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THE NATURE AND JUSTIFIABILITY OF

THE ACT OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS

by

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degree of

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In memory of

George Nicholas Stanley, 1912 – 1942

and

Eliza Emily (née Dent), 1909 – 1998.

ABSTRACT

JEANNETTE GILL

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This thesis, which moves through three stages, asks whether the compulsory provision of a daily act of collective worship can be justified in the schools of a liberal society. It begins with an analysis of the public debate which has surrounded its presence since legislation in 1944 formalised existing practice, and notes that its arguments are based on differing perceptions of the value of religious practice, the needs of the child, the relationship between religion and morality, and the nature of society.

Because this public debate is often distanced from actual practice, research was undertaken in primary and secondary schools in England and Wales and is described in the central section of the study. The methods used to gather data are first discussed and are then followed by reports on the information acquired by means of a national questionnaire, as well as observation and interviews which were carried out with teachers and pupils in the south west of England and a city in the Midlands. The findings show that the legal requirements are met in the majority of primary schools, but that pupils' transfer to the secondary school frequently marks a point of transition from daily worship to a weekly assembly, except in the voluntary sector. Adult respondents discuss their attitudes to collective worship, the obstacles they encounter in meeting the legal requirements and the approaches adopted in their schools. The most important features of collective worship are perceived by teachers and pupils to be the contribution it makes to the development of a sense of community, the celebration of achievement and the ethos of the school. Conversations with pupils reveal the changes in belief which occur as they mature, and shed further light on provision in schools, reflecting young people's declining willingness to participate in religious worship.

The evidence of the data reveals that opposition to collective worship is expressed by young people and their teachers in the language of individualism and choice. The philosophical analysis of the concluding section therefore examines the question of the justifiability of collective worship from a liberal perspective, giving particular attention to questions of autonomy, rights, indoctrination and the distinction between the public and private domains. Recognising, however, that communitarianism provides a major challenge to liberalism, a study is also made of relevant arguments from this perspective before concluding that collective worship cannot be justified from either position. Nevertheless, schools claim that they intend to maintain the provision of assembly in a manner which meets their needs, and the conclusion suggests that the way ahead may be to build on the current strengths of provision and to replace the traditional elements of participatory worship with a programme which develops a deeper emphasis on the spiritual and cultural dimensions of experience.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis:

(i)   After an initial identification which is given in full, subsequent references to the proceedings of the debates held in the Houses of Parliament in 1988 and recorded in Hansard are abbreviated as follows:

Elton, HL, 498: 658 may be read as: Elton, House of Lords (1988) vol. 498, col. 658

(ii)   'Faith assemblies': Acts of worship held in schools which are granted a determination that exempts them from the requirement that worship shall be wholly or mainly broadly Christian and who choose to provide parallel acts of worship according to the faith traditions represented by their pupils, e.g. for Sikh pupils, for Hindu pupils, etc, are described as 'faith assemblies', following the custom adopted in some institutions.

(iii)   Other abbreviations are as follows:

DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
LEA	Local Education Authority
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SACRE	Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
SCAA	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority

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Conference of the Association of Religious Education Advisors and Inspectors: The Spiritual and Moral Dimensions of the Curriculum - Implications for Inspection and Advice (July, 1993) London

National Conference on Moral and Spiritual Education (September, 1993), University of Plymouth, Exmouth

International Colloquium on Spiritual and Moral Development: From Theory to Practice (July, 1994), the Islamic Academy, Homerton College, University of Cambridge

Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child (July, 1994), Roehampton Institute, London

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Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child: Expressions of Spirituality (July, 1995), Roehampton Institute, London

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PREFACE

The privatisation of religion which is characteristic of western modernity (Sacks, 1992; Bounds, 1997) is accompanied by the widespread belief that the state should, in matters of significant and soundly reasoned public controversy, provide a neutral framework of governance within which its members are at liberty to pursue their own versions of the good (Kymlicka, 1992). Consequently it is argued that, in the private arena of religion, the state has no right to intervene or to display preference. *'The function of the state in religious matters should not, I think, be one of taking any side on issues of so controversial a nature'* (Hirst, 1972, p.10). The daily provision of a compulsory act of collective worship in all maintained schools in England and Wales is, therefore, a matter of continuing and sometimes vociferous debate.

It is the intention of this thesis to examine the question of its justification from a philosophical perspective. It seemed important from the outset, however, that this analysis should be rooted in the reality of school practice, in order to better inform the discussion which constitutes the final section of the study and to avoid *'armchair theorising'* (May, 1993, p.vii). The thesis is presented, therefore, in three parts. The introductory stage (chapter 1) discusses the broad debate which has surrounded the provision of school worship since its entry into legislation in the Education Act of 1944 and serves also as a literature review. It incorporates two themes. The first relates to the presence of religious worship in schools. Often incommensurable, the arguments which are put forward are expressions of support or opposition and, although reasoned, are frequently grounded in opposing life stances or in contrasting perceptions of the nature of education and of worship. The second theme, which has been most prominent since the Education Reform Act of 1988, concentrates attention on the type of worship which is appropriate in the schools of a pluralist society. Often these arguments appear remote from actual practice and take little account of the

opinions and attitudes of teachers or pupils. For this reason, and in order to construct a firm basis of evidence from which to explore these issues, a body of data was gathered from schools by means of questionnaire, observation and interview. Chapter 2 describes the methodology adopted in the collection of this information, and is followed in chapter 3 by a report of the data gathered from the questionnaire. Data acquired by means of observation in schools and from interviews with teachers and pupils from both the primary and secondary sectors is then reported in chapter 4. These findings are examined in chapter 5, and their main conclusions inform the philosophical analysis of the final stage (chapters 6 and 7) where I examine wider arguments concerning autonomy and individual rights, the neutrality of the state and the distinction between the public and private spheres of life which is characteristic of contemporary society from a liberal perspective. Recognising, however, that liberalism itself is currently facing strong challenge from communitarianism, I then examine the issue of collective worship from this perspective. Finally, I conclude that it is not possible to justify, from either position, the compulsory provision of collective worship within the education system of a liberal democracy. Nevertheless, taking the arguments and the data as a whole, the study ends with the suggestion that there may be sound reasons for an attenuated form of provision which builds on the strengths of current practice while giving more attention to the spiritual and cultural dimensions. The thesis concludes therefore with a brief consideration of these features of personal development. Recommendations for further research are made, the limitations of the study are acknowledged and its contribution to the field is identified.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

THE PUBLIC DEBATE SURROUNDING THE ACT OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Overview

This chapter serves as both a literature review and an introduction to the major arguments surrounding the act of collective worship. It identifies two major lines of public argument which result from its compulsory provision in all maintained schools in England and Wales. The first, which is chiefly theoretical and of longstanding duration, debates the issue of the inclusion of religious worship in schools. The second, although irrevocably linked to the first, can be seen largely as a response to current legislation, and involves practical decision-making about alternative approaches to the provision of worship in the schools of a pluralist society.

Consequently this chapter, which is sub-divided into 7 sections, begins with (1) a brief introduction establishing the focus of the debate which has accompanied the provision of the act of collective worship throughout the past half century. It continues (2) with an outline of the social context which has provided the framework of the debate, and (3) itemises the main features of the legal requirements. The succeeding sections examine (4) the arguments which are put forward in support of collective worship and (5) those which oppose its provision. The concluding section discusses (6) responses to the requirement for worship which is wholly or mainly broadly Christian, and (7) alternative approaches to the implementation of collective worship which are proposed in the debate.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The public debate which surrounds the provision of a daily act of collective worship in all maintained schools in England and Wales seeks answers to two distinct but related questions. The first asks whether the activity of worship should be a compulsory element of the programme for all pupils or whether it should be abolished as incompatible with the aims of education in a western, liberal state. The second focuses on the type of worship which it is appropriate to provide in the schools of a society whose government seeks to maintain its traditional Christian heritage whilst at the same time supporting its plurality of cultures. It is this issue which has been chiefly at the forefront of the debate since the publication of the Education Reform Act in 1988, but any consideration of the place of school worship must be seen in the light of the tangled web of argument and counter-argument which has surrounded it since the Education Act of 1944. In this debate, common positions are sometimes held for different reasons while the same circumstances can be interpreted in a manner which supports opposing sides. Religious belief adds a further dimension: personal commitment is, however, no indicator of either support for, or opposition to, school worship. Most of the arguments discussed in the public domain refer to the common school, a term which is utilised to identify those public institutions which are open to all pupils regardless of religion, class or ethnicity, and which are committed to a form of common education which '*... seeks not to shape either the beliefs or personal qualities of pupils in the light of any substantial or 'comprehensive' conception of the good which is significantly controversial'* (McLaughlin, 1995, p.241). In the British context the term is applied to maintained community and foundation schools which are non-denominational and which, in the phrasing of legislation, do not have a religious character. There has been as yet little analysis of the convention that voluntary schools have a particular responsibility to nurture the commitment of children whose parents have chosen a religious framework for their general education. Nevertheless, there is some recognition that the

arguments in this debate may apply as much to provision in these schools as elsewhere (Hull, 1975; Watson, 1988; Copley, 1989; Attfield, 1991; Hogan, 1993; Chadwick, 1994).

1.2   THE BACKGROUND TO THE DEBATE

Rapid demographic and ethnographic changes in the decades since the end of the second world war have provided the context within which the arguments surrounding the provision of collective worship have been set. In a society moving from an industrial to a consumerist and technological economy, changing patterns of employment and residence, together with advances in the communications, transport, leisure and travel industries have altered people's perceptions and awareness. These developments have been accompanied by changes in the social fabric of life, affecting traditional institutions such as marriage and the family and disturbing previously established patterns of community. Psychological research in education has been instrumental in extending understanding of the nature of learning and human development. In addition, a steady decline in membership of the Christian communion has been attended by a concomitant growth in secularism, while at the same time there has been a rapid expansion in the numbers of citizens from ethnic minority groups settling in the country, particularly in the cities. As a consequence, there has been a continuing increase in the active membership of non-Christian religious traditions. Permeating many of these developments it is possible to identify concepts of liberal values, particularly those which relate to the distinction drawn between the public domain and the sphere of personal privacy which is protected by a sense of individual freedom and rights. '*The lives of liberal citizens are properly divided: we have a public and a private side, and the public or political side is guided by imperatives designed to make our shared life together possible*' (Macedo, 1995, p. 226). Religion is largely confined to the private arena and is regarded as a matter of

personal choice in which the state has no right to interfere. As I shall discuss in chapter 6, it is this commonly shared understanding which is at the fulcrum of the debate surrounding the issue of compulsory worship in schools.

It was in the context of this rapidly changing society that the legislation enacted in the Education Reform Act of 1988 occurred. When the Bill was introduced to the House of Commons at the end of 1987, little attention was given to its religious clauses which reiterated the requirements enshrined in the 1944 Education Act. This omitted any formal reference to a prescriptive Christian content: yoking together instruction and worship under the name 'religious education', its roots stretched back to the provisions of the 1870 Education Act and beyond (Durham Report, 1970; Hull, 1975; Department for Education and Science, 1985). Subsequently however, as a curriculum subject religious education has adopted a broadly critical and non-confessional approach to its subject matter and has incorporated a study of the world's major faiths. Particularly in the common school it has become largely independent of collective worship, the implementation and progress of which has been marked by fluctuating but increasingly vocal opposition along with calls for its abolition or warnings of its demise (Hilliard, 1964; Cole, 1972, 1974; Marvell, 1974; Hull, 1975, 1995; National Association of Head Teachers, 1994).

Early in 1988, concerned by a steady decline in schools' provision of religious education and collective worship and by the move towards a phenomenological approach, as well as by fears of deteriorating standards of public order, amendments to the Education Reform Bill were sought in the House of Lords in order to secure a central position for Christianity in religious teaching and worship. Expressing deep anxiety about national and cultural identity and fearful of the fragmentation of commonly shared moral values, a small group of peers called forcefully for the re-establishment of an education which, whilst respecting the position of the minority faiths represented in schools, would be *unequivocally Christian* (Elton, House of

Lords, vol. 498, col. 658). Amendments were finally agreed which included the requirement that collective worship in all maintained schools should, except where 'determinations' were granted, be *'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'* (Amendment no.13, HL, 498:444). This demand set the agenda for the debates which ensued and focused attention on the nature of provision, in addition to the issue of its justification which had been the central concern of earlier controversies (Alves, 1965; Hull, 1969, 1975; Cole, 1974; Attfield, 1974). Both of these issues are inextricably linked, however, and cannot be wholly separated either from each other or from preceding debates which continue to erupt sporadically, particularly in response to the publication of new legislation or guidance.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS IN RESPECT OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The Reform Act of 1988 retained the religious provisions of the Education Act 1944, but in the light of changes in school size and composition during the intervening period, introduced a certain amount of flexibility whilst continuing to require the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all registered pupils. The specific requirements for the organisation and content of collective worship in all maintained schools, with the exception of special schools, are set out in Sections 6 and 7 of Chapter 40 of the Act (UK Parliament, 29.7.1988). Amendments to legislation were introduced in the Education Acts of 1992, 1996 and 1998, and circulars containing further guidance were published in 1989 and 1994.

In community schools and foundation schools which do not have a religious character, taking the school term as a whole, most acts of worship are to be *'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'* (UK Parliament, 1988, chap. 40, part 1.7.1). In order to satisfy this requirement, they must reflect '... *the broad traditions*

of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination' (1988, chap. 40, part 1.7.2; 1998, schedule 20, para. 3(1), (2), (3)). In voluntary schools and foundation schools with a religious character, collective worship must be in accordance with any trust deed. Where the trust deed makes no such provision but the school has a religious character, collective worship must be provided according to the tenets and practices of the religion or denomination specified in relation to the school by the Secretary of State (UK Parliament, 1998) under section 69 (4). Decisions regarding the extent and manner of compliance or non-compliance in any school must take pupils' age, aptitude and family background into consideration (UK Parliament, 1988, para. 7. 4-5). If the nature of such worship is inappropriate for all or some of the pupils at any school, the headteacher, after consultation with the governing body, may make an application (UK Parliament, 1988, para.12.1) to the standing advisory council on religious education, established in every authority, to determine whether the requirement for broadly Christian worship (UK Parliament, 1988, para.7.1) might be replaced by an alternative form of collective worship which may be distinctive of a particular faith, though not of a denomination of that faith (UK Parliament, 1988, para.7.6). In making such a determination, the family background of the pupils who feature in the application must be taken into account (UK Parliament, 1988, para.12.2). Determinations must be reviewed every five years, when they may be renewed or revoked by the standing advisory council.

The requirement of the 1944 Act that there should be a single act attended by the entire pupil body at the start of the school day is amended, to allow for one or more acts of worship. These may take place at any time of the school day, for different age or school groups in which pupils meet as part of their normal school activities: they do not refer to religious faith groups (DfE,1994, para.55). Maintaining the existing conscience clauses, any pupil may be wholly or partly excused from attendance at the act of collective worship on parental request and, under certain

circumstances and conditions, arrangements can be made for alternative provision at the start or close of the school session provided this does not interfere with attendance at the school on the day in question (UK Parliament, 1988, para. 9.3). Facilities for such worship may be made available on school premises, although no expenditure may fall to the authorities (UK Parliament, 1988, para. 9.8; see also DfE, 1994, para. 88).

Subsequent to the publication of the Education Reform Act 1988, the Department for Education published further guidance elaborating its legal requirements. *The Education Reform Act 1988: Religious Education and Collective Worship* (Circular 3/89) was published in January 1989 and replaced five years later by *Religious Education and Collective Worship* (Circular 1/94). These documents, although not authoritative legal interpretations of the Act which are a matter for the courts, provide detailed clarification of its requirements and set dates for their implementation. Schools must provide information to parents concerning the right to withdraw their children from collective worship, the nature of any determination which is granted, and the school's religious affiliation where relevant (DfE, 1994, para.123). They are also expected to indicate whether there will be any deviation from worship which is of a broadly Christian character, or any inclusion of non-Christian material (DfE, 1994, para.124). Independent four yearly inspections of schools, introduced by the Education (Schools) Act 1992, incorporate the provision of daily worship in their reports and can require that any inadequacies be addressed. Voluntary schools are responsible for making separate arrangements for the inspection of their religious provisions. A complaints machinery is also established; this provides opportunities for local representation and resolution where possible, before reference is made to the Secretary of State.

Whereas the purpose of Circular 3/89 was to provide guidance on the changes introduced by the Education Reform Act's requirements for religious education and

worship (DES, 1989, p.2), Circular 1/94 (DfE, 1994) articulates the government's concern that insufficient attention is paid to the spiritual, moral and social aspects of pupil development in schools, and argues that the religious provisions of the Act make an important contribution to this process. Expressing deep regret that religious education and worship are infrequently or inadequately provided, it re-emphasises the government's requirement on schools to identify and publicise their shared values and ethos, and to provide opportunities for pupils to '... *consider the response of religion to fundamental questions about the purpose of being, morality and ethical standards, and to develop their own response to such matters'* (DfE, 1994, para.4). The specific aims of collective worship are identified as:

> *... the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response; to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes.* (para.50)

In support of these aims, the circular sets out to provide definitions of certain terms. Whilst recognising that worship in schools is necessarily different from that of a body of believers, it argues that the term must be used in its ordinary meaning and '... *should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power'* (para.57). Passive attendance on the part of pupils therefore will not meet the declared aims (para.59). The act of collective worship '... *should be capable of eliciting a response from pupils, even though on a particular occasion some of the pupils may not feel able actively to identify with the act of worship'* (para.59). Although acts of worship may contain some non-Christian elements, those which are broadly Christian must contain material which makes specific reference to the traditions of Christian belief and '*accord[s] a special status to Jesus Christ'*(para.63).

Additional material relating to the legal requirements in respect of collective worship can be found in Appendix 1.

Although the requirements in respect of religious education were broadly welcomed, the demand for collective worship which is wholly or mainly broadly Christian in character met with a range of responses, some of which are examined in the sections below. Detailed examination of the legislation and of the subsequent guidance provided in *Religious Education and Collective Worship* (Circular 1/94, DfE, 1994) has been undertaken, particularly by Hull (1989, 1990, 1994, 1995) and, from a legal perspective, by Harte (1989, 1991); Poulter (1990); and Bradney (1989, 1996). Additional responses, from teachers' organisations, educational authorities and faith organisations, are summarised in *Collective Worship in Schools* (Culham College Institute, 1996). Many of the arguments in this debate which are examined in the sections below present responses to legislation and I shall not, therefore, pre-empt this discussion by a detailed examination of the requirements here, except for the following broad comments.

The legislation of 1988 sought to accomplish two tasks: to retain the requirements of the Education Act 1944 in respect of both religious education and collective worship, and to strengthen the position of Christianity. Religious educators welcomed the strengthening of their subject area, and some teachers value the emphasis given to collective worship and the greater flexibility of group and timing which the Act permits. However, in seeking to retain the worship provisions of the 1944 Education Act, the government failed largely to recognise the impact of the considerable changes which had occurred in schools in the intervening period. Insufficient account was taken of the difficulties for schools in re-establishing what had become a declining practice, in the light of the altered relationship between religious education and collective worship, and between the church and the wider population. By 1988, religious education had moved from a confessional to a non-

confessional approach, particularly in the secondary sector, and children's previously common attendance at Sunday School had diminished to a point where familiarity with religious attitudes and concepts which had once provided a shared context for school worship was available neither to the young nor to their teachers. In its absence the implementation of the legal clauses in respect of collective worship continues to be problematic for many schools.

Secondly, legislation paid insufficient attention to the needs of pupils in multi-faith schools, for whom religious worship as a collectivity is inappropriate. Although such schools may make an application for a determination, this leaves them in a position where they are required to offer daily worship but are given little indication of what this might be. One possibility is the provision of worship which is distinctive of a non-Christian tradition but not of a denomination of that tradition: this poses difficulties for schools who find themselves unable to distinguish such denominational emphases and fear giving offence to local communities. As we shall see below, division into faith groups for worship is unwelcome to many schools, poses difficulties with leadership and also carries the possibility of denominationalism. In schools with a minority of children from other religious traditions, the emphasis on Christian worship cannot be easily resolved by the withdrawal of pupils, and may add to their sense of alienation from the school community.

Thirdly, although legislation incorporates a reference to age, aptitude and family background, it is difficult to know how this could be taken into account in any school except very generally, nor is it possible to know how aptitude might be recognised or assessed. The conscience clauses place the responsibility for the withdrawal of their children solely with parents, and what is missing from the legislation is any reference to pupils' willingness or capacity to participate, or of the

preparedness of sufficient numbers of teachers to lead worship in a manner which meets the spirit, rather than the letter, of the law.

Whereas the 1944 Act avoided the use of terms which could lead to controversy, the Education Act of 1988 and the guidance of Circular 1/94 incorporate phrases which are subject to persistent question and challenge. Thus the phrase 'wholly or mainly broadly Christian', although more appropriately inclusive than the term 'Christian' which was the initial proposal, can be viewed as acceptably flexible, overly ambiguous, or insufficiently precise. The attempt to define the nature of worship in Circular 1/94 may be regarded by some as a clarification, but its insistence on reverence or veneration afforded to the concept of a divine being or power also presents a faith requirement which is an obstacle for many. Although the Circular recognises a distinction between corporate and collective worship, it does not elaborate on what this difference might be, except to state that the latter will reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief (making no mention of practice) and will not be distinctive of any denomination. This fails to recognise that all Christian belief is mediated through denominational interpretations. Attempts to specify the meanings of terms or to establish particular requirements (e.g. the meaning of 'most', in the requirement that most acts of worship should be wholly or mainly broadly Christian) often raise further disputes, and it is possible for controversy to rage indefinitely; this is a major criticism of details of the legislation and in particular of the guidance provided in Circular 1/94, although not of Circular 3/89 which sought only to clarify legislation and did not enter into the theological domain.

Finally, in its reiteration of legislation in respect of collective worship, the government gave no consideration to the question of whether it should legislate for a dimension of human existence which is regarded as personal and private or whether it should draw a distinction between education and worship, as is common in most

educational systems in western liberal societies. This is the issue which is at the heart of this study.

1.4   THE CASE FOR SCHOOL WORSHIP

An analysis of the current debate identifies a range of arguments in support of collective worship which are articulated with varying degrees of fervour. The account of these which follows is accompanied by a critical evaluation, and concludes with a brief summary.

1.4.1   Britain is a Christian country

At the heart of the continuing demand for school worship is a perception of Britain as a Christian country whose children must be given a Christian education as their right and entitlement. This claim, which often makes no distinction between the practice of worship and the study entailed in religious education, was influential in the parliamentary debates surrounding the Education Reform Bill where, on the basis of a survey carried out by the Bible Society (Harrison, 1983), Cox argued that 85% of the population were Christian (1988, HL, 493:1455), a figure repeated by Burn and Hart (1988) and Copley (1989). However, a people's religious affiliation cannot be easily quantified, and it is seldom clear whether the use of the term 'Christian' as a descriptor refers to membership, churchgoing, belief or association. Close examination of available statistics reveals a complex picture which is open to a variety of interpretations. Svennevig (1989) reports that 79% of people interviewed claimed membership of the Christian faith, but this figure obviously incorporates varying levels of commitment. Brierley (1991, p.202f) distinguishes between regular churchgoers (10% of the population of Britain) and non-regular churchgoers (55%): of the latter group, 47% are categorised as *'notional Christians'* who claim allegiance but are neither regular attenders nor members. The non-Christian community (35%)

includes 27% of the population who describe themselves as 'secular', a small increase of 1% during the previous decade.

Table 1   The religious structure in Great Britain, 1990,
                                                    (after Brierley, 1991).

	1980	1990
churchgoers who are members	8%	9%
churchgoers but not members	3%	1%
nominal churchgoers	9%	8%
notional Christians but not members	47%	47%
secular	26%	27%
religious: non-trinitarian and non-Christian traditions	7%	8%

Brierley concludes that, in common with Western Europe generally, there continues to be a significant amount of residual religious attachment, albeit isolated from practice. The figures reveal higher levels of attendance and membership in Wales and Scotland than in England, and a continuing decline amongst the young, particularly young males, reflecting a steady decrease in membership overall. A table to show figures of church membership is available in Appendix 2.

Most of the overall decline is due to a decrease in the size of the Anglican community: membership of the Catholic Church as a percentage of the population has remained constant since 1975, although attendance at Mass continues to fall. These figures mirror a national pattern of declining membership of a range of voluntary organisations, including trades unions and political parties (Brierley, 1995). Reluctance to associate with the formal dimensions of religious institutions may be, at least in part, a reflection of a widespread culture of non-attachment to traditional voluntary organisations. Nevertheless, it is claimed that 65% of the population regard

themselves as having an affiliation to Christianity: 50% of all infants are baptised, 64% of first-time marriages take place in church, and nearly all cremations and funerals are accompanied by a Christian ceremony. '*Thus in the significant passages of life, birth, marriage and death, Christianity plays a significant role for at least half the population*' (Brierley, 1995). Davie (1994) maintains that the persistence of popular but privatised religion indicates that Christianity continues to fulfil a function in society. She argues that there is evidence of a common religion amongst the majority of the population which reveals a continuum of unorthodox and conventional beliefs, but which has little or no affiliation with the organised church. Believing without belonging, she claims, is a persistent theme. The cultural climate has been equally severe on both secular and religious certainties and she suggests that:

> *Religious life - like so many other features of post-industrial or post-modern society - is not so much disappearing as mutating, for the sacred undoubtedly persists and will continue to do so, but in forms which may be very different from those which have gone before.* (p. 198)

Associated with the claim that Britain is a Christian country, three arguments for the maintenance of its traditional faith can be distinguished. The first seeks to offer religion as a channel of comfort. Although churchgoing is limited to a minority, it is claimed that Christianity continues to receive support from the public which turns to it for comfort and strength in times of need and distress (Strange, HL, 492:1190; Thorneycroft, HL, 496:1344; Cox, HL, 496:1345; St. John of Fawsley, HL, 498:649-650; Spikins, 1988). The second argument claims, as a consequence, that society, through its schools, has a responsibility to pass on this tradition to the next generation (Thorneycroft, HL, 496:1350) and '... *to ensure that in the education system of this land the Christian faith shall be strong and secure*' (Tonypandy, HL,

498:647). Thirdly, it is argued that because Christianity has shaped and moulded the country's ethical traditions and cultural institutions, exerting a profound and lasting influence on its laws and government, its art, literature and music as well as on its democratic and social development, it must be taught to the young (Tonypandy, HL, 498:646; Burn and Hart, 1988; Haldane, 1988; Harte, 1989).

However, these are arguments which fail to distinguish between religious education and worship. Whilst religious faith may be a source of comfort, it is dependent nevertheless on a measure of personal belief and is the responsibility of the faith community, not of the common school. The existence of a tradition is not of itself an argument for its continuation and knowledge of a religious culture can be achieved by pedagogy and study without recourse to compulsory participation in its practices. The extent to which Christianity has had an influence over a wide range of institutions cannot be used as a justification for participation in worship. Furthermore, to equate Englishness (sic) with Christianity is politically insensitive in a pluralist society (Bates, 1996).

Finally, a counter-argument revolves around the definition of the term 'Christian'. Not all groups accept, for example, the inclusive descriptions given above, and there are those who use much more stringent criteria for membership of the Christian communion. The use of the term as a broad description of the country's cultural and communal identity is challenged therefore on the grounds that there is no commonly shared definition.

The evidential basis for the claim that Britain is a Christian country, except by historical tradition, is both complex and inconclusive. The argument offers no logical basis for participation in worship as part of the common education system unless it can be shown that worship is an integral and essential element of religious education, which is a further claim put forward in support of its provision.

1.4.2 Worship is an integral element of religious education

Implicit in this argument are assumptions about the inter-connectedness of religious education and the act of worship. Although it is now widely accepted that as a curriculum subject religious education is non-confessional and that its linkage with collective worship is unhelpful (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, 1995), it is nevertheless frequently argued that, because worship is central to religion it must be an essential and integral dimension of religious education (Campbell, HL, 498:634). Echoing the Durham Report (1970), parallels continue to be drawn with the practical elements of other subject areas (St. John of Fawsley, HL, 492:1188). The Bishop of London argues that:

> *... one cannot give religious education by instruction only; worship is an integral part of it. To try to give religious education merely by instruction would be like trying to teach science without allowing anyone to go to the laboratory and handle materials. It is an integral part.*   (HL, 496:1346)

This argument fails to distinguish between the study of worship and its practice; it extends the responsibility of the teacher of religious education (Thatcher, 1997) and restores a confessional approach to its provision. Furthermore, it ignores the distinctive nature of each curriculum area, in its assumption that all subjects can be taught and experienced through both instruction and practice, which is clearly not always the case (Hirst, 1974a). There are certain contexts where it is entirely appropriate to give information only; education about drugs and sex is an example of this. Nevertheless, it is claimed that the demise of collective worship would deprive pupils of '... *the opportunity to experience in school what is regarded as the living centre of religion*' (Webster, 1990, p.157). Felderhof (1999) argues that an understanding of worship, achieved through practice, is the best way to appreciate the

religious life. *'In a similar way, the practice of religious worship in schools may be an important aspect of the acquisition of a religious understanding'* (p.260). Implicit in this perspective is an expectation that participation in worship leads to commitment:

> *Some may argue that, if understanding is a mastery of practice, education may lead people to be religious. And indeed it may follow that through the doing, pupils are being inducted into religious life and may be in danger of embracing the practice for life.*
>
> (Felderhof, 1999, p.259)

Rejecting the accusation that this would be indoctrinatory, Felderhof argues that the introduction of a practice which encourages understanding and possible commitment is not a deprivation of freedom but an opening of possibilities, and is therefore no more objectionable than is the practice of mathematics (p.259-260). This fails to recognise that the practice of mathematics is a skill, and is inherently different from the life of religious faith which is a distinctive and significantly controversial dimension of existence. Initiation into religious belief is not one of the educational aims of the common school, although nurture, at the request of parents, may be part of the task of the voluntary sector.

Furthermore, the assumption that participation in worship is the only means whereby pupils can gain an understanding of the significance for believers of religion can also be questioned. Art, music, drama and personal example are all ways by which pupils can encounter aspects of religious commitment and practice (Hull, 1975), and observation and description may be more honest and acceptable approaches to adopt (Attfield, 1974; Marvell, 1974; Ramsey, 1976). This suggestion is rejected as being of dubious benefit, however, as well as difficult to implement (Webster, 1974), and Watson (1988) argues that, because the nature of worship defies

description, observation of its outward forms may simply result in limited or superficial understanding, and the presence of observers may have an adverse effect on the worshippers.

Thus there would appear to be no foundation for the claim that participatory worship is an integral part of the study of religion, which is to confuse scholarship with commitment although, as a dimension of religion, worship may reasonably be studied as an element of the taught programme. There is, however, a further argument that is closely linked to this issue, which claims that worship is a natural human instinct which schools have a responsibility to address as a contribution to the affective and emotional development of pupils.

1.4.3   Worship is an innate instinct

Whereas some supporters of school worship believe that they have a responsibility to induct young people into the tradition of Christian worship, others argue that the natural human experiences of awe, wonder and reverence which are central to the activity of worship are innate capacities that can be explored by all regardless of intellectual interpretation (Ramsey, 1976). The responsibility is, rather, to build on these human capacities in order to nurture a wide range of appropriate experiences such as respect, trust and joy which might subsequently provide a foundation for individual choice.

Children can explore these natural capacities at any age, and schools may subsequently provide an introduction to more formal liturgy, allowing pupils to encounter the concepts they will later need to comprehend if they are to be able to make mature decisions (Attfield, 1974). Hull (1975) is careful to argue that this is a preliminary activity which does not itself constitute literal worship: this requires committed belief in the existence of the divine (p. 36) and is defined as '...*that*

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attitude which confers supreme worth upon the admired object of its attention. It evaluates the object of its worship as being utterly worthy' (p. 34). The experience encountered in this threshold activity may complement the study of religion and lead to a deeper level of understanding (Halstead and Khan Cheema, 1987). Inevitably, pupils will respond in varying ways and at different levels. For some, regular experience of a worshipful atmosphere may encourage silent or active participation (Lindley, 1995) while other pupils may engage in quiet reflection, mental discipline or broad support for a commonly shared activity (Halstead and Khan Cheema, 1987). Hull (1989) argues that, following the Education Reform Act of 1988, school worship is intended to be educationally appropriate but Attfield (1991) suspects that this may prove to be so vague and formless that it will fail to provide a sufficient introduction to worship as it is experienced in the world's major religions.

However, some supporters regard this innate capacity as evidence of an instinct for religious worship in the young and argue that this is a need which must be met and nurtured.

> *To be truly human must involve being faithful to the religious element in our nature as simple human beings. The religious dimension of life does not make us human, it enables us to be fully human. That is why I see it as an integral part of any education process. ... I believe that we have a duty to respond to that instinct and enable it to grow ... being faithful to the needs of our children.*
>
> (Bishop of London, HL, 496:433-4)

It cannot be deduced, however, from the circumstance that individuals demonstrate reflective insight and a capacity for adoration and worship, that there is a religious element in human nature, nor can this claim be used to argue that schools have a responsibility to take a child's innate experience and to channel it in any particular

religious direction. The possession of an instinct is not necessarily a justification for its nurture, although it might be an argument for its exploration in the context of a curricular programme.

All of these arguments recognise the fundamental inter-relationship of worship and religion which is common to all faiths. What is central to the current debate, however, is the claim that this relationship must be replicated in the common school. This is to confuse religious education, the aim of which is the study of religion, with religion itself, and implies an expectation that the goal of the legal provisions will be participation in the faith. This would be to introduce a confessional element to the common school which is incompatible with educational principles in contemporary society (Hull, 1988) and which previously had been avoided in legislation (Hull, 1990a). Felderhof, however, sees no distinction between schools of different status, insisting rather that because schools worship, they are religious communities (1999, p. 265, n.49). This is not a claim which can be easily upheld, although the National Society (1991) also challenges the convention that non-denominational schools are secular institutions but on different grounds, arguing that legislation in respect of collective worship refers to pupils' background as a determinant of what is religiously appropriate. Nevertheless, religious communities are characterised by corporate beliefs and shared commitments to a particular way of life which are made voluntarily. Such a description cannot be applied to the common schools of contemporary Britain although it might be argued that, in certain respects, voluntary schools display some of the features of a religious community.

1.4.4   School worship contributes to the needs of the 'whole child'

Arguments which claim, first, that collective worship has a vital contribution to make towards meeting the needs of children and, second, that schooling should address the education of the whole child, have a long history. The regular ritual of

worship is regarded as an enriching process (Luckman, 1968) which meets young children's emotional needs for security, reassurance and belonging; and provides an opportunity for adolescent pupils to develop a sense of purpose (Bull, 1964; Robinson, 1964) and a faith by which to live (Central Advisory Council, 1959). It is seen as a preparation for adult life, when its lessons might prove to be of value even for those who reject any form of religious commitment. Many of these earlier claims are present in the current debate, and can be recognised in teachers' perceptions of the contribution made by collective worship to meeting personal needs.

There is no shared agreement about what these might be, however: any account incorporates a value-dependent and culturally-specific projection of adults' attitudes, fears and hopes for children and for society, which is reflected more generally in the educational enterprise. Inevitably, as the data of chapters 4.2 and 4.3 demonstrate below, teachers' assessments of need do not always coincide with those of their pupils. Although a sense of security and purposiveness are integral elements of the schooling environment, these can be encouraged without participation in religious worship and this claim, therefore, provides no justification for its inclusion.

Closely related to this argument is a continuing claim which calls attention to the multi-dimensional person known as the 'whole child', who possesses not only mental and physical traits but also spiritual attributes. Collective worship has a particular contribution to make to the development of this dimension of life (DfE, 1994); and the encouragement of particular attitudes, values and insights, although not distinctive of worship, is a necessary element of educational provision because of the contribution it offers to the 'education of pupils in all aspects of humanity' (National Society, 1991). The development of the spiritual dimension involves an 'inner' search for purpose, significance and answers to questions of ultimate concern and commitment which may, for some, lead to the recognition of a religious force or power as central to existence. Bastow (1989), however, questions the suggestion that

the abstract concepts involved in the examination of existential questions of ultimate concern can be undertaken by the young outside the context of a substantive religious tradition.

Implicit in such arguments are concerns that education should fulfil a role which seeks not only to provide a preparation for adult scholarship, but also for personhood. Harte (1991) argues that education is not intended to be solely concerned with the intellectual and Mead (1989), drawing on Holley (1979), identifies a shift of emphasis in the balance from a largely intellectual approach to one which recognises the:

> *... more varied needs of the 'whole person' to be educated. This moderates the demands for an objectivity that is incompatible with involvement in worship. Worship is reinstated as being a possible part of the education of a person (although separate from his training as a scholar).* (p.116)

Finally, the importance of a period of calm and quiet reflection, set aside from the busy haste of the day, is recognised (Halstead and Khan Cheema, 1987; Thorneycroft, HL, 496:1344). During this time, pupils can re-visit those elements of experience which would be otherwise overlooked (Erricker, n.d). Such an activity does not, however, necessitate participation in religious worship.

1.4.5   School worship has strong parental and public support

Closely linked in this debate are claims of popular support and an allied concern for standards of morality. Alongside complaints of declining provision, it is argued that high levels of support exist in favour of the established arrangements for religious teaching and worship in schools. Cox claims that '... *an overwhelming*

majority of parents want their children to have a Christian-based act of worship in school' (1988, HL, 493:1454), while Pollard (1995) argues that over 70% of parents want their children introduced to both religious education and worship. Evidence for such claims is unclear, however, and even if correct, popular support does not appear to be based on theological or sacramental understanding but on *'... a kind of folk faith'* which emphasises traditional Christian ethics such as kindness, tolerance and generosity (Cox, E. and Cairns, 1989, p.15). Although it is argued that folk religion is no basis on which to build educational policies (Shepherd, 1995), it may nevertheless indicate a general wish for the provision of worship in schools: the underlying reason for this support appears to be either its contribution to the development of acceptable and shared standards of moral behaviour which will be of benefit to the whole community (Webster, 1990), or a sense of nostalgia for the past. However, there is no clear evidence either of parental support or opposition. In the claims made by Cox (1988, above) no evidence is cited beyond a survey carried out in 1982, on behalf of the Bible Society, into attitudes to the Bible, God and the church (Harrison, 1983). This found that 84% of interviewees, from a sample of 1136, claimed a religious affiliation when questioned but that more than half attended church only for weddings or not at all. To deduce from such figures that 85% of the population is Christian (Cox, HL, 493:1454-1455) simply raises again the questions about affiliation, belief and commitment which have been discussed above; and it is not possible to extrapolate from this evidence any claims with respect to parental attitudes to collective worship. This is an imprecise and worrying use of figures in an argument which was influential in revising the religious clauses of the Education Act.

1.4.6 Worship makes an essential contribution to morality

The perception of morality as a product of religious education and worship is one which has been articulated forcibly by government, and for some supporters their joint purpose is understood to be the transmission of *'... proper values and proper morals'* (Thurlow, HL, 496:1348). The debates in the Upper House during the passage of the Education Reform Bill provide a clear indication of members' perception of the dependence of morality on religion: *'Morality cannot be sustained without the support of religion'* (St. John of Fawsley, HL, 498:649). Overwhelming agreement with this position by the majority of peers present was displayed in their response to a dissenting question set by Lord Houghton (HL, 496:423). Religion, it was argued, provides the sense of a higher authority needed by the *' ...ordinary child'* (St. John of Fawsley, HL, 498:649), and (despite historical and contemporary evidence also to the contrary) produces a more virtuous society in which members of minority faiths are likely to feel secure (Goodman, HL, 496:430).

It is evident throughout these debates that peers' perception of the nature of morality is closely related to notions of acceptable social behaviour involving conformity to a particular code of conduct and obedience to authority, rather than to the encouragement of rational moral development which is an aim of liberal education. Although the influence of Christianity on the political development of democratic institutions in the past is commended (Tonypandy, HL, 498:646), the use of contemporary examples of moral protest and political action is criticised and there are frequent expressions of opposition to the secularisation and politicisation of school worship (Cox, HL, 496:1345; London, HL, 496:1346).

The high profile given to moral behaviour can be seen as an indication of the alarm felt by many in response to contemporary changes in social behaviour. This has led to forceful expressions of anxiety about the danger of sliding into paganism and

anarchy (Jakobovits, HL, 496:419) and to demands for a stronger sense of morality. This is no new concern: throughout earlier debates the moral influence provided by religion was frequently cited in support of its continued provision in schools (Drakley, 1967; Luckman, 1968; Brimer, 1972; Kay, 1984). This refrain has more recently been strongly argued by Burn and Hart (1988), who urge a return to God-given moral absolutes in order to counteract the contemporary crisis in personal morality and responsibility. A more moderate position is taken by other educationalists and religious leaders who argue rather for the encouragement of appropriate insights, values and attitudes through the provision of shared school worship (Webster, 1990; Erricker, nd; Islamic Academy, 1993). As part of its influence, it is felt that worship provides an opportunity for the creation and development of a spirit of tolerance and community, showing respect for differences of conviction whilst retaining loyalty to one's own position (Adie, 1990). One reason then for the continued level of general support for school worship may be the hope that it will reinforce commitment to an agreed common standard of moral behaviour, based on religious teaching and authority, which will serve a vital function through its contribution to meeting society's need for cohesion and unity (Hooper, HL, 499:441).

Such a demand fails to recognise that although there is an integral relationship between ethics and religion, the former exists as an independent process. It also overlooks the distinction between (i) moral principles, such as freedom and justice, (ii) codes of moral behaviour, which are culturally acquired and (iii) their application to particular issues. Common agreement on what constitutes acceptable standards of behaviour is not always achievable. Because social rules are culturally based, they can be expected to differ between groups, and arguments in favour of shared standards and values fail to indicate whether these are the values which are commonly practised throughout society or whether they are those which are advanced as principles and ideals. A further element in moral decision-making is, of course, the question of individual willingness to engage in the associated course of action: it

seems clear that there is an expectation in this line of argument that attachment to a religion with its specific moral and ethical code will provide the necessary incentive and authority for the young. However, whilst moral values, attitudes and insights may be encouraged during collective worship, by itself this offers no justification for its compulsory provision, since the same values can be explored in secular assemblies. To use religious worship as a means of moral control is to regard it as instrumental (Thatcher, 1997): as a justification for compulsory collective worship in schools this is invalid.

1.4.7   Summary of the arguments in support of collective worship

The case for the provision of collective worship has long been challenged but those who support its presence in schools believe that Britain is a Christian country which has a responsibility, through its system of education, to transmit its traditions and practices to succeeding generations. They argue that religion provides the necessary framework of moral authority required by society and that collective worship has the support of parents and the general public. Religious faith is a solace in times of individual need and worship is a natural instinct: schools have a responsibility therefore to nurture this dimension of the 'whole child' as part of the wider programme of religious education.

Many of these arguments, which thread their way also through the data gathered during the research investigation and reported in chapters 3 and 4, are personal responses to deep social issues and raise questions relating to concerns about morality, autonomy and responsibility, of the right of the state to intervene in the transmission of religion to future generations, and the right of the child to determine for itself the nature of its needs in respect of the good life. These are core issues which will be examined in the concluding chapters of this study.

1.5   THE ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION TO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

In this section, the arguments against collective worship are examined. Inevitably, some arguments stand on their own, while others are refutations of the claims already discussed above: some categories are therefore common to both sides of the debate.

1.5.1   Britain is a secular and pluralist society

As has been illustrated earlier, the practice of daily worship in schools during the past century has occurred in the context of a declining membership of the Christian churches and an increasing spread of disinterest in a religious approach to life. Opponents of school worship interpret this as an indication of a lack of interest and commitment by the general population, and advance this as a reason for the abolition of worship (Sefton, HL, 496:426). The claim that collective worship enjoys public support may be more superficial than is claimed and, lacking corroborative evidence, can perhaps be ascribed to no more than reluctance to break a long tradition (Webster, 1990). Certainly the passage of the relevant sections of the Education Reform Bill through the House of Commons aroused neither interest nor hostility from Members or from the population at large. This apparent apathy is reflected in the paucity of public responses to the religious provisions of the Bill: out of 20,000 letters received by the Minister for Education, only 50 made any reference to these clauses (Rumbold, written response, House of Commons, 1988, vol.125, col. 617). This may be indicative of '... *the prevalence of a sort of unreflective acceptance of an institutionalised status quo'* (Beattie, 1992). Alternatively, such a minimal response may suggest a measure of broad satisfaction with the proposals, a general lack of awareness of the religious clauses, or a ranking of parental concerns, indicating only that the religious dimension is regarded as a matter of less importance than vocational examination subjects. Disinterest cannot be interpreted as a sign of

hostility to the proposals, and it has been shown above that there is a measure of private belief in the Christian tradition whose rituals continue to provide a framework for the main episodes of public and personal life. It may be necessary therefore to recognise that there is still a measure of religious feeling amongst individuals who, although maintaining scant connection with its institutional organisations, continue to harbour attitudes which are at least agnostic rather than atheistic, although beliefs may be unorthodox, even amongst congregations (Astley, 1992; Davie, 1994). Harrison (1983) found that although 5% of regular churchgoers claimed that God was unimportant in their lives, conversely 30% of non-attenders found God important, while Heimbrock (1990) and Fox (1996) describe secularisation as a myth, arguing that there is clear evidence of a common or folk religion which takes many forms in the contemporary search for a spiritual dimension to life.

However, evidence that public interest clearly does not extend to active membership of the religious communities is manipulated to support each side of the argument. Whereas opponents regard adult absenteeism as a reason for the abolition of school worship, supporters use it as an argument in favour of its continued presence, in order to provide an experience for young people which is no longer given by the home or faith community (St.John of Fawsley, HL, 492:1188; Pollard, 1995). This argument is rejected, however, on the grounds that the religious or non-religious upbringing of children is the responsibility of parents, not of the state; and France and the United States of America are identified as examples of democratic countries where this approach is adopted (Houghton, 1988, HL, 498: 645; Sefton, 1988, HL, 498:652; Thornley, 1989). In the United States, the First Amendment of the Constitution draws a strict distinction between the church and the state that is interpreted to forbid any organised form of prayer or worship in schools. However, it is argued that more than half of the public would favour its inclusion on the grounds that it would improve student behaviour (Kolstad, McCracken and Briggs, 1998), although this justification might be rejected on the grounds of its instrumentality, as

discussed earlier. Compulsory religious education in schools is against international trends (Alexander, 1997) and comparable figures for active religious membership show that numbers for Britain are much lower than those for other western European countries where state education is strictly secular (Brierley, 1991).

Not everybody would accept the claim that Britain is now a secular society, however. Although practising membership of the Christian churches may be generally in decline, the non-Christian religious traditions (with the exception of Judaism) are showing a steady increase in membership and now number over a million adult adherents. Increasingly there is a third description of society which claims that it is neither Christian nor secular but that it is pluralist. *'We are no longer a predominantly Christian nation and our schools reflect the multi-faith nature of Britain'* (Earl of Arran, HL, 493:1486).

During the past twenty-five years the numbers of Muslims and Sikhs resident in Britain have tripled and those of Hindus have nearly doubled, although the figures for Judaism have steadily decreased over the same period (Social Trends, 1999). 'Active adult membership' of religions other than Christianity now totals 1.29 million, although no information is provided to show on what basis this figure is calculated (Social Trends, 1999). A table providing details of membership is given in Appendix 3.

However, although the presence of children from non-Christian traditions in schools is sometimes advanced as a reason for the abolition of school worship, this response is not supported by their faith communities. Parents from these traditions are broadly in favour of the provision of religious worship in schools, subject to certain conditions: withdrawal is regarded as divisive (Mabud, 1992), and would only be requested as a last resort (Halstead, 1992).

1.5.2 Schools face insurmountable difficulties in the implementation of daily acts of collective worship

The declining levels of religious commitment in society have resulted in increasing difficulties in the implementation of daily worship. Schools encounter problems not only in finding adequate space and time but also, and more importantly, in recruiting sufficient numbers of teachers who are prepared to take on the leadership of worship (Orchard, 1993). The greater flexibility of group size and time provided by legislation does little to solve the difficulties of larger schools, where accommodation problems could necessitate up to 200 acts of worship each week (Shepherd, 1995), a figure which appears to be based notionally on daily acts of tutor group worship throughout a school. Suggestions that local clergy could be used to replace reluctant teachers are clearly unworkable in such situations. In addition, pupils often display a measure of resentment against conventional society (Houghton, 496:424) and regard worship as *'over-directive and over-didactive'* (Walker, 1990). Francis (1990) reports a consistent decline in attitudes towards Christianity during the years of adolescence, noting that *'many more secondary pupils [47%] feel negatively about the place of religion in school than feel positively towards it [21%]'* (p.8) and Gibson (1995) reports a steady deterioration in attitudes to prayer during adolescence. Consequently, there is a recognition that its enforcement may prove to be counter-productive, alienating both pupils and teachers and cheapening the concept of commitment (Goodman, HL, 496:430; Wilkins, 1989; Walker, 1990; Cole, 1990; Shepherd, 1995).

The presence in schools of representatives of a wide range of religious traditions as well as many pupils with no commitment poses an additional dilemma when the question of an appropriate content for school worship in a pluralist community is discussed. Opponents of collective worship use this difficulty to argue that its existence in schools is inappropriate and potentially divisive (Goodman, 1988,

HL, 496:430), and the presence of pupils of non-Christian faiths, as well as those of no faith, results in a broad level of dissent which renders worship inoperable (Wilkins, 1989). In schools themselves, the pluralist situation has been met by widely differing responses. In some, the argument is made that the increasing presence of children from non-Christian religious traditions is a reason for abandoning daily worship in the common school. As discussed above this is not a policy supported by Muslim organisations, for example, (Halstead and Khan Cheema, 1987; Webster, 1990) and in some schools the situation gives rise to a heightened valuation of its importance in encouraging a sense of tolerance, community and co-operation (Morton, 1988, HL, 499:435; Hooper, 1988, HL, 498:661). What is valued in these circumstances, however, is the custom of assembling: in multi-faith situations, this rarely takes the form of an act of religious worship, particularly in secondary schools, as the empirical research data will show.

1.5.3 Worship cannot take place in the absence of belief

While an inclusivist perspective regards the activity of collective worship as a developmental process which provides a basis for future choice, supporters of an exclusivist approach to religious practice claim that worship can only be offered by and on behalf of committed believers, who must necessarily be of an age to make such a decision. Worship is an adult activity which young children cannot comprehend (Attfield, 1974) and to require it of pupils before they have the capacity to understand its message is a form of indoctrination (Houghton, HL, 496:424). Consequently, because most pupils in state schools cannot be presumed to possess the necessary faith and commitment, their participation is inappropriate (Cole, 1990). Although Hull (1975) argues strongly that worship in the community school may appropriately build on innate human capacities in order to bring children to the threshold of worship, he also emphasises that this is only fully possible within a community of committed believers, a position which is shared by various groups of

Christians (Wilkins, 1989; Association of Christian Teachers, 1994). Essentially religious faith is a private matter (Cole, 1974) and worship is a private act (Harte, 1991). Pupils from non-religious homes and those who have no personal belief cannot worship: its compulsory requirement in schools is seen to threaten individual integrity and to compromise religious truth (Webster, 1990). Consequently, *'true worship'* is impossible in many schools (Association of Christian Teachers, 1994) and Section 7 of the Education Act which covers school worship is deeply flawed (Hull, 1995).

Such arguments are based on claims which can be challenged, however. To insist that worship is dependent on belief, maturity and understanding raises questions about its nature, content and extent, and ignores the position of learners of any age. Adult worshippers do not always give unqualified assent to the credal statements of their denominations or groups, nor is faith always constant over time. Commitment to a religious organisation is not necessarily dependent on belief, and indeed some religious groups and traditions emphasise praxis rather than personal faith. To withhold opportunities for worship from young people on the basis of their presumed lack of belief is to make a judgment against them for which there is no sound evidence nor is it one which is used against adults. A distinction must be recognised, however, between the provision of voluntary opportunities for worship and the compulsory requirements for collective worship.

1.5.4 Education and worship are incompatible

Central to the argument in opposition to school worship is the continuing claim that the processes of education and of worship are incompatible. Increasingly, educational philosophy has stressed rational and critical objectivity as the preferred approach to the study of all subject areas. *'The notion that the pupil should develop critical reflective judgment is at the heart of the liberal conception of education'* (McLaughlin, 1992, p. 107). Hirst (1974b) describes the idea of Christian education

in contemporary secular society as *'a kind of nonsense'* (p.77), arguing that nurture in any faith has no place in the process of education, which is *'...clearly directed to the development of people who are rational, autonomous beings in every area of life'* (p.81). Opposition has been mounting steadily as religious educationists have pursued an objectivity in the classroom which cannot be maintained during the period of worship. The teacher is seen to have a duty to present *'...possible truth for exploration, not actual truth for commitment'* and is as responsible for pupils who are moving away from faith as for those who are journeying towards it (Attfield, 1974, p.175). Education seeks to examine belief and worship, and the emotions which both inspire. It cannot promote or encourage commitment nor can it seek to give religious nurture to the pupils in its care. *'Education is detached from its content and is enquiring and reflective'* argues Hull (1975). Worship, by contrast, is committed to the object of its devotion *'... and is passionate and adoring'* (p.62). It is a fundamentally different process from education and *'... in the history and literature of school assembly is understood as an explicit, direct and appropriate response to God who has the right to the total loyalty of the believer'* (Hull, 1975, p.34). Worship is a declaration, not an exploration (Cole, 1974, p.11), and is the antithesis of the entire philosophy underpinning contemporary education (Cole, 1990). For Christians, worship is a response to God's gift of salvation and serves no purpose other than itself (Thatcher, 1997).

These arguments permeate the current debate. Enquiry, choice, analysis and evaluation are integral to the pursuit of education; worship, by comparison, has no place for dissent on the part of either pupil or teacher (Walker, 1990). The elements involved in the act of worship encourage an *'... inappropriate interpretation of the concepts inherent in the search for autonomy and a liberal education'* (Thornley, 1989, p.15). Compulsory school worship should be abolished therefore as incompatible with liberal approaches and goals, and as an unnecessary feature of education in a democratic society (Sefton, HL, 496:426; 498:652). However, such

arguments overlook the presence in the education system of voluntary schools which also pursue a liberal approach to the curriculum but which operate from within a religious paradigm that submits all activities to the will of God. Believers do not see their faith as incompatible with autonomy, but would argue rather that they have made an autonomous commitment of their lives to God. In voluntary schools, therefore, it is clear that the practice of religious worship occurs alongside a liberal approach to education and it would appear that a liberal education is not incompatible with one which provides a nurture in religious faith, although it might make the transmission of belief more difficult.

It is important, however, to recognise the existence of different perceptions of the nature of worship. Where the term is taken most literally, as synonymous with adoration, the wider understanding of the practice as a family of activities is lost. Reflecting an ideal of religious commitment which few are ever able to achieve with any consistency, such specific expectations obscure the everyday experience of human worship and overlook the position of the ordinary person whose faith fluctuates and who comes to worship not only to give but to receive. This receptive dimension is largely ignored in the current emphasis on the worshipper's faith, but is one which featured sporadically in earlier decades (Richardson, 1972; Brimer, 1974) and has more recently been recognised by Webster (1990) who points to the belief that '...*it is the Holy Spirit who truly educates and that worship, like poetry or music, is felt before it is understood*' (p.153), as well as by Halstead and Khan Cheema (1987) who suggest that school worship may provide an opportunity for pupils to respond to God's power.

The aim and function of education is also a concept which does not go unchallenged and the dominance of the liberal view is currently being contested (Winch, 1996), while the application of analysis and objectivity to religious faith is not acceptable to all communities. The Muslim tradition, for example, supports the

provision of nurture for all pupils and is unhappy with approaches which present faith in a manner which is either critical or neutral. Any form of teaching which leads children from religious homes to question the faith of their communities is unacceptable and schools should provide an ethos which supports the commitment of these pupils (Halstead and Khan Cheema, 1987; Halstead, 1992). Similarly, many practising Christians, whilst accepting that doubt cannot be excluded, argue that confusion should not be introduced by the school (Souper and Kay, 1983). For many pupils, however, doubt arises from their membership of a secular and pluralist society in which they encounter a broad range of religious and non-religious belief systems. In seeking to address this circumstance, schools must inevitably examine elements of assent and dissent. Indeed, it is argued that the greatest threat to faith may not be critical analysis but the attractions of materialism and consumerism: '... *dogmatic secularism is so widespread that children growing up in the West are in danger of being conditioned into it'* (Watson, 1988, p.106).

The maintenance of home-school consistency for pupils from worshipping communities is questioned by some groups, however, on the grounds that in certain circumstances children's religious development may be restricted to that of their family backgrounds if continuity is implemented in a narrow sense. This would be in opposition to education's aims of autonomy and freedom, a task which it sets out to achieve by liberating pupils from indoctrinatory and restricting practices (Watson, 1988).

1.5.5 Summary of the arguments against collective worship

Opposition to the provision of collective worship is based on claims that Britain is a country which is both secular and pluralist, and that evidence of the steady decline in religious commitment and practice amongst the general population signifies a lack of support for worship in schools. The widening gulf between society

and religion, and the corresponding absence of belief, constitutes an obstacle which schools find increasingly difficult to overcome. Schooling is predicated on a liberal approach to education, the main aims of which are the development of critical rationality and autonomy. The act of religious worship, by contrast, involves concepts of adoration, trust and commitment: its development is not the responsibility of the common school, therefore, but of the family and faith community. Like the claims of the supporters of collective worship, these arguments are similarly grounded in shared societal attitudes. In particular, they reflect the current emphasis on autonomy and critical rationality and the privatisation of religion which is characteristic of contemporary western society (Sacks, 1992; Bounds, 1997), and which is the subject of the philosophical analysis of chapter 6.

In addition to these arguments, which have a long history, the everyday issues which face schools are also the subject of a continuing public debate in which responses to current legislation are aired and alternative solutions to the provision of religious worship in a pluralist society are advocated. It is this aspect of the debate which has been most vocal since the publication of the Education Act of 1988, as schools seek to come to terms with its demands for worship which is 'wholly or mainly broadly Christian'. In the following sections I outline the responses made to this demand together with the subsequent arguments which surround various approaches to actual provision, as a structural precursor to the examination of schools' practice which is the focus of the research data reported in chapters 3 and 4.

1.6 RESPONSES TO THE LEGISLATION OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1988

As we have seen, the government's demand (Education Act, 1988) for the reinforcement of collective worship was backed by an insistence that, for the majority of pupils, it would be broadly Christian in its nature. Although welcomed by some,

this requirement introduced another source of dissent which argues that the Reform Act's dual insistence on a form of worship which is Christian as well as one in which most pupils can participate not only places intolerable demands on both teachers and pupils but is also an incompatible one, since the reality of the school situation is that although it is claimed that most schools contain practising Christians (Wilkins, 1989), the majority of those present cannot be described as Christian and therefore cannot offer Christian worship (Association of Christian Teachers, 1994). On the other hand, some argue that full Christian worship is not what is demanded: the task of the school is to provide an introduction to, and experience of, Christian worship as a preparation for later decision-making. If belief is a condition for worship, not even the children of practising Christians can be assumed to be committed members of the faith: the solution therefore may be the adoption of a mixed approach which would allow for the participation of as many pupils as possible (Copley, 1989). However, this results in a form of worship which is so broad that it fails to reflect *'real worship'* as experienced from the faith position (Attfield, 1991, p. 140).

Muslim response to the legislation has been similarly mixed. Having been largely content with the previously non-specific requirements of the 1944 Act and with the arrangements made by schools which allowed their children to remain part of the assembly without requiring any compromise of faith, the Muslim community claims that the renewed emphasis on the primacy of Christianity has undone much of the careful work and goodwill previously engendered. The legislation is seen by some to be an attempt to drive a wedge between Muslims and their membership of British society, whose steadfast disregard of the Islamic contribution to the nation's moral fabric is further evidence of this group's marginalisation (Halstead, 1992). Any introduction of an approach which included references to specifically Christian doctrines would be wholly unacceptable to Muslims (Sonyel, 1988; Sarwar, 1988; Halstead, 1992) and requests for determinations are an indication of their unwillingness to accept the imposition of Christian worship, the centrality of which

relegates minority faiths to a secondary position (Mabud, 1992), and is feared by some as indoctrinatory. Although legislation already makes allowance, where a determination is granted, for worship which is distinctive of a particular faith, Muslims argue that this should become a statutory arrangement without the need for recourse to the local standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE) where the Church of England, as one 'house', has an equal power of veto with other representative groups (Mabud, 1992). However, although the picture is unclear, predictions of increasing numbers of requests for determinations on the part of schools, which would lead to greater division and would conflict with the governmental aim of social unity and cohesion (Hull, 1995), seem not to have been fulfilled. Analyses of SACRE reports indicate that 272 schools were granted determinations between 1988-1992 (National Curriculum Council, 1993) and the most recent report notes 144 current determinations (62 from one local education authority), plus 90 applications, 78 of which were requests for the renewal of a determination previously granted. The recent re-organisation of some LEAs has obfuscated the picture to some extent, however (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000).

1.7 APPROACHES TO THE PROVISION OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Even before the legislation of the Education Reform Act (1988) stressed the position of Christianity as the main religious tradition of the country, changing circumstances had led schools to develop different forms of provision. These arrangements continue to feature in the present debate as possible solutions to the quandary in which some schools find themselves. The most common forms of provision which are suggested are (i) mono-faith worship, in which pupils meet for an act which is distinctive of one tradition; (ii) multi-faith worship, in which material from the major religions is incorporated; (iii) acts which are broadly spiritual in their

emphasis, and (iv) secular assemblies: this model would not be included in any common usage of the term 'worship' but is nevertheless an approach which is advocated by some groups as well as practised in many schools. None meets with unanimous support, but each can be seen to be a response to the perceived needs of pupils and of society.

1.7.1 Mono-faith worship

Collective worship which reflects the Christian tradition is the approach adopted in the majority of schools and, as the data in chapters 3 and 4.1 demonstrate, is to be found predominantly in the primary and voluntary sectors. Where schools have a sufficiently large number of pupils from non-Christian traditions, there is a clear need for alternative provision however.

Actual circumstances mean that while some schools contain small numbers of pupils from non-Christian traditions, in other institutions a majority of students may, between them, represent one or several different faiths. In these circumstances, neither shared worship nor pupil withdrawal is appropriate, but the provision of parallel forms of mono-faith worship meets with little support. Some objectors argue that such an approach would be divisive for the school and the local community (Goodman, HL, 496:430; Horne, 1990), possibly adding to racial tension. The fear is also expressed that such an arrangement might result in the provision of inappropriate and restrictive priestly instruction (Hull, 1988) and forms of unrecognised denominational bias in, for example, Islamic worship (Horne, 1990; Küçükcan, 1998). The adoption of this approach would undermine a school's opportunities for flexible integration, and is in opposition to the goal of mutual understanding and co-operation (Hull, 1988). The separation of pupils for the purposes of worship is a form of 'spiritual apartheid' which leads along the road to the ghetto (Hull, 1990b, p. 123). This is an emotive overstatement of the position, however: pupils are separated for a

variety of purposes, and claims such as these fail to recognise that there are aspects of educational provision where legitimate distinctions are accepted, as for example in respect of gender differences, where there has been a growing move towards separate provision for certain subject areas, e.g. mathematics, or even for the entire curriculum in some secondary schools, although this is uncommon. The availability of parallel forms of worship may demonstrate respect for religious and racial differences, meeting the needs of individuals and communities. Claims that separate provision is divisive have rarely been challenged, but in certain circumstances, this approach may make a positive contribution to the life of the school:

> *Differences of worship within a community need not divide a community; but they can do so, if, on the one hand, they are over-emphasised or, on the other hand, suppressed or ignored. Sometimes the maintenance of harmony within a multi-faith school will be best achieved by expression of the differences that exist through the provision of different forms of worship.*
>
> (Bishop of London, HL, 499: 432)

When this structure is adopted, it is important that the arrangements are implemented in a manner which involves all of the community, so that no group feels excluded and all are regarded as parallel and equivalent, with no hint of superiority or inferiority (Alves, 1989). Gibbons (1989) reminds us that there are precedents for the provision of parallel forms of worship, as in the arrangements made in some joint Roman Catholic/Anglican schools, but these have been accompanied by failure as well as by success (Chadwick, 1994).

Finally, while recognising that a narrow interpretation of the requirements of the Reform Act may lead to some groups of Muslims seeking withdrawal and separate provision, Halstead (1992) argues that where opportunities for combined

assembling occur, this would be their preferred choice, although they would nevertheless also like to see the provision of facilities for Islamic worship in schools. Sonyel (1988) articulates a wish expressed by Turkish Muslim pupils for occasional acts of separate Islamic worship, and also suggests that all pupils should sometimes attend Muslim celebrations of cultural and religious events.

1.7.2 Multi-faith worship

This is another proposed solution to the problem of a religiously diverse pupil population and is one which also attracts strong support as well as equally strong opposition. Hull (1990b) claims that '... *there is no other acceptable policy'* (p.125) which could offer opportunities for a '...*rich comprehensiveness'* (Adie, 1990, p.522). This approach would enable pupils to share common understandings and values, and could make a powerful contribution to unity within the school and its surrounding community. For this to be truly effective, however, there is a need for inter-faith dialogue between the school and local groups (National Society, 1991), which could produce worship which is more accessible and meaningful to pupils from different ethnic backgrounds (Sonyel, 1988). The outcome might then be a deepening of commitment, rather than its disruption. This, it is argued, would surely be preferable to ' ... *the negative compromise of reducing everything to the trivial so that no one can object'* (Adie, 1990, p.522).

While recognising the practical value of this approach in providing a wide variety of experiences for pupils, some groups are nevertheless concerned that, in emphasising the common ground between traditions, a misleading impression is given. By ignoring important distinctions and by the implication that prayer can be offered interchangeably to the divine figures of different religions, children may acquire a false understanding of the nature of religious commitment (Free Church Federal Council, 1990) and could be encouraged to commit sin of a most serious

nature (Mead, 1989). These arguments show little understanding of school practice, where prayer is more likely to be omitted altogether rather than offered to diverse deities. Webster (1990) remarks that many headteachers, fearing controversy and error, prefer to maintain existing practice until the religious traditions have themselves developed acceptable approaches to shared worship, but currently there is little encouragement from the major faiths. As the evidence from the data demonstrates, any form of collective worship in schools with large numbers of pupils from different faith traditions is rare.

The strongest objections to multi-faith worship come from those who seek to protect the integrity of their own faith community's concept of worship from dilution and trivialisation. The fear of pollution was one of the major features influencing the parliamentary demand for worship which is Christian, where it was argued that multi-faith worship is meaningless, dangerous and destructive. Initiatives of this nature in schools result '... *in a reduction of worship to the lowest common denominator of a celebration of shared values'* (Cox, HL, 496:1345). This disadvantages all forms of divine worship and produces a '...*bland, flavourless experience which skirts the fundamentals of the faith'* (Walker, 1990, p.36). In contrast, however, it is argued that, if the emphasis is placed on reverence, it is possible to identify a concept of inclusive and multi-faceted worship as the common and regular experience of religious practice:

> *If our view of worship is of multiple variety, it is certainly possible for people to share in worship, in the sense of reverence, while differing in their theological styles. And I need hardly say this is a situation which, far from being novel, is one in which I find myself virtually every Sunday, not least when I have to sing the hymns.*
>
> (Ramsey, 1976, p.145)

1.7.3 Broadly spiritual assemblies

In the search for meaningful acts of worship in which entire school communities can participate, it is argued that an emphasis on the spiritual dimension of human life might be a valuable approach. Definitions of this term are elusive however: for some, it refers to an inner subjectivity, for others it is linked with sensitivity to aesthetic experience, or with relationships and responsibility in community. These experiences are perceived to be founded on common elements of shared human nature. Fearing a loss of spirituality under the present legislation, Hull argues that *'acts of collective spirituality'* should replace school worship, emphasising *'community through participation in the lives of others ... in solidarity with others'* (1995, p. 131-2). Perhaps then the solution to the whole problem of worship in schools is that the time should be used to provide acts which explore the common ground between pupils, with an emphasis on similarities and paying minimum attention to differences (Alves, 1989; Halstead, 1992; Mabud, 1992). This is, of course, what some groups would criticise as a diminution and devaluation of worship and faith. The content of such gatherings is unclear: for some, the transmission of morals and values would be central (Thurlow, HL, 496:1348). These would include concepts of duty, truth and goodness. Questions of ultimate concern would be explored, and there could be an honest recognition of the oscillation which can occur between faith and doubt (Webster, 1990; Gearon, 1997) although such a feature would not be acceptable to those groups of believers who insist that their children should not be encouraged to criticise the faith to which their families belong. Nevertheless, this approach would have the advantage of causing least division and offence; it could provide a formative and affirming experience for pupils which would focus on the values of the school and the promotion of work, and serve as a celebration of shared principles and beliefs (Association of Christian Teachers, 1994; British Humanist Association, nd). As such it would meet the requests of non-

Christian religious traditions for the provision of acts which are accessible and meaningful to all pupils (Sonyel, 1988; Halstead, 1992).

The place of religion in such an approach is unclear. Some argue in favour of a mixed provision, in which the pattern of acts varies to include religious and non-religious materials and emphases. Others argue for a stress on the spiritual dimension (Thornley, 1989; Horne, 1990), but it is difficult to see how this could be implemented without reference to the world's religions, and presumably what is being suggested here is an act of reflection which excludes the directional elements of hymns and prayers. This would overcome the problem of identifying a divine focus, but could be opposed on the grounds that such provision would not constitute an act of worship (Webster, 1990). Finally, there are some who argue for an assembly which omits any reference to religion, which although important is nevertheless the responsibility of the faith community (Walker, 1990).

1.7.4   Secular assemblies

The notion of a religionless and secular assembly is one which is rarely articulated with any clarity: nevertheless it is an approach which is common practice especially in the secondary sector. However, schools find themselves in a situation in which the provision of a non-religious assembly is made almost by default, because this is seen to be the only way in which the tradition of assembling can be maintained, in the face of disinterested pupils and unwilling teachers, many of whom find the government's requirements for school worship unacceptable (National Association of Head Teachers, 1994). Nevertheless, school assemblies are seen to be important and there are groups who, in spite of their opposition to collective worship, are anxious that its abolition should not lead to their demise (Cole, 1988; Association of Teachers and Lecturers, 1995) and who support the provision of opportunities for the affirmation of shared values without any reference to religion (British Humanist

Association, n.d.; Walker, 1990). Such suggestions have met with considerable opposition. The argument is made that secularism is as controversial as any belief system, and is an adult perspective which should not be imposed on the young as part of their schooling (Association of Christian Teachers, 1994). The claim that community schools are secular institutions is rejected by the National Society (1991) which argues that this notion is challenged by the Education Reform Act in its emphasis that the background of pupils, not the status of the school, is the deciding factor in all religious education. If pupil background is to be the major determinant, then the customary celebration of Easter, Christmas, baptism and marriage may indicate a need to cover these aspects of Christianity in the pattern of worship for the common school (National Society, 1991). Furthermore, an emphasis on social, moral and political issues during assembly, together with the espousal of reason, overlooks the affective and unconscious dimensions of human existence; and the relegation of religion to the private arena denies the spiritual basis to human personality (Webster, 1990).

1.8   CONCLUSION: A NEW APPROACH?

In addition to the arguments which focus on the presence and manner of collective worship in schools, objections are made both to the compulsory nature of its provision, on the grounds that worship by its nature is necessarily a voluntary act, and to the insistence that all pupils meet for worship on every day which, it is argued, exceeds adult practice. Consequently, over the years there have been calls for worship to be made voluntary (Cockin, 1968; Fletcher, 1969; Wilkes, 1970; Hull, 1975) although it is not always clear whether this refers to provision or attendance. The Church of England Board of Education and the British Council of Churches have added their weight to requests for changes in the law, although the government has consistently rejected these appeals (Alves, 1989). An examination of OFSTED

inspection reports has revealed that there is no evidence that daily provision necessarily results in better practice, and although schools have made more effort to conform to the legal requirements since the Education Reform Act, there has also been a corresponding rise in unfavourable reports (Orchard, 1993). Many supporters of school worship feel therefore that the provision of fewer acts of a higher quality might give a better sense of faith than ritualised daily repetition (Adie, 1990). Such an arrangement is common practice in schools in Scotland, where weekly observance is the minimum requirement in primary schools, and monthly observance in secondary institutions (Circular 6/91 in Gray, 1999).

Recognising that there is value in the assembling of the school community on a regular basis, various revisions to the statutory requirements are sought. One suggestion is that collective worship should become an optional provision, to encourage spiritual growth and allow for personal and individual response (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, 1995). Alternatively, it is suggested that the legal requirements should set a minimum number of acts of worship for each week, of which at least one should feature Christianity (Association of Christian Teachers, 1994). This group has also advocated the introduction of legislation which would identify topics to be covered and criteria for assessment. Collective gatherings of this nature could be supplemented by voluntary acts of worship provided by teacher representatives of the faith groups, or approved visitors. The headteacher and governors would be responsible for the arrangements which could vary according to the circumstances of the school. This would allow schools to provide acts of worship when *'genuinely appropriate'* (Association of Christian Teachers, p.3). Such a proposal could lead to the demise of collective worship in many schools and to much controversy in others, where what is thought appropriate is likely to be a matter of opinion and may be hotly disputed. Most recently, following a series of consultations and conferences held throughout 1997 under the auspices of the Religious Education

Council of England and Wales, the National Association of SACREs and the Inter-Faith Network, a proposal was agreed that advocated a new approach:

> *... which would retain a requirement for regular gatherings with a moral and spiritual dimension, but with the withdrawal of the present requirement for collective worship, and permitting a more flexible approach to the content of these gatherings.*
>
> (Culham College Institute, 1998, p. 20)

This did not receive the unanimous support of the bodies represented, however, and the government has taken no step towards changing the present legal requirements.

Despite the long controversy which has surrounded the presence of the act of collective worship in schools, there has been little examination of the manner in which the legal requirements are implemented or of the responses of the pupils and teachers who are involved in its provision. These are the aspects which I propose to examine in the central body of this study and I begin, in the next chapter, with an account of the research methodology which was adopted in order to build a broad picture of provision in England and Wales and to gather insights into the attitudes and opinions of its major participants.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter, which is presented in two sections, describes the approach adopted only to the collection of the empirical data which inform the subsequent philosophical thesis of this research. The first section is an account of the theoretical framework to the data collection, although it also incorporates some references to the circumstances of its implementation. It begins with a brief examination of the major paradigms of educational and social research and then discusses the reasons why a multi-method approach, incorporating questionnaire, observation and interview, was chosen. The process of data collection and the order in which each element was carried out is described next, and this is followed by a review of each of the methods selected, accompanied by a consideration of their advantages and disadvantages. The approach adopted to the analysis of data concludes the first section. The second section gives a more detailed account of the actual collection of data (i) by questionnaire (ii) observation and (iii) interview. The empirical data is viewed instrumentally as a foundation for the concluding philosophical analysis of the key issues which underpin the provision of collective worship in schools. This was completed after the preliminary data was analysed, and used the major findings as the basis for the further wide reading on which the final chapters are based.

It was at the point of writing, however, that I confronted an unforeseen dilemma in preparing this chapter. Starting from a position where writing is personally distanced, the encounter, through reading, with advice to write in the first person and to personalise accounts (Wolcott, 1990; Burgess, 1984; Coffey, 1999) required a re-examination of my customary approach to writing, at least with respect

to the account which follows. Equally important, however, is the need to recognise the 'practical, intellectual and emotional' processes which are also involved in the collection of data from the social world (Coffey, 1999, p.1) whilst maintaining an investigative objectivity. The chapter which follows seeks, therefore, to tread a path between these approaches to writing.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Educational and social research share much in common and it is clear that there is a range of different approaches available by which each can be pursued (May, 1993; Cohen and Manion, 1994; Robson, 1994). In addition, there are '... *not only different perspectives on a given phenomenon, but also alternative methods of gathering information and of analysing the resultant data'* (May, 1993, p.3). The positivist view adopts an objective, disengaged and impartial approach which is particularly evident in scientific investigations. Often proceeding from an initial hypothesis, it shares with empiricism the belief that factual information can be acquired in isolation from human interpretation (May, 1993; Robson, 1994) and sets out to gather this information by the use of quantitative data. The interpretive approach argues that, since the social world is created and interpreted by individuals who seek constantly to make sense of their experiences, it can best be understood through an investigation into people's actions and their subjective accounts (Burgess, 1985; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989; May, 1993; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It adopts a qualitative approach to data collection and attempts to see the social world from the perspective of its participants. Consequently, this method does not begin with a preliminary hypothesis. Although there is a small number of questions around which its investigation focuses, others are generated by the data itself and a range of complementary methodologies may be incorporated as appropriate. Elements of both approaches were selected as being most appropriate to this study.

Each paradigm has its preferred approach to the collection of data and, despite the availability of countless texts on the mechanics of undertaking research, no method is without its critics and no universal set of procedures exists (Burgess, 1985). Nevertheless, guidance consistently advises that the research question should dictate the method adopted (Burgess, 1985; Robson, 1993; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), and some approaches suggest that the design of the study should '*be allowed to emerge during the research process*' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.33).

This study was, to some extent, an emergent process: although the broad aim was to investigate the contribution of collective worship to the personal development of pupils, the intended approach was to explore the phenomenon with an open mind and to allow the evidence to speak for itself. The study therefore adopts an approach to data collection which is broadly qualitative and interpretive although it combines a quantitative element in order to present an informed picture of schools' provision. As the data emerged, the direction of the study altered course in response to the key elements of its findings which were critical in the identification of the philosophical issues which are discussed in chapter 6. In this respect, the data which were gathered were active in creating the final design. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue: '*It is frequently only over the course of the research that one discovers what the research is really 'about', and it is not uncommon for it to turn out to be about something quite remote from the initial foreshadowed problems*' (p.175). Although I had anticipated that the spiritual and moral dimensions of personal development would constitute the main themes of the study, the analysis of the data led to a recognition that the issue of justification is central to the provision of collective worship and this, therefore, became the focus of the analysis of chapter 6.

Each element of the study was prone to influence from what had preceded it. With hindsight, it is evident that the literature review, the initial draft of which was completed during the early period of data collection, fed into the questions which

were raised during interviews and also sensitised the subsequent analysis of responses, to the extent that the report of teachers' interviews was re-written to free it from the constraining categories of the public debate. In addition, the process was iterative and features observed and information gained were sometimes used to identify further elements for more focused observation and questions for discussion. In this respect, the approach corresponds to some aspects of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), although this study also includes a quantitative dimension.

2.1.1 General approach to data collection

Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate the use of a variety of procedures and, in order to acquire a fuller understanding of the place and function of collective worship, data was gathered by means of a national questionnaire, observation in schools, and interviews with teachers and pupils. This multi-method or 'hybrid' approach (Robson, 1993) was adopted because it would provide a picture of provision which was both broad and dense. It would increase the amount of information available and the range of different perspectives would contribute to the reliability and validity of the data. Triangulation would be both methodological, therefore, as well as spatial, in its coverage of a wide geographical area (Cohen and Manion, 1994). In addition, because of the need to recognise, in all methods, the influence of a *social desirability response bias* (Robson, 1993, p.191) it was hoped that the multi-method approach would serve to identify the gap between respondents' words and actions. To some extent, observation would provide an internal check on the data gathered by interview in the same school, while the responses of pupils and of teachers could provide a further means of comparison for accuracy. This material could be contrasted with responses to the questionnaire, which would itself provide a framework of general practice for purposes of comparison with the schools which were visited. However, multiple data collection is costly and demanding: the mass of

material which is accumulated is difficult to analyse and investigations can lack depth and focus. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study the multi-method approach was able to provide information about provision, content, presentation and the attitudes of participants, without which the picture would have been incomplete.

2.1.2 Sequence of data collection

Each of these approaches to the collection of data proved to be very time-consuming and because of the need to adapt to school terms, as well as to the demands of my employment schedule, progress was fitful and occurred in several overlapping stages. However, as familiarity with the material developed and as confidence in approaching schools grew, a more structured framework emerged. In the first instance there was a gathering of material from random sources, often opportunistically, especially where observation was involved: this was an introductory stage, beginning in 1993, when I visited local schools for the purpose of observation and sometimes found that I was also engaged in conversations with headteachers. Later, I made contact with nearby secondary schools and took the opportunity to visit other institutions whose approach might be expected to be distinctive. This early period proved to be a time of refinement and sifting, as I established a mental map of the area under study by observation, discussion and reading. By the time I had completed the initial review of literature, a considerable amount of data had been accumulated but this was unbalanced and lacked structure. In the second phase therefore, the situation was re-examined and a more systematic approach was implemented. A preliminary version of the questionnaire, which is discussed below, was used to produce the final format which was distributed during the summer and autumn terms of 1996. Further observations and interviews with teachers and pupils were undertaken, mostly in schools in the Midlands, in order to address the initial imbalance which was weighted in favour of schools in the south west, and the final interviews were completed in December of that year.

Because I was engaged in full-time employment throughout the period of this research, opportunities for the collection of data were both curtailed and enhanced. Frequently I was able to observe acts of worship during visits to schools for the supervision of student teaching practices, always with prior permission from the head teacher. One advantage of this was that on some occasions I was able to gather data from the same school, usually on a weekly basis, over a period of time in order to build a picture of regular provision. However, because only primary and middle schools were involved, a gap remained to be filled by secondary institutions. Another advantage of my professional position was that I was able to make useful contacts, at conferences for example, and some invitations were the result of such meetings. Amongst the disadvantages were the restrictions on time and the conflict of competing demands. This meant, for example, that some of the journeys to the Midlands were made during university vacation periods when they happened to overlap with the school term, although this opportunity was also hampered during the summer by the annual pressure of external examinations in secondary schools, resulting in the temporary suspension of collective worship. I found that, although I could usually collect data by observation and interview on the same day, I could not maintain this approach whilst working on the production and distribution of the questionnaire. In order to concentrate my attention on its demands, this required me to set aside blocks of time, interposed with my teaching commitments. Only after I had concluded this work was I finally able to complete my school visits. A brief timetable showing the sequence of the main activities of data collection is included in Appendix 4.

2.1.3 Outline of intentions

Initially, I wanted to gather material to answer three broad questions:

(i)   What provision is made by schools for the act of collective worship?

(ii)   How do schools implement the act of collective worship and what is the nature of this experience?

(iii)   How is the provision viewed by teachers and by pupils?

In order, mainly, to address the first question, I chose to undertake a national survey involving a postal questionnaire. This would enable me to acquire quantitative data about provision and common practice in all types of schools in England and Wales, the area to which the legal regulations of the Education Act (1988) apply. Secondly, I decided to examine the manner in which the legal requirements are translated into experience, by means of personal observation of a range of acts of collective worship. This approach would offer further and more detailed information about the major features of schools' provision, such as content, atmosphere and environment, which a questionnaire could not elicit. Thirdly, recognising that neither of these techniques would provide insights into the attitudes and responses of the major participants involved in collective worship, I also chose to interview a sample of teachers and pupils in order to complete what I hoped would be a balanced picture. *'Each mode adds something essential to the ultimate findings'* (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.28). First, however, it was necessary to develop an ethics protocol.

2.1.4   Preparation of the ethics protocol

In developing a set of working principles, consideration was given to issues of consent, honesty and openness about the intentions of the research, and the need to avoid placing any pressure on respondents. The main concern, however, was with the question of confidentiality. I felt that, because the provision of the act of collective worship on a daily basis is a legal requirement, some schools which were not meeting these demands might feel insecure unless anonymity was promised.

Informed consent and right to withdraw

In making arrangements to visit schools, I always sought to make the purpose of the research clear to headteachers, explaining that my aim was neither to inspect nor to assess provision but to gather data about normal practice. Permission to make use of tape recording and to take notes was also requested when appropriate. Since the work was not of a sensitive nature in personal terms, the school's permission to interview pupils was deemed to be sufficient, and no contact was made with parents. The youngest pupils, i.e. those in infant departments, displayed no reluctance to talk to me. With older students, however, I felt some concern that they might be unwilling 'volunteers' since I was not always present at the selection process. These students, when withdrawn from their classes, were always offered the opportunity to remain silent if they wished.

Confidentiality and anonymity

This was the central feature of the protocol and the promise of confidentiality was given to all of those with whom contact was made, in order to protect the institutions from identification and to ensure that accurate data was acquired. In addition, I felt that both pupils and teachers needed to be confident that any remarks made to me would not be passed on to any other person in a way which might lead to their identification. All respondents were assured of anonymity, and in this study all schools and participants are protected by the use of pseudonyms: this was explained to all who were involved. A copy of the protocol can be found in Appendix 5.

2.1.5 Design and distribution of the questionnaire

May (1993) identifies four types of survey: factual, attitudinal, social-psychological, and explanatory. In choosing to use a questionnaire as one arm of my

research strategy, the main intention was the collection of factual information in a standardised form in order to provide a picture of provision in schools across both England and Wales. Recognising, however, the opportunity afforded by the survey to investigate attitudes and opinions, some questions relating to these dimensions were also included.

This approach was adopted because it would reach a wider sample: the basic information about the provision of collective worship which was required could be obtained in no other way. Surveys are probably the most common descriptive method in research in education by which existing conditions are investigated (Cohen and Manion, 1994), and have several benefits, although the efficiency in time and effort which Robson (1993) describes can surely apply only to the experienced researcher. Self-completed questionnaires have the advantage of anonymity: they provide an opportunity for considered responses and may demonstrate less bias (May, 1993). However, it is not possible to check on the honesty or seriousness of responses, and the data is necessarily superficial (Robson, 1993). Because questions must be straightforward and easy to complete, they are limited: no probing of responses can be made, nor is it possible to know how questions are interpreted. Furthermore, since postal questionnaires typically have a low response rate, it is difficult to assess respondent bias (May, 1993). In addition, I suggest that the design of a questionnaire may incorporate the researcher's bias, in the selection and wording of questions as well as in their placement, which can influence responses. However, for the purposes of this study, I estimated that the incorporation of data collection by observation and interview would serve to balance and supplement some of the limitations of the questionnaire, contributing to the overall validity and reliability of the study.

In its design, I recognised that attention needed to be given to questions of content, sample and return rate (Robson, 1993).

Content   Initially a pilot questionnaire was distributed to post-graduate students during periods of teaching practice, and a second version was completed by teachers attending conferences at the university, whom I judged to be a sufficiently random sample to provide useful information on the provision of worship in their schools as well as on their personal responses to this activity. Although information derived from these pilot versions was incorporated into the final structure, in retrospect I reacted more strongly to the content of the responses and was insufficiently evaluative of the design features. However a form was designed which, in order to encourage a good response rate, would not add too much to the existing pressures on teachers' time. Most replies, therefore, could be completed by ticks, single words or brief phrases but at appropriate points provision was made for optional comments if respondents wished to expand more fully. This provided an opportunity for teachers to air their views, to relieve the monotony of the factual grids, and to present additional and valuable information (Cohen and Manion, 1994). The final version was produced as a small booklet in order to encourage completion. A copy can be found in Appendix 6.

Sample   The sample of schools needed to be large enough to give a measure of validity and reliability to the investigation, but small enough to analyse, being but one element of the data. The financial cost was another consideration. Initially, I decided to distribute the questionnaire systematically to one school in every hundred throughout England and Wales, but on studying the appropriate statistics for schools and their pupil populations, I made an adjustment in respect of secondary schools. These are numerically fewer but each usually contains much larger pupil populations than are found in the primary sector. Consequently, I sent the questionnaire to one secondary school in every fifty. Because voluntary schools might be expected to place a particular emphasis on collective worship, a stratified approach to sampling was adopted which incorporated representative numbers of independent, special and grant-maintained (now foundation) schools.

Response   The third element which required attention was the encouragement of a satisfactory rate of response. Recognising that the likelihood of a high level of return from a random postal survey was unlikely (Robson, 1993), a covering letter was included which explained the purpose of the questionnaire and stressed the value of the response (May, 1993). Schools were asked to identify their returns simply to protect them from a second request: this was explained in the covering letter and again confidentiality was stressed. Initially, I decided to address the questionnaire to the teacher responsible for religious education in each school, feeling that this might be an appropriate source of information, although I realised that this could produce a less impartial response. In practice, as the data subsequently revealed, this was not the most appropriate course, since not all schools have an identified religious education specialist and furthermore only in the smallest schools is any class teacher likely to have access to the information required for the whole school. The second mailing therefore was addressed to the teacher with responsibility for collective worship and was, as explained below, usually a named person, although this approach was, of course, also open to problems of bias.

2.1.6 The process of observation

Because the information gathered from the questionnaires would only provide a distanced picture of collective worship, it seemed appropriate to visit a range of schools for the purpose of observation, which would enable me to gain a more immediate impression of provision and would also supply information that I could not hope to acquire by any other means. Directness, contrast and complementarity with other methods of data collection are amongst the advantages of this approach, which is also the least artificial (Robson, 1993). Nevertheless, the presence of an observer can influence the proceedings and it is never possible to know what might otherwise have occurred. May (1993) describes four possible roles: complete observer, complete participant, participant as observer, and observer as participant.

The latter role is usually adopted in the type of single-visit observations which I undertook and seemed most appropriate to my needs, since collective worship is a formal and regular ritual and most of the participants were themselves also onlookers. Although my presence may have sharpened the presentation, there was little evidence of this. I had made it clear that I was neither inspector nor judge, and that I was interested in common practice. Most leaders are accustomed to addressing an audience, and pupils took little or no notice of my presence at an activity where, especially in primary schools, visitors are common. Since I had previously worked in a wide range of schools, there was little need for initial theoretical orientation (May, 1993). It might be said that I knew all the hymns! This very familiarity needed to be recognised during the analysis stage, however, in order to *'maintain, and if necessary re-create, a sense of strangeness'* (Coffey, 1999, p. 22) so that fresh insights might be gained.

Access to schools in the first instance was by personal contact with members of the teaching profession in the course of my employment or by recommendation on the basis of teachers' local knowledge of pupil populations, incorporating an element of snowball sampling (Cohen and Manion, 1994). This was particularly helpful in the city where it enabled me to target a range of ethnic and cultural groups. In addition, I identified schools to visit which would give a more balanced sample: these included voluntary schools, a grammar school, and single-sex schools. Where I heard that provision was distinctive in any way, mindful of the phrase *'treasure your exceptions'* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.204), I also attempted to arrange a visit if this was possible. Realising that schools in the shire counties of the south-west region could not be regarded as representative and in order to overcome the problem of parochialism (Cohen and Manion, 1994), the range of visits was extended to primary and secondary schools in a large city in the Midlands. This was selected not only because of its size and personal accessibility, but also because of its range of communities, to provide the inner-city and multi-cultural perspective which my work

would otherwise have lacked. Most schools were contacted by telephone, as the most direct means of explaining my intentions and of making the necessary arrangements. Only one school refused access, on the grounds of pressure of work during the examination period.

In order to minimise any intrusion, I usually sat at the side and near the back of the assembly hall, adopting an unstructured approach to making notes. Although coded observation schedules have higher validity and reliability, I rejected this method because of its inflexibility and lack of complexity (Robson, 1993). Instead, a written record was made throughout the act of worship and copied as soon as possible after the visit. This approach was more discrete and enabled me to report unpredicted features without the need to move across structured schedule-pages. It allowed me to note key features, such as space, actors, events and sequence without any restriction (May, 1993; Robson, 1993). In addition to recording the content, the physical environment was described and a diagram of the space was drawn, with the positions of participants noted. All aspects of provision (e.g. notices and reprimands) together with observable pupil responses, both open and covert, were included. Notice was also taken of adult reactions where it was possible to detect these. Although I was aware of looking for key indicators, such as the inclusion of hymns or prayers, my attention was drawn also to other dimensions, such as teachers' exercise of discipline and the use of recorded music, and these led to more focused observation during later visits.

2.1.7 The interview process

The third strand to my approach was the use of interview, which I felt to be necessary to complete the picture I was building. This method allows the examination of opinions and attitudes in more depth and can provide information that would not be revealed in writing (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Emphases can be communicated in

speech which may be concealed in the written word; meanings can be clarified and details added. Amongst the disadvantages of interview are problems of bias and subjectivity, which can be present in both interviewee and interviewer with a resultant loss of reliability. Inevitably there can be a sense of distance between individuals and the respondent may feel uncomfortable and may withhold information (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Although I rarely experienced such a gulf, I was aware that some respondents had particular concerns that they were determined to express, sometimes with vehemence. The interviewer may likewise feel some unease, particularly if an unstructured approach is adopted. Spradley (1979) identifies four steps in the interview process: apprehension, exploration, co-operation, and participation, all of which were present in varying degrees on each occasion, although initial apprehension was probably always most significant for me. In seeking to develop a supportive relationship, however, it may be an advantage to be a female interviewer. May (1993) argues that women respondents are more likely to feel at ease, and bias is more likely to reveal itself. Male respondents are unlikely to feel constrained by a female interviewer however, since they customarily dominate any mixed gender conversation and maintain the interaction (Fishman, 1990). This may result in a free flow of information but, in this situation, I suggest that it may then be the female interviewer who is uncomfortable and who, consequently, may feel constrained from pursuing particular lines of enquiry. Perhaps the solution is for interviewers and respondents to be of the same gender: this would, however, probably provoke different tensions.

My interview schedule included both adults and children. The former were usually interviewed singly, but most of the pupils met for discussion in small groups. In all cases, it was important to take into consideration issues of age, race, gender and accent (May, 1994) as well as social class and religion but I felt that these were more pertinent when dealing with pupils. As an ex-teacher (a point I always communicated to adults) I seemed to be accepted by other teachers, while very young children

appeared to regard me as yet another classroom assistant. Most teenagers were able to respond to me as an adult who was interested in their opinions, but there was a small cluster of primary school children from one inner city school where gender, culture and ethnicity may have been prohibiting factors. To this I would add children's facility in the use of spoken language in a formal setting. These were also the only pupils who were interviewed individually, in order to fit in with the teacher's planned lesson, and it is impossible to know how much this approach influenced their responses. The advantage of group interviewing is the potential this method contains for the development of discussions. In addition to practical and organisational benefits, members of the group can be expected to challenge, clarify and extend each other's ideas (Cohen and Manion, 1994). This proved to be the case in my study, but was generally more effective in groups where pupils knew each other well. However, the two instances where students had been selected from across year groups were, coincidentally, also single sex schools and it is therefore difficult to assess to what extent interpersonal unfamiliarity, age differences or social class constrained the dynamics of one of these groups, though not the other. Gender differences with respect to conversational styles may have been most influential: the boys were more assertive in interrupting their peers, while some girls were hesitant to speak out in the presence of older and very articulate students. This was a feature which was characteristic of all groups except for the youngest children, where girls were more dominant. With younger children, a group size of between two and four pupils was most appropriate in encouraging conversation and allowing each child to take part. Although some of the older students were self-selected, most pupils were chosen by their teachers and were likely therefore to have been amongst the more articulate members of their groups. Discussion with senior students indicated their recognition of this circumstance although they argued strongly that their opinions were representative of their generation.

Amongst the disadvantages of this approach is the difficulty of following up individual responses. Additionally, the direction of conversation may obscure some issues and prevent other features being raised (May, 1993; Cohen and Manion, 1994). With young people, there can be a reluctance to oppose the peer culture, and it is common in group interviews for grievances against management to be expressed (May, 1993). This was a feature which was evident amongst all of the pupil groups in my sample: even the very youngest children complained about perceived injustices, but older students criticised provision rather than persons.

Since I was conducting only one interview with each teacher, I chose to adopt either a semi-structured or an unstructured approach, depending on the respondent. The former would give support to the interview, but could prove more restrictive. In an unstructured approach, there could be a more equal relationship which would encourage a freer flow of information, and I hoped that such an atmosphere would permit the expression of more honest and personal opinions (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). May (1993) reports three necessary conditions for the conduct of interviews: the respondent must have access to the required information (accessibility), must understand what is required in the discussion (cognition), and should feel that the information given makes a valued and necessary contribution to the research (motivation). Since most of the interviewees were senior members of staff with a responsibility for collective worship, they had access to the information I sought, and were able to address the issues from their own perspective. Despite my explanations of the importance of their contributions, however, a small minority of respondents was less motivated: disinterest in the subject under investigation or more pressing concerns may account for this. Usually, however, people were very willing to talk: relationships were harmonious and respondents expressed positive feelings and *'even enjoyment'* about the interview (Spradley, 1979, p.78), which gave them an opportunity to review their own positions and to express their sometimes strong opinions. While second interviews would have given me an opportunity to probe

opinions more deeply and to check that understandings and definitions were shared, the single interview approach may have been advantageous in its immediacy, giving interviewees a chance to speak openly to a passing stranger whom they would not expect to meet again, a circumstance which can give rise to a greater freedom of expression.

2.1.8 The approach to analysis

Although analysis is not a distinct stage (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 205) in fact it mostly became so, after the time-consuming collection of data was carried out. Because this was gathered by several methods and for different but related purposes, my approach to analysis needed to take this into account. The immediate intention was to describe existing practice and to identify patterns. The questionnaire was designed for this purpose, and its statistical questions were analysed by frequency only. However, the responses to its open questions, and the qualitative material which was gathered through observation and interview required an approach which would incorporate description and interpretation. As Robson (1993, p. 370) remarks, there is *'no clear or accepted set of conventions'* for the analysis of qualitative data. However, in order to build a *'dense, well-developed, integrated and comprehensive theory'* (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), there was a need to move beyond the presentation of a narrative account and to examine participants' responses. In order to handle the large amount of information which was acquired, it was important to categorise the findings into a conceptual framework. The first stage involved an open coding of material in order to identify common themes, to make comparisons and to establish links. The method which was adopted has some affinity with the preliminary stages of the 'grounded theory' approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). This typically involves the generation of explanations and analysis during the collection of data which is then compared with subsequent findings, allowing core categories to be identified and

theories to become refined, clarified and synthesised (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). The process allows the theory, defined as that which *'explains or interprets something'* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 31, n.22), to emerge from the data. However, Bryman and Burgess (1994) claim that there are few examples of research which are based entirely on grounded theory and this study did not attempt to proceed to the final stages of interpretive theorising and axial coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Data collection in this study was not an end in itself but was a means of determining the grounds for the philosophical analysis of the final section. Although part of this endeavour involved an attempt to investigate *'how individuals make sense of their social world and act within it'* (May, 1993, p. 108) the intention was not to develop theories about ethnographic behaviour but to examine the prevailing circumstance and to reach justificatory conclusions from the philosophical perspective. Nevertheless, after open coding of the material, and the clustering of this into broad themes, it is obvious that core categories emerged, and subsequently selective coding occurred, developing ultimately into the common dimensions which are examined in chapter 5. Finally, the key issues which emerged from this process directed the analysis of chapter 6. I had anticipated initially that this would examine the contribution of collective worship to pupil development, probably paying particular attention to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions. Instead, I felt that the findings of the data impelled an examination of the justificatory arguments for compulsory provision, which led in the direction of political philosophy. To this extent, theory neither emerged from nor formed the foundation of the research but the empirical data identified the core issues for the philosophical analysis.

2.2 THE PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION

In this section, I describe in more detail the manner in which I implemented my chosen methods of data collection, discussing each separately although, as I have indicated, the process involved considerable overlap both in time and in content, each approach having some measure of influence on the others.

2.2.1 The collection of data by questionnaire

Preparation   Once I had decided to establish a data base of quantitative information, there were two immediate steps to be undertaken. The first was to design a questionnaire which would produce the information I required, the format of which would be amenable to completion by busy teachers. Making use of the earlier questionnaires which I had piloted with the help of students, I drew up a set of factual questions which would inform the following themes:

(i)   the practical logistics of collective worship: its frequency, timing, venue, participants and leadership;

(ii)   the extent to which the common elements of worship (e.g. hymn, prayer, sacred text) are present, and references to the major religious traditions are incorporated;

(iii)   the subject matter of the themes which are included;

(iv)   the extent of any formal pupil contributions (e.g. providing musical accompaniment);

(v)   the contribution of the programme to pupil development.

In addition, a small number of open questions were also included in order to examine the following features:

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(vi)   major influences on provision;

(vii)   perceptions of benefit to pupils;

(viii) insights into a hidden curriculum.

Finally, spaces for optional comments were also provided where appropriate: these offered opportunities for respondents to express relevant insights and opinions, and to identify the presence of additional elements which might be specific to their schools. It allowed the collection of valuable information without adding so much to the demands of completion that teachers refused to respond. It also gave an opportunity for respondents to personalise the communication which is a factor that contributes to motivation. Although it would be impossible to generalise from their statements, they could nevertheless serve to indicate the attitudes held by some teachers and could be compared with the responses made during the programme of interviews. With hindsight, it might have been valuable to have incorporated direct questions relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but at the time I was concerned about the difficulty of shared meanings and the lack of opportunity for clarification, and anxious also that such questions might influence other responses.

Most questions could be answered by ticks on grids: this aided ease of completion and reduced the amount of time required of teachers. The questionnaire was condensed in size at the printing stage in order to make it appear less daunting, and was produced as a small booklet which incorporated a brief explanatory statement on the front cover. This ensured that even if the covering letter was lost or ignored, the necessary information continued to be available. In spite of my care, some potentially useful questions were overlooked. It would, for example, have been helpful to be able to identify numbers of pupils withdrawn from collective worship, and to know whether schools operated under a determination. In addition, my concern to design a document which would be amenable to completion and would achieve a high response rate meant that insufficient attention was given to ease of analysis.

Distribution During the production of the questionnaires, I set about the identification of the target sample. As noted above, realising that my intention to contact one school in every hundred would result in a very low sample of secondary schools, I amended my plan to extend the survey to one in every fifty secondary schools. I then grouped, separately, all primary and secondary schools into the following categories (using here the descriptors which then applied): county, voluntary (aided and controlled), grant-maintained and independent. Special schools which frequently include pupils across the age phases were identified as a separate category, as were middle schools, and these were contacted on the 1:100 ratio. This resulted in the distribution of questionnaires as follows:

Table 2   Distribution of questionnaire

county secondary	55	county primary	137
voluntary secondary	12	voluntary primary	60
middle schools	14	combined schools	6
independent secondary	19	independent primary	16
grant-maintained secondary	7	grant-maintained primary	4
TOTAL	107		223

With the addition of 17 special schools covering pupils aged 5-18 years in various groupings, the total number of questionnaires distributed was 347.

Of this total, two schools proved to be sixth-form colleges and one was an independent nursery, where the legal requirements were not applicable. Four independent schools had closed. This reduced the overall sample base to 340 schools. The careful categorisation of schools which I undertook was time-consuming, and because so many different types of school are in existence, this stratification resulted in several small clusters. With hindsight therefore this process was probably

unnecessary. A simple division into county and voluntary schools in the secondary and primary sectors would have been sufficient for my purpose. Nevertheless, although the sample of special and independent schools was small, it was useful to receive sometimes different insights from their replies.

Response   The questionnaires were finally ready for distribution in May, 1996, and were dispatched with haste, recognising that some schools would close for the summer vacation at the end of June. By September, 158 questionnaires had been returned, which was 46% of the working total. Judging that the initial response had ended, I set about contacting again all of the schools from which no reply had been received. At this point, I encountered an obstacle in that, although each school had been asked to identify itself by name, some had failed to do so. In several cases, this appeared to have been an accidental omission, the booklet having been opened only at the second page. Other respondents had intentionally omitted the name of the school, but had completed the remainder of the questions. Sometimes this gave sufficient information, when linked with the postmark, to make an identification. Where I was unable to do this, these returns were eliminated from the survey in order to avoid the danger of duplication when I made contact for the second time. This I did in October and November 1996, initially by telephone to ask whether schools would be willing to complete the questionnaire if I sent a second copy; where willingness was expressed, I identified a named person to whom I wrote directly. This was usually a head teacher or a senior teacher with responsibility for the oversight of collective worship. Although time prevented me from making contact with all of the schools missing from the sample, this approach resulted in the return of a further 140 questionnaires. The final figure for the receipt of valid questionnaires was therefore 278, which constitutes 81.8°o of the total.

2.2.2 The collection of data by observation

As explained above, observation was the first method of data collection which was implemented. Beginning with visits to primary schools in the immediate locality, I gradually journeyed further afield and with increasing selectivity, as I sought to achieve an appropriate balance of types of school. Aware of the unrepresentative nature of the rural south-west, schools in a multi-cultural city in the Midlands were incorporated in the sample, to provide more balance and to gain further insights. I decided to ensure that I visited at least six secondary and six primary schools in the inner-city as well as schools in the rural south-west: in the event, I exceeded this target in a number of respects, making:

29 visits to 16 primary schools, of which 3 were voluntary schools;

10 visits to 4 middle combined schools, 2 of which were voluntary schools, and

24 visits to 12 secondary schools, of which 2 were voluntary schools, one was a grant-maintained (now foundation) grammar school, and 2 were single-sex schools.

In addition, I made one visit each to three further schools, comprising one special, one independent secondary and one city technology college. This gave a total of 66 visits for the purpose of observation at 35 schools as the following table illustrates:

Table 3   Visits made to schools for the purpose of data collection

	Primary			Secondary					
	community	VC	VA	community	VA	GM	Independent.	C.T.C.	special
schools	15	2	3	9	2	1	1	1	1
visits	34	2	3	21	2	1	1	1	1

Of the city secondary schools, one had a student population which was almost wholly Muslim, and another was mainly Hindu. A third had a considerable Sikh population

amongst its Muslim and Hindu students. Three primary schools contained a majority of Hindu pupils, while three had representatives from several communities. One headteacher described her pupils, affectionately, as *'poor whites' (SP)*.

The aim of these visits was, first, to make notes of the content of the act of collective worship. This I did throughout each session in as much detail as possible, recording verbatim phrases when the opportunity allowed. In addition to subject content and the incorporation of various forms of worship, my notes included reference to pupil behaviour, participation and attentiveness; seating arrangements; atmosphere, setting and the use of music on entrance and exit; the inclusion of notices; and the presence of visitors either as leaders or observers, as well as teachers.

My observations not only had some influence on the structure of the questionnaire but also allowed me to flesh out the information which it provided. Towards the final stages, I sought out schools which would allow me to cover a wide range of types and situations, whilst recognising that there were limits to what I could hope to achieve. Thus I made contact with two single-sex city schools, anticipating that they might be favoured by the parents of Muslim pupils, and with a grammar school which incorporated its sixth-form pupils in its provision, a circumstance I did not encounter in any other secondary school.

2.2.3 The interview process

Although the material from the questionnaire provided me with a broad picture of collective worship, and the observations in a range of schools gave me insights into the detail and manner of provision, neither could inform me about the attitudes and perceptions of the teachers and pupils who were the major participants. I determined therefore to interview representatives of both groups, seeking to establish the following:

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from teachers:

(i)   attitudes to the legal requirements for acts of collective worship;

(ii)   perceptions of the intended contribution of worship to pupil development;

(iii)   perceived value and function of the activity;

(iv)   particular difficulties and problems experienced in implementing the legal requirements;

(v)   general attitudes and the identification of issues.

from pupils:

(i)   attitudes to the act of collective worship;

(ii)   what is learned or gained from the activity;

(iii)   alterations which might be made;

(iv)   additional perceptions they might offer into their responses to collective worship (e.g. issues concerning relationships with peers and teachers).

The interview process developed alongside the collection of data by observation: initially I was fearful of making too many demands on busy schools but later I was able to be more specific in my requests. As I gained experience, I became less dependent on my semi-structured questions, allowing interviewees to articulate their own thoughts and feelings more freely, resulting in the expression of some unanticipated insights. Schools' timetabling arrangements meant that pupils were the most difficult target group to arrange, but in due course I was able to reach my planned figure of twelve groups of pupils. These included children in the reception class and in years 1, 4, 5, and 6 in primary schools; and from years 7-11 and year 13 in the secondary sector. Altogether, I talked with 24 primary pupils (13 boys and 11 girls) and 41 secondary students (23 males and 18 females), giving a total of 65. Some of these I met at lunch-time, but most were withdrawn from lessons for brief

periods of 15-30 minutes for the purposes of the interview, which usually took place in classrooms, small offices or libraries, although on one occasion a cloakroom was used. All were tape-recorded, but the quality was sometimes affected by physical circumstances and background noise. Consequently, in one secondary school, written responses to a short questionnaire were completed, and a copy of this is included in Appendix 7. In order to develop a level of confidence amongst infant pupils, I went into school regularly to help in the classroom before I attempted to withdraw children for interview. With pupils from Key Stage 2 onwards, I was able to explain more clearly the nature of my research, the confidentiality of their comments, and their right to withdraw from the process by remaining silent if they wished. I felt that this was necessary since the pupils had been selected by their teachers and may have been included with some reluctance on their part. As noted above, only one secondary school pupil remained silent throughout a group interview: I was unable to tell whether this was due to disinterest, lack of confidence, or embarrassment in the company of older pupils with whom she may have been unfamiliar or ill at ease.

Teachers' and headteachers' timetables have some flexibility and I was able to interview a total of 33 adults from 23 schools. This included 7 male and 5 female headteachers from primary and middle schools; 6 male and 2 female headteachers from the secondary sector together with 11 senior teachers of whom 8 were male, typifying the gender balance in senior management in secondary schools. In addition, I also talked with one (male) chaplain and one school governor (also male). The length of discussion was largely dependent on the demands on the teacher's time, and varied in general from 30-45 minutes, although some lasted only 15 minutes and others an hour. All were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of the confidential nature of the discussions, although none expressed any anxiety in this respect. Many teachers needed little prompting and were happy to explore the subject from their own perspective. In addition to the broad themes listed above, prepared questions attempted to explore, as appropriate, issues such as the perceived benefit of

collective worship to both pupils and teachers, their attitudes to the legal requirements for daily worship which is 'wholly or mainly broadly Christian', the place of alternative arrangements (e.g. class or tutor group worship, sometimes called 'thought for the day') and attitudes to the provision of faith worship. Many teachers addressed these issues in their general comments, and I chose therefore not to restrict the conversation by adhering to set questions, feeling that I would encounter a more accurate range of insights and attitudes if I did not attempt to structure the discussion too rigidly. Instead, I tried to follow where the teachers led, probing further the issues which they introduced. One limitation of the data which I was able to gather was that the teachers with whom I talked were all in senior positions in their schools since timetabling constraints meant that only these individuals were able to commit themselves to be available for interview. A different response might have been gathered from less experienced teachers: many senior teachers themselves revealed that their own attitudes to provision had changed with seniority and responsibility. Nevertheless, their position meant that I was able to acquire insights from those who are most influential in the implementation of collective worship at the present time.

2.3   Conclusion

Although some initial analysis of the data occurred as it was gathered, it was only after the process of collection had been completed that it was possible to concentrate on the reports which form the content of chapters 3 and 4, and the subsequent analysis of the findings which constitutes chapter 5. Because my intention was to provide a clear picture of the provision of collective worship in schools across the country, I examine first the material gathered by questionnaire, and this is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

REPORT ON QUESTIONNAIRE: THE PROVISION OF COLLECTIVE

WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Overview   In this chapter I report the results of the questionnaire which was

distributed to a sample of schools in England and Wales. After a brief introduction, it

is sub-divided into 4 broad sections: the first describes the sample of schools from

which the data are drawn, and the second examines the practical and procedural

structures by means of which the act of collective worship is organised. The third

section explores the content of the act of collective worship, and the conclusion

examines respondents' perceptions of its contribution to pupil development and

additional insights into practice and provision.

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present only the picture of national provision which emerges

from the self-completed questionnaire, the purpose of which was to establish a broad

outline of the content and function of the act of collective worship. This report,

which will be followed by an interpretive discussion of the findings in chapter 5,

seeks to present in a linear mode a large and complex mass of data, the analysis of

which reveals both common patterns and wide diversity.

One of the complications which was present throughout this investigation was

the need to recognise that, in the everyday life of schools, the act of worship is known

by a range of different terms, 'assembly' being the most common of these. Because I

wanted to examine what occurs during this timetabled period of the day, regardless of

its descriptor, the phrase *'worship assembly'* was utilised interchangeably throughout

the questionnaire. In producing the report which follows I have, therefore, some concern that to refer exclusively to this somewhat hybrid activity as either 'collective worship' or 'assembly' may lead to confusion and misunderstanding. On consideration, however, I have chosen to adopt the term 'collective worship' in recognition of the legal description, and because the question of religious worship, rather than the assembling of the school community, is at the heart of this research. Nevertheless, the use of this phrase should not be taken to imply that religious worship is the focus, or even an element, of what occurs in each school on every occasion of assembling. As the data show, in some institutions worship is a central feature, in others it is occasional or minimal, and in a few it is intentionally non-existent. Most schools claim to incorporate a religious element during the course of the school year, however, even though this may be irregular in frequency and minimal in emphasis.

Of the 27 questions in the survey only 4 were intentionally open-ended, but the opportunity provided throughout the questionnaire to add further comments produced a considerable amount of additional material, giving insights into the variety and complexity of schools' provision, and of the commonly recurring patterns which also exist. With hindsight, it is clear that some elements of the questionnaire were of peripheral importance and value, and only brief reference is made to them in the report which follows. Nevertheless, even minor details may have a contribution to make towards the experience of the participants at the act of collective worship, and reveal also something of the attitudes of teachers and the value they place on this activity. The key features of the statistical data are incorporated as tables in the text, therefore, and the remainder are placed in the appendix. Responses to the questions are clustered together as follows, and teachers' additional comments are incorporated as appropriate in order to add colour and further detail.

3.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE

Replies to the questionnaire were received from schools in rural communities, small towns and large cities in all areas of England and Wales. The majority were mixed: only 11 schools, five of which belonged to the independent sector, were single-sex schools, although the sample included one mixed secondary school where boys and girls were always taught separately. Schools were representative by type and status, and were located in a wide range of communities and cultural traditions.

In order to distinguish between schools, a brief codified description in parenthesis is included with every reference. Each school is distinguished by a three-figure number. This is followed by an abbreviation which refers to status, e.g. C = county (now community), GM = grant-maintained (now foundation), VC = voluntary controlled. Voluntary-aided schools are identified additionally by CE or RC. A final reference describes the school's type: F = First; C = comprehensive; GS = grammar school. Thus a full descriptor might read:

158 GM P	School 158, a grant-maintained primary school
003 CJ	School 003, a community junior school
124 RC 11-18C	School 124, a Roman Catholic (voluntary aided) comprehensive school with students from the ages of 11 to 18.

A full list of abbreviated terms is included in Appendix 8.

3.2.1 The type and status of schools

Of the 278 schools in the sample, 185 were in the primary sector: this included combined schools with pupils from 5 to 12 years of age, and middle schools which were deemed primary. In the secondary sector there were 75 schools: this

figure included middle schools deemed secondary. In addition, the sample incorporated 13 special schools whose pupils ranged from 2 to 19 years, in various age combinations, and 5 schools in the independent sector with pupils between the ages of 3 and 13 years. Although the term 'comprehensive' is usually taken to apply to non-selective state schools, 3 independent schools also identified themselves in this manner.

Table 4   school type: all schools   n = 278

infant	19	6.8%
first	18	6.5%
junior	26	9.4%
primary	113	40.6%
combined	8	2.9%
middle primary	1	0.4%
middle secondary	7	2.5%
secondary modern	1	0.4%
comprehensive-16	23	8.3%
comprehensive -18	39	14.0%
grammar	3	1.1%
upper	2	0.7%
special	13	4.7%
other	5	1.8%
total	278	100°o

The sample included 48 voluntary aided schools, three of which were special agreement schools; in addition, amongst the grant-maintained schools were 3 which had previously had voluntary status: one was Roman Catholic, one was Anglican and one had been a controlled school. Another described itself as being influenced by its Christian foundation.

Table 5   School status

	primary n—185	secondary n = 75	special n = 13	cross-phase n = 5	total n = 278
county	115 = 62.2%	42 – 56.0%	11 = 84.6%	0	168 = 60.4%
V.C.	22 – 11.9%	1 = 1.3%	0	0	23 = 8.3%
V.A.	37 = 20.0%	11 – 14.7%	0	0	48 = 17.3%
G.M.	5 = 2.7%	13 = 17.3%	0	0	18 = 6.5%
independent	6 – 3.2°o	8 = 10.7%	2 = 15.4%	5 =100.0%	21 = 7.6%

- Additional detail is included in Appendix 9 to show schools by status as a percentage of the entire sample (table 22).

Institutions varied widely in size. The smallest primary school had 26 pupils, while the largest contained 730. By comparison, the smallest secondary school had 400 students on roll and the largest had 1800 students. Five other establishments had over 1500 students. Rather more than half of the schools were situated in villages or small towns. 44°o of the schools, however, were in large towns, cities or their suburbs. Table 23 in Appendix 10 gives this information in more detail.

These figures could reveal nothing about the cultural background of the pupils, however, and this was explored in question 26 which asked about the *'main cultural traditions of pupils'*, listing the major religions. The intention was to identify birth tradition rather than current religious practice, which I could not expect teachers to know or to provide. However, the design of the question contained a flawed column, and an explanation, accompanied by the results (table 24), is provided in Appendix 11. Nevertheless, the responses show that Christianity is the main cultural tradition in 82°o of schools in this sample. Of the other religious traditions represented, only Islam, in 9 schools (3°o), constituted a simple majority at the time of the survey. 12 other schools reported having between 25-50% Muslim pupils, while 6 schools indicated a similar percentage of students from the Sikh tradition. A number of schools contained students from several traditions, which is a common

feature of urban institutions: 25 secondary schools (33%) and 39 primary schools (21%) reported the presence of pupil groups representing two or more different traditions.

This question included provision for additional comments and most of the 46 responses referred to teachers' difficulties as they wrestled with the dilemma of whether the term 'Christian' could be applied accurately to their pupils, drawing attention to the absence of observable religious practice or faith.

Little evidence of any active religious culture at all.   (097 CP)

Most of our pupils have no religious/cultural background/traditions.
(121 C11-16C)

Teachers also noted that although many parents claim denominational membership when selecting voluntary schools for their children, they have no active association with the Christian church (117 CE/P). Some parents freely express their lack of religious belief (102 CI) and respondents commented that many pupils also have no religion, describing them as '... *atheists, agnostics and humanists'* (128 C11-16C). During interviews held later, some students also described themselves in these terms. By contrast, because baptism provides entry to their tradition, many Roman Catholic primary schools described their pupils as *'Catholics 100%. No non-Catholics in the school'* (017 RC P). By the secondary stage, however, the possibility of notional membership was noted. *'Probably 98% of the school are 'Catholic' in name!'* (124 RC 11-18C). Such remarks reflect the confused picture of the place of Christianity in the religious life of contemporary Britain which was noted in the debate surrounding collective worship (see chapter 1) and described in the work of sociologists such as Davie (1994) and Bruce (1995).

3.2.2 Summary of key points

- Christianity is the main cultural tradition in 82% of the schools in this sample. In 3% of schools, Islam is the main tradition. 23% of schools report the presence of two or more traditions.

- However, many teachers find that the identification of Christian religious affiliation is problematic in the absence of family practice and commitment.

3.3 THE PRACTICAL ORGANISATION OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

A number of questions were included in the survey to establish the manner in which collective worship is organised, in order to provide a picture of the actual circumstances which relate to its provision and to identify patterns of practice. In this section, I describe the structural approaches which surround the provision of collective worship, detailing the times of meeting; the organisation of pupils into groups; leadership and attendance; and practical features such as programme planning and the maintenance of records.

3.3.1 Time, place and grouping (question 6)

Time Overwhelmingly, despite the flexibility of time and grouping provided in the Education Reform Act 1988, most schools continue to assemble during the first part of the morning, maintaining the pattern established by the Education Act of 1944. Custom may not be the only reason for the continuation of this tradition, however, and as interviews revealed, many schools choose to start with this activity in order to set the tone for the day.

Table 6   **Time of day during which collective worship is held: all schools**
(n=278)

between	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.30 -10.30	210	204	206	205	190
10.30 -12.30	52	57	61	60	41
12.30 - 2.30	15	17	18	19	22
2.30 - 4.00	11	9	15	6	27

- no response to question: 8 schools

The pattern is similar for schools in both the primary and secondary sectors, although primary schools rarely begin before 9 o'clock while some secondary schools start as early as 8.30 a.m. As will be shown, however, it cannot be assumed that these are single acts or that all pupils are present. In some schools pupils assemble in varied groupings, either simultaneously in different venues or throughout the day, and the figures given in this table exceed, therefore, the number of schools in the sample.

Place Over the years, problems of accommodation, growth in school size and restrictions on time have resulted in a complex pattern of provision. Consequently, whilst it is clear that a specific period is set aside on a daily basis in nearly all of the sample schools, not all pupils are able to be present. Although most primary schools have sufficient space to accommodate all pupils in a single gathering, large secondary institutions, often with 1000 or more students, describe halls with a seating capacity of 200 or 250 which is sufficient for one year group only. Often these schools are also situated in a range of dispersed buildings.

We use 2 sites [for assemblies] on Monday, 3 on Tuesday and Wednesday, 4 on Thursday, and 1 on Friday, when Upper and Lower school use the hall on alternate weeks. (160 C11-18C)

In response to their difficulties over accommodation, schools have developed a range of solutions. Spaces which are pressed into service include classrooms, libraries,

dining rooms, drama studios, and community meeting rooms, but these are multi-purpose venues in which it can be difficult to generate an appropriate atmosphere. The most common solution to problems of accommodation adopted in the secondary sector, therefore, is the restriction of collective worship to a limited number of groups each day.

Grouping   In primary schools usually a single act of collective worship is provided on a daily basis, although sometimes children may be grouped in key stages in order to meet their particular needs. Occasionally nursery pupils are involved, especially those who are nearing compulsory school age, but children as young as 3 are occasionally included on a regular basis in some infant departments in independent schools.

Although secondary schools may make arrangements for several acts of worship on each day, one of the most common practices is to gather together each of the year groups 7-11 for collective worship on one day of each week.

Each year group has one assembly p.w. Nothing else. Rest
of the week − tutor groups. (139 CE/11-18C)

When this pattern is adopted, it is common for the year groups to meet sequentially during the course of the week, e.g. year 7 on Mondays, year 8 on Tuesdays. In some schools, half year-group gatherings are held; each pupil is then involved once in two weeks (119 C11-18C). Other arrangements include variable patterns of double year groups, house groups, or upper and lower schools. Sometimes, worship also takes place in faith groups (269 C Midd.-S; 160 C11-18C; 169 Ind.11-18C). Where schools provide worship for sixth form pupils, this makes even greater demands on space and time, and a rolling programme may be adopted. *'Year 7; 9; 12 and 13; 10;*
11. The programme is rolling. Year 8 occurs on the following week' (195 C11-18C).

In the voluntary sector, the common pattern is often augmented by additional forms of provision. Schools may hold Mass (061 RC/P), Eucharist (193 CE/11-16C; 272 CE/P) or Communion (064 GM 11-18C) at regular intervals, e.g. every term or half term. Major festivals, such as Christmas, and 'leaving' ceremonies attract special provision and an effort may be made to assemble the whole school at the end of each term or year (179 GM 11-18C). Boarding schools, of course, are in the distinctive position of operating on seven days a week, and may also provide services in church or chapel on Sundays (258 Ind. 8-13). By contrast, two schools state explicitly that no worship occurs during their assemblies and responses to question 10 reveal that a further eight schools never incorporate the elements traditionally associated with worship.

Each year group has an assembly each day in the hall. Occasionally year groups use hall on Wednesday, period 4 (PSHE lesson). There is a whole school assembly in the hall at the end of each term. No worship is involved in any assembly.   (159 C11-18C)

Where schools are large and dispersed, the time needed to gather pupils together constitutes another problem. '*Too many assemblies and too little time*'' (132 SM).

In many schools, when pupils are not meeting as a year or house group, the time may be spent in tutor groups. The practice of classroom worship is then adopted by some schools but is largely dependent on the willing co-operation of the teachers who are required to act as leaders. One secondary school, however, where the majority of students are Muslim, successfully broadcasts the act of collective worship over the public address system into each form room every day (172 C11-16C), and especially in Roman Catholic schools, daily prayers may be held with each class (110 RC 11-16C; 164 RC/11-16C; 185 RC/11-18C; 076 RC/P). Nevertheless, the flexibility incorporated into the Education Act 1988 which provides for worship to

occur in class groups is not popular and the time is often occupied by pastoral work, described as tutorial lessons (176 C11-16C). Although 34% of schools claim to include tutor-led worship, often called 'thought for the day' or 'pause for thought', on a regular basis, 58% never adopt this approach. Subsequent interviews with teachers confirmed their reluctance to engage in this form of provision and revealed that even where appropriate support material was distributed, schools intentionally kept no check on how the period was used.

Table 7   Teacher-led classroom worship

held...	primary n – 185	secondary n = 75	cross-phase n = 18	total n = 278
daily	19 – 10.3%	17 = 22.7%	2 = 11.1%	38 = 13.7%
weekly	43 = 23.2%	11 – 14.7%	4 = 22.2%	58 = 20.9%
monthly	0	1 = 1.3%	0	1 = 0.4%
sometimes	7 3.8%	0	0	7 = 2.5%
never	107 – 57.8%	43 – 57.3%	10 = 55.6%	160 = 57.6%
not answered	9 – 4.9%	3 = 4.0%	2 = 11.1%	14 = 5.0%

3.3.2   Approaches to organisation   (questions 11, 13-16)

Aware that the physical environment has a contribution to make to the experience of the participants, this section examines the practical arrangements which are made for the act of collective worship, beginning with the seating arrangements, and the ways in which an appropriate atmosphere is encouraged.

Seating arrangements: pupils   (questions 13-14)

Whilst it is customary for the headteacher or leader to stand or sit facing the student body, the seating arrangements for pupils and staff are varied between schools and between sectors. Whereas pupils in 74% of primary schools customarily sit on the floor, students in 60% of secondary institutions are provided with chairs.

Sometimes a mixed pattern is adopted, with senior pupils only sitting on benches or chairs in both primary and secondary schools, reflecting problems of space:

> *Years 7, 8, 9 sit on the floor, and years 10 and 11 sit on chairs. I would rather all were seated but the hall is not large enough for so many chairs, and so I prefer them, for their comfort, to sit on the floor, rather than stand.*   (164 RC/11-16C)

In some schools, seating arrangements vary from day to day, according to group size, so whole school gatherings may involve all pupils sitting on the floor in order to accommodate them, but the same pupils will sit on chairs when they meet as a year group. Only 2°o of responses indicated that pupils stand throughout the period. In secondary schools, seating arrangements may reflect teachers' attitudes, both to the activity and to the students: as an interviewee explained subsequently, the provision of chairs was an expression of respect and was closely related to the general aims of the school. A table showing customary practice is included in table 25 in Appendix 12.

In 80°o of schools, pupils are usually seated in their class groups by age. The most common arrangement is for pupils to sit in straight lines, with the smallest and youngest children at the front, although there are exceptions to this practice. Some schools allow pupils to sit wherever they choose; and occasionally, the assembled group is arranged in a circle or in a horseshoe formation. One secondary school reports that pupils stand in their form groups and '... *interestingly, boys stand on one side, the girls on the other'* (124 RC 11-18 C). Table 26 in Appendix 13 illustrates the responses to this question.

Seating arrangements: teachers   (question 15)

Especially in primary schools, teachers customarily sit on chairs at the side of the pupil body, except in special schools where they are more likely to sit within the pupil group. Seating arrangements are decided by the requirements of supervision, the availability of space and, occasionally, by hierarchy, with senior teachers at the front alongside the leader. In some institutions, and particularly in the secondary sector, there is no established position for members of staff, who may sit in any convenient space. Half of the 20 voluntary comments, made only by respondents from primary schools, referred to the non-attendance of teachers however. Withdrawal may, of course, be made on grounds of conscience but it may also be due to pressure of time on busy teachers, for whom this period is often the only non-contact time available during the week, providing an opportunity to undertake various tasks and activities. A table (27) giving details of seating arrangements for teachers is provided in Appendix 14.

Setting the scene   (question 16)

In an attempt to encourage an appropriate atmosphere, some schools provide candles, flowers or a religious symbol as a visual focus of attention. This appears to be an infrequent practice, however, and is not widespread. Fewer respondents answered this question than any other and a table (28), provided in Appendix 15, indicates that less than half of schools in the sample (129 = 46.4%) incorporate occasional displays. These are usually seasonal, such as the use of candles at Diwali, Hanukah and Christmas. Voluntary schools may display a cross and some multi-faith schools refer to the use of religious symbols:

Symbols of main faiths within the school, Sikh, Hindu, Christian and

Muslim are displayed in assembly hall as focal point. (100 CP)

Overall, primary schools are much more likely to provide some form of visual focus than are secondary institutions.

The most common means of establishing an appropriate atmosphere is the use of music at the beginning and end of the session, and 82% of schools adopt this practice at least on some occasions, even when there is no intention to incorporate any overt aspect of worship. From the additional comments made, it is clear that provision can vary from day to day, and according to the pupil group involved. Music is usually relayed by an electronic system, but in some few schools organ music is the norm (167 Ind.11-18; 206 CE/11-18 C). One school lists instrumental music provided by pupils (115 CJ) and elsewhere, children sing as they walk into the hall; by contrast a secondary school refers to silence '... *broken by the noise of feet and chairs' (128 C11-16C)*. Sometimes quiet conversation is permitted but silence is more customary, especially in the secondary sector. Another feature, only mentioned obliquely, is the custom in many secondary schools of the completion of the class register by teachers as students arrive. Further details of the arrangements for pupils' entrance and exit are provided in a table (29) in Appendix 16.

3.3.3 The people involved: leadership (question 9), attendance (question 22) and participation (question 21)

Question 9 sought to establish who is actively involved in the leadership of collective worship. In most institutions the task is shared amongst many members of staff whose contribution is sometimes augmented by visiting speakers but the headteacher is the individual who makes the greatest single contribution, leading collective worship on a daily basis in 18% of primary schools and 5% of secondary schools. However, the pattern of provision in the secondary sector may mean that the headteacher visits each of the assembling groups sequentially throughout the week, a feature which was encountered during visits for observation. Deputy headteachers in

all schools, and year leaders in secondary schools are the other members of staff who are most frequently involved, generally at least once a week. Staff seniority can sometimes be identified by the frequency with which teachers undertake this activity (118 CP).

Class-led worship occurs weekly in 16% of primary schools and in 7% of secondary schools, although senior pupils take a leadership role in a further 5% of institutions in this sector. Nearly half of the responding independent schools made reference in their comments to the contribution of chaplains who lead weekday and Sunday services and also play a co-ordinating role in providing programme outlines for teachers to follow. Guest speakers may be invited but in the majority of cases such visits occur only occasionally, i.e. less than termly. As a respondent from a split-site school with 1100 pupils which uses a year group approach explained:

15 mins which includes coming into the hall, registration and being in lessons by 9 a.m. does not lend itself to visiting speakers regularly.

(012 C11-18C)

Tables 30, 31 and 32 in Appendices 17, 18 and 19 provide further details of the leadership of collective worship.

Adult attendance   (question 22)

More than half of the headteachers of primary and voluntary schools are in attendance daily. Secondary headteachers are more likely to attend on a weekly basis; only one is recorded as never present. Most teachers attend at least weekly although this does not necessarily imply participation if worship is involved, but in small schools only the leader may be present, sometimes supported in special schools by ancillary staff. Some respondents imply that expectations of attendance are not

always met and one observed wryly that some teachers attend only when a colleague is leaving (143 GM 11-18 C).

Comments indicate that parental attendance is a common practice only in primary schools, where they are usually invited to their children's class-led worship and to special occasions, e.g. harvest. Governors are not frequent visitors to collective worship and, in some schools, respondents complain that they never attend despite regular invitations. Responses to this question can be found in table 33 in Appendix 20.

<u>Pupil participation   (question 21)</u>

Previous conversations with pupils had indicated their desire for more active participation in the act of collective worship, and for this reason a question was included which sought to identify the extent and manner of pupil involvement. Responses indicate that, in the secondary sector, although pupils sometimes perform as individuals or as members of a group, their participation is mainly limited to attendance. Pupils are more involved in primary schools, however: they answer questions, give reports and take part in class-led worship on a regular basis. Tables 34, 35, 36 and 37, illustrating this information, can be found in Appendices 21-24.

3.3.4   Planning the programme (question 20) and keeping records (question19)

Because I was interested in the extent and manner of programme planning and the development of coherent themes as a support for pupil learning and reflection, two questions were included in order to examine schools' arrangements. Question 20 was designed to discover whether a programme of themes was prepared in advance, either by an individual or a group, and whether pupils made any contribution. Some ambiguity was present in this question however, and although 66% of schools

indicated that the 'leader responsible' undertook the planning, it is unclear whether this refers to each teacher who leads an act of worship, or to a person who has overall responsibility for the general planning. It is evident from responses, however, that this task is rarely a group activity, an approach which occurs in only 10% of schools while the inclusion of pupils in the planning process takes place in only 2.5%. Optional comments reveal that where planning is undertaken, this might occur termly or annually, and one school writes of pursuing a two year rolling programme. Visiting speakers may choose their own themes, and some schools have bulletins or *'ideas charts in staffroom'* (298 C. Midd-Sec) to assist the preparation process. Twelve schools expressed their intention to undertake advance planning during the coming year: *'Until this year there has been no planning at all'* (155 C11-18C). Comments from independent schools sometimes reveal a more traditional pattern of worship:

Some repetition over the years - e.g. we read a Gospel each Lent term: Mark one year, John the next. Some 'series' have been repeated after a suitable interval. (127 Ind. 11-18)

Table 38 in Appendix 25 records the responses to this question.

Record-keeping ____ (question 19)

A further question was included in line with the OFSTED requirement that records of collective worship are available for inspection, but although 65% of responses claimed that records are maintained, practice seems to vary considerably. Some schools conscientiously record themes, hymns and stories, and these may be centrally held: '... *much of material used by pupils and staff is original and a complete record is kept in headteacher's office - open to inspection by anyone'* (172 C11-16C). Often, however, no official record is maintained for the whole school.

Individual leaders may keep their own records but these are not necessarily collated in any way, and within the school, teachers often do not know what records are kept: *'I personally keep a record of assemblies I hold, but otherwise do not know'* (179 GM 11-18). Even where they are held centrally, they may be maintained only erratically: keeping a record is seen as a demanding addition to the day's tasks, and *'staff often too pressurised to fill this in'* (038 CE/Comb). There is some recognition, however, that *'staff leading ought to keep notes'* (135 C11-16C) and ten schools indicated their intention to keep records during the next school year. In addition the sometimes different expectations made of independent schools are reflected in comments:

> *Question not understood. Lists of readings and hymns produced termly. Other kind of record?* (258 Ind. 4-13)

Details of the response to this question can be found in table 39 in Appendix 26.

3.3.5 Summary of the key points

- The traditional custom of an assembly of the school community at the start of the day continues to take place where possible.

- Although accommodation problems in the secondary sector often restrict the size and frequency of gathering to a weekly assembly of students in year groups, most primary schools meet daily as a single unit.

- The headteacher is the person most likely to conduct the activity with regular support from senior teachers, and most teachers are in attendance at least weekly.

- Planning the content is usually undertaken by the leader, and is seldom a joint exercise.

- Pupils in secondary schools are less likely to play an active part in the presentation of collective worship than their primary counterparts.

3.4   THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP: CONTENT

The sections above reveal a variable pattern of organisation and practice, with examples of divergence existing within broad common trends, but they reveal little of the actual content of collective worship or of the extent to which religious worship is an element of schools' provision. The inclusion of the formal elements traditionally associated with worship, as well as the teaching content, would be key indicators: questions were incorporated therefore which enquired into the use of hymns, prayers and sacred texts, and also examined teaching themes.

3.4.1   Inclusion of traditional elements of worship   (questions 10, 12 and 17)

It is evident from the responses to these questions that although many of the customary aspects associated with collective worship are present in nearly all primary schools, they are frequently absent from community secondary schools. Whereas general prayer occurs *'usually'* in 77% of primary schools, the comparable figure for secondary institutions, where year groups may meet only weekly, is 40%. The use of the Lord's prayer is not widespread, incorporated *'always or usually'* in only 28% of primary schools and 19°o of secondary institutions, most of these in the voluntary sector. Neither is the inclusion of hymns common in the secondary sector: nearly half of schools never include them, although most primary schools incorporate them on a regular basis.

Table 8   Traditional elements of worship in primary schools

n = 185	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response
prayer: general	108 58.4%	35 = 18.9%	13 = 7.0%	4 = 2.1%	2 = 1.1%	23 = 12.4%
Lord's prayer	26−14.1%	25 = 13.5%	52 = 28.1%	24 = 13.0%	15 = 8.1%	43 = 23.2%
silent reflection	28=15.1%	25 = 13.5%	69 = 37.3%	35 = 18.9%	6 = 3.2%	22 = 11.9%
hymns	84 45.4%	62 = 33.5%	27 = 14.6%	7 = 3.8%	1 = 0.5%	4 = 2.2%
non-religious song	3 1.6%	22 = 11.9%	84 = 45.4%	34 = 18.4%	5 = 2.7%	37 = 20.0%
readings Bible	5 2.7%	20 = 10.8%	91 − 49.2%	43 = 23.2%	7 = 3.8%	19 = 10.3%
sacred texts	2− 1.1%	3 = 1.6%	59 = 31.9%	60 = 32.4%	17 = 9.2%	44 = 23.8%

- This is a multiple response question so columns do not total 100%.

Table 9   Traditional elements of worship in secondary schools

n 75	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response to line
prayer: general	13 17.3%	17 = 22.7%	16 = 21.3%	15 = 20.0%	8 = 10.7%	6 = 8.0%
Lord's prayer	5 − 6.7%	9 = 12.0%	13 = 17.3%	14 = 18.7%	26 = 34.7%	8 = 10.7%
silent reflection	3 − 4.0%	12 = 16.0%	29 = 38.7%	17 = 22.7%	7 = 9.3%	7 = 9.3%
hymns	9 − 12.0%	10 − 13.3%	11 = 14.7%	9 = 12.0%	29 − 38.7%	7 − 9.3%
non-religious song	0	1 − 1.3%	18 = 24.0%	13 = 17.3%	26 = 34.7%	17 = 22.7%
Readings Bible	3 = 4.0%	11 = 14.7%	29 = 38.7%	19 = 25.3%	6 = 8.0%	7 = 9.3%
sacred texts	0	3 = 4.0%	20 = 26.7%	25 = 33.3%	15 = 20.0%	12 = 16.0%

- This is a multiple response question so columns do not total 100%.

Table 10   Traditional elements of worship in cross-phase schools

n 18	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response
prayer: general	11 61.1%	2 = 11.1%	1 = 5.6%	1 = 5.6%	1 = 5.6%	2 = 11.1%
Lord's prayer	4 22.2%	1 = 5.6%	4 22.2%	4 = 22.2%	3 = 16.7%	2 = 11.1%
silent reflection	1 = 5.6%	1 = 5.6%	4 – 22.2%	4 = 22.2%	4 = 22.2%	4 = 22.2%
hymns	7 – 38.9%	6 = 33.3%	3 = 16.7%	1 = 5.6%	0	1 = 5.6%
non-religious songs	2 11.1%	3 16.7%	5 = 27.8%	4 = 22.2%	2 = 11.1%	2 = 11.1%
readings Bible	1 – 5.6%	3 16.7%	6 – 33.3%	4 = 22.2%	1 = 5.6%	3 = 16.7%
sacred texts	0	0	2 = 11.1%	7 = 38.9%	4 = 22.2%	5 = 27.8%

- This is a multiple response question so columns do not total 100%.

This question generated few additional remarks. References to prayer were made exclusively by primary schools, half of which referred to the regular use of a school prayer designed to reflect the institution's ethos. In one school, pupils are encouraged to pray aloud extemporarily on the day's theme (082 CF).

Only three references were made to hymns, all from secondary schools, two of which reported their disuse: '...singing devotional hymns is inappropriate at 11-16 age' (135 C11-16 C). However a third comment, from a boys' independent grammar school, reports the inclusion of hymns twice a week; and some independent secondary schools hold compulsory practices on Saturdays, indicating that the singing of hymns continues into adolescence in establishments where such a tradition exists.

Direct reading from any sacred text is uncommon although in primary schools Biblical stories are paraphrased, sometimes accompanied by material from non-religious sources as further illustration (284 CP; 273 Ind.P). The reading of sacred

text occurs largely with older pupils and then only occasionally. In one school where most pupils are Muslim, some Islamic material is used every day (172 C11-16C).

The additional comments supplied to this question emphasise the centrality of the moral dimension in all types of school '... *moral element usual bias'* (143 GM 11-18C). Where pupils represent several faith traditions, such an approach is seen as an acceptable model by teachers.

We are a multi-faith school so only certain staff will use 'religious' material - the rest tend to be moral - prayers are designed so as not to offend.　　　　(012 C11-18C)

The words of hymns often carry powerful messages which pupils learn by constant repetition and may take with them into adult life. In a typical primary school, older pupils may be provided with hymn books while younger children sing from memory insofar as they are able but generally the words of the hymns are reproduced onto a screen by an overhead projector (often operated by selected pupils). The use of hymn books is more common in the few secondary schools which include singing in their acts of worship. Although little reference is made to musical support, the use of piano, guitar and organ is mentioned: however, some schools remark on their difficulties in this respect, having nobody available to provide an accompaniment.

In the schools which make use of a published hymn book, the title most frequently identified by respondents is the BBC's publication *Come and Praise* which accompanies its radio broadcasts. This is named in 26 responses, all of them from maintained primary schools. *Junior Praise* also appeals largely to the primary sector but is found in both maintained and independent schools. *Hymns Old and New* is listed solely by Roman Catholic schools and *Hymns Ancient and Modern* is

favoured by 3 independent schools out of the 5 secondary schools which listed it. In addition, 12 schools make use of their own hymn books, for which an annual copyright fee is paid. Photocopied sheets may also be provided for special occasions such as Christmas and Easter; and the availability of duplication facilities in schools can mean that dilapidated hymn books are discarded and not replaced (045 CP).

A table (40) to show the practical arrangements made to support singing is included in Appendix 27, and a full list of hymn books identified in this response appears in Appendix 28.

Inclusion of material from major religions represented in Britain (question 17)

A further question attempted to identify the frequency with which material from the major religious traditions is incorporated into provision. Christianity continues to be the main focus, with 71% of schools recording its inclusion on a frequent basis, while only 1.1% of schools claim never to incorporate a Christian element. Material from the Jewish tradition is used more frequently than that of Islam and the eastern religions, Sikhism being the least commonly incorporated, despite its higher representation in the general population than Buddhism, Hinduism or Judaism. Other belief systems which are identified by respondents include Humanism, Bahai and Rastafarianism. One large secondary school states that there is no religious content to any of its assemblies (253 GM 11-18C).

Table 11   Inclusion of material from main religious traditions: primary schools

n 185	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response to line
Buddhism	0	0	52 – 28.1%	82 = 44.3%	12 = 6.5%	39 = 21.1%
Christianity	44 23.8%	97 52.4%	32 = 17.3%	7 = 3.8%	2 = 1.1%	3 = 1.6%
Hinduism	0	0	61 = 33.0%	91 = 49.2%	7 = 3.8%	26 = 14.1%
Islam	0	0	60 = 32.4%	89 = 48.1%	6 = 3.2%	30 = 16.2%
Judaism	0	0	78 = 42.2%	78 = 42.2%	2 = 1.1%	27 = 14.5%
Sikhism	0	0	40 = 21.6%	44 = 23.8%	8 = 4.3%	93 = 50.3%
other	0	0	9 = 4.9%	10 = 5.4%	1 = 0.5%	165 = 89.2%

- multiple response question so percentages do not total 100.

Table 12 Inclusion of material from main religious traditions: secondary schools

n 75	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response to line
Buddhism	0	0	13 – 17.3%	29 = 38.7%	10 = 13.3%	22 = 29.3%
Christianity	16 21.3%	28 – 37.3%	20 = 26.7%	8 = 10.7%	1 = 1.3%	1 = 1.3%
Hinduism	0	0	13 = 17.3%	29 = 38.7%	9 = 12.0%	23 = 30.7%
Islam	1 – 1.3%	1 – 1.3%	15 = 20.0%	33 = 44.0%	5 = 6.7%	19 = 25.3%
Judaism	0	1 1.3%	18 24.0%	29 38.7%	4 = 5.3%	22 = 29.3%
Sikhism	0	0	10 = 13.3%	23 = 30.7%	11 = 14.7%	30 = 40.0%
other	0	2 – 2.7%	7 – 9.3%	6 = 8.0%	1 = 1.3%	58 = 77.3%

question not answered: 1 = 1.3%

- multiple response question so percentages do not total 100.

Table 13 Inclusion of material from main religious traditions: cross-phase schools

n 18	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response to line
Buddhism	0	0	2 11.1%	4 = 22.2%	3 = 16.7%	8 = 44.4%
Christianity	5 27.8%	8 44.4%	3 – 16.7%	1 = 5.6%	0	0
Hinduism	0	0	2 = 11.1%	3 – 16.7%	3 = 16.7%	9 = 50.0%
Islam	0	0	3 – 16.7%	3 – 16.7	4 = 22.2%	7 = 38.9%
Judaism	0	0	5 – 27.8%	5 = 27.8%	2 = 11.1%	6 = 27.8%
Sikhism	0	0	2 11.1%	3 = 16.7%	3 = 16.7%	9 = 50.0%
other	0	0	0	0	0	

question not answered: 1 = 5.6%

- multiple response question so percentages do not total 100.

From supplementary comments, it is again evident that material is selected from both religious and non-religious sources and is subordinate to the requirements of the intended lesson, '...whatever helps to get the message across' (017 RC/P). Further comments also refer to the prevalence of a moral emphasis. Usually, '... the main theme is 'morality' irrespective of source' (237 CP); only if the materials available from the religious traditions contribute towards such development are they used (174 GM 11-16C). The purpose is to provide '... general moral guidelines not specific to any religion' (012 C11-18C). Any inclusion of material from non-Christian traditions is usually focused on the seasonal celebration of religious festivals:

Non-Christian input usually coincides with festivals of other religions.

(167 Ind.11-18C)

Go to church. Always celebrate Harvest, Christmas, Easter, Whitsun.
Also Baisakhi (Sikh), Hanukah (Jewish). Class assembly on Islam.
(038 CE/Comb)

In primary schools, the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education are sometimes reflected in collective worship, usually through the class-led worship which presents curricular material:

County RE syllabus for 7-11 year olds specifies Christianity, Judaism
and Islam. (281 CJ)

At the same time, while some schools imply that their pupils have no need of material from non-Christian faiths: '*We have very few pupils from non-Christian traditions*' (188 Ind. 11-18 C), others indicate that although their pupils' birth tradition is Christianity, this is not reflected in assembly, which is largely secular:

The school is over 90% Christian. Many assemblies do not have a
specifically 'religious' theme.   (182 C11-18C)

Another practice which is identified is the provision of separate 'faith assemblies'. In one school, these are held weekly, pupils being free to attend whichever group they choose (160 C11-18C).

3.4.2   Thematic content   (question 18)

Question 18 sought to investigate the teaching content of collective worship in more detail by asking respondents to identify the themes of the five previous days. Not all were able to provide a full reply, either because they lacked information or because collective worship had not taken place, e.g. during the summer examination

period. Some respondents noted only the use of broad themes or series, and it was not always possible to tell whether a single theme was expanded throughout the week or repeated to separate year groups, a practice observed during visits to schools. However, a total of 956 titles was recorded from the 249 schools which provided information in response to this question. Themes fell into several, often overlapping, categories: they are clustered below for the purpose of analysis, but subsequent observation in schools served to remind that a title may give little indication of the message intended by the leader, or of the understanding acquired by the listeners. Furthermore, the absence of an overt reference to religious content in a title cannot be taken to imply that no such material is incorporated; similarly, a religious title may mask a moral or social emphasis, and frequently these dimensions are indistinguishable from each other. It is important also to recognise that the values which are transmitted may derive either from an implicitly religious framework or from one which is essentially humanist and secular. Religious themes are clearly identifiable and comprise 25% of the titles listed. Many others, however, refer to moral and social guidance and to broad aspects of pupil development, while teachers' concern for their pupils as individuals is apparent in themes which address personal wellbeing. Curricular themes, usually reported by primary schools, appear often to be based on class projects; and a further cluster of titles is related to school routines and rituals. Miscellaneous elements, where insufficient information is available for classification, are included in a final set. The following figure identifies the main sub-sections of each category, together with the number of references to each set of themes.

Table 14   **Clusters of themes**

Religious	Christianity	202
	other world religions	41
Moral precepts	positive	31
	negative	30
Social guidance	behaviour	128
	relationships	36
	community	20
Personal development	advice	66
	emotions	14
	achievement	52
	heroic figures	12
	health & safety	11
General interest	curriculum	120
	current affairs	9
	calendar	56
	environment	35
Organisational: routines and rituals		66
Miscellaneous		27
Total		**956**

Themes with a religious emphasis

Nearly all of the titles which incorporated a reference to religion were listed by respondents from primary and voluntary schools, and almost all (83%) related to the Christian tradition.

Table 15   Themes relating to Christianity

general			8
Old Testament			26
New Testament	(i)	Gospels	71
	(ii)	Acts and Letters	14
Saints and Christians			11
Doctrine	(i)	God	4
	(ii)	Jesus	3
	(iii)	Creed	1
Christian life and practice	(i)	discipleship	16
	(ii)	prayer & worship	14
	(iii)	sacraments	8
	(iv)	festivals	20
	(v)	miscellaneous	6
		Total:	**202**

The autumn completion of some responses is evident in numerous references to the season of Advent and Christmas: many other titles are story-based, and include miracles, parables, the life of Jesus and accounts of the early church, while material from the Old Testament includes stories of leaders, kings and prophets. There is little information available to indicate how the subject matter is interpreted, except for one

reference to *'Noah – God's love for us'* (218 CP), and another to *'Elijah - fear, fatigue, how God gives us what we want'* (073 CE/P). Doctrinal themes were reported mainly by Roman Catholic schools while references to discipleship were noted particularly by primary schools and include titles such as *'being a friend of Jesus'* (244 CP).

Themes relating to prayer and to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, marriage and ordination are also identified. Festivals from the Christian calendar, most notably Harvest and the feasts of All Souls and All Saints were reported solely by secondary schools, while primary schools referred to carol and christingle services. Miscellaneous religious themes include monasteries, the family of the Church and the week of Christian unity.

A much smaller number of schools identified themes from non-Christian traditions (17%) during the period of the survey. Although all five major religions were represented, there is a clear imbalance in the use of the material, as the following figures show:

Table 16   Themes on world religions

General	4
Buddhism	4
Hinduism	22
Islam	6
Judaism	4
Sikhism	1
Total:	**41**

As a percentage of the overall number of identified themes, this cluster represents a very small group (4%). Most of the titles were reported by primary schools, the emphasis on material associated with Hinduism reflecting the celebration of Diwali during the autumn term. Only one, to the Prophet Mohammed, was listed by a secondary school, and five (to Hinduism) by a middle-secondary school. This does not appear to confirm the information given in response to question 17 which enquired about the inclusion of material from the main religious traditions, except that the minimal reference to material from Sikhism is replicated here.

Moral and social guidance

As noted in responses to earlier questions, for many schools the encouragement of appropriate pupil behaviours is the main focus of attention and a further 26°o of themes refer to moral and social guidance. A small set of precepts can be identified which refer to specific principles by which action is determined: truth is the theme most commonly identified, and tolerance, justice and respect are also listed. Negative attitudes and behaviours which are discouraged include prejudice, selfishness, greed, racism, and theft. The concern most frequently expressed, however, relates to bullying, which was listed by schools from both primary and secondary sectors. Only one school reported challenging moral expectations.

Because schools are anxious to encourage particular forms of pupil behaviour, most themes encourage behaviours, qualities and attitudes which support harmonious relationships in the social environment. These include kindliness, consideration, thoughtfulness, gratitude and forgiveness. In particular, it is clear that caring, sharing and helping are virtues which are much promoted by all schools, each being found in a variety of combinations. Support for those in need is encouraged, and several schools report fund-raising for charitable organisations. Closely related are numerous references to co-operation and the development of relationships. The value of

friendship, the importance of commitment and the 'cost of love' (160 C11-18C) are emphasised. Beyond the immediate circle of family and friends, the place of the individual in the school and in wider society is another theme, and the potential for conflict between individuals and the community is identified.

Personal guidance

Many of the themes offering guidance on personal development were difficult to isolate from the social categories above: eventually, however, I decided to cluster separately those themes whose concern was chiefly individual wellbeing and achievement. In addition to advice on dealing with feelings and emotions, including anger, sorrow, happiness and depression, a picture emerges of school communities in which young people are encouraged to develop positive attitudes, to aim for high standards, to work purposefully and to strive for improvement. Pupils are advised to recognise their talents and to pursue their goals with determination and perseverance, investing in their own futures and making effective use of time.

What is also clear from the themes identified by respondents is the use of the worship period for the celebration of achievement, which serves as an incentive to further effort. This can range from verbal praise in the primary school to the distribution of awards as a formal acknowledgement of success, in what are often described as 'merit assemblies' in the secondary sector. Heroic figures, such as Drake, Livingstone, Scott, Mme. Curie and Rosa Parks are elevated as examples of purpose, struggle and accomplishment. The only contemporary figure who is identified is listed as 'Gazza' (Paul Gasgoine).

Finally, respondents included references which reflect teachers' concern for pupils' physical wellbeing and relate to a small set of themes which address issues of

health and safety. These include road safety, the dangers of fireworks and bonfires, smoking and drugs.

General interest

The period provides an opportunity for extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider curriculum, especially in the primary school and many of the themes incorporate material presented by children in their class-led assemblies. Examples include *'the alphabet', 'farms'* and *'the Tudors'.* In secondary schools, use is also made of current affairs: the Rwanda-Zaire conflict, the American election, and Amnesty International are listed, and one middle school used a local road demonstration to discuss the issue of protesting for what one believes is important. Material of this type, focusing on national and international events, is more commonly cited by secondary schools but forms only a very small set of themes (9 = 0.9%). Although there is evidence elsewhere in the questionnaire to indicate that teachers use material culled from newspapers and the media to put across their intended message, observation indicated that this is usually a human story which gives support to a socio-moral message.

More dominant in primary schools are themes based on the calendar or on the environment which draw attention to *'nature's beauty'* (001 CP), *'our wonderful world'* (266 CE VC P) and the *'beauty of creation'* (115 CJ). For those who replied in November, remembrance was a subject frequently identified by both primary and secondary schools. Associated themes included sacrifice in war, Edith Cavell and Anne Frank. Some schools emphasised peace and gratitude, although one incorporated a discussion on the Vietnam War and draft-evasion.

General organisation and administration

Schools commonly use the worship period to promote aspects of their own administrative routines and organisation. Secondary schools in particular communicate information about work experience, examinations, homework and money-raising events. End of year ceremonies provide opportunities for farewells, for the sharing of memories and the expression of gratitude as well as looking towards the future.

Some themes, however, seemed determined to defy all attempts to classify them, because their titles were ambiguous or their focus unclear e.g. *'Dreams'*; *'Hyde Park Corner'*. Another identified *'Death'* as a theme, followed by *'Morality in Education - synopsis of Tate proposals for sixth forms'* (169 Ind.11-18C).

3.4.3 Source of material   (question 8)

By this question, I had hoped to establish whether, in the interests of coherence and parity, schools provided a common source of material for use by teachers when they adopted the *'thought for the day'* approach in the classroom. This was not made sufficiently clear in the question and so was misunderstood by respondents: nevertheless, some useful information was incidentally acquired about the general provision of resources.

Published sources of material include diocesan guidelines and LEA booklets produced in support of the agreed syllabus for religious education. Of the commercial publications listed, the most commonly cited are *Primary Assembly File*, *Here I Am* and *Join with Us*. Other publications are listed in Appendix 29 and include material from both religious and non-religious sources, such as Scripture Union, the Redemptorists and the Secondary Heads' Association. Some schools

make use of their own religious education syllabus or planning and policy documents, and may also draw on PS(H)E materials. Many refer to material produced by members of staff: in addition, one school referred to a manual produced by children and another to the use of pupils' work. Finally, one school expressed the intention to provide resources for both religious education and worship during the coming year: presumably none had previously been maintained. However, in listing sources, teachers' experience is identified as '... *perhaps best resource*' (229 CJ).

3.4.4 Summary of key points

- The provision of an act of worship which contains the traditional elements of hymn and prayer is common only in primary and voluntary schools.

- Where it is incorporated, religious material is customarily derived from Christianity.

- The inclusion of material from other religious traditions is uncommon and is usually found only in primary schools, where it focuses on the celebration of festivals.

- The teaching element of the content is chosen to support socio-moral and personal development.

- The encouragement and celebration of achievement is a common theme, particularly in the secondary school.

3.5 TEACHERS' VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Finally, I wanted to explore some of the perceptions and attitudes held by teachers with regard to the function and value of collective worship in their schools, and this section addresses these, together with related insights provided by respondents.

3.5.1 Teachers' perceptions of the contribution of collective worship in their schools (questions 23 and 24);

In order to gain an insight into teachers' perceptions of the value of collective worship, a question was designed to examine its contribution to student experience, using a list of elements compiled from suggestions made in response to a pilot questionnaire. It asked: *'To which of the following elements, identified by other teachers, does worship/assembly in your school contribute most frequently?'* As the following table illustrates, a sense of unity and community, the communication of the school's values and the celebration of achievement are key features for schools, but there is some variation between types of school. Whereas primary and secondary schools emphasise the celebration of achievement, in cross-phase institutions, most of which are special schools, this is less important than the encouragement of a sense of identity and self-worth. Voluntary schools place more emphasis on spiritual awareness than other establishments (94%), and also on moral development (90%).

Table 17   **Teachers' perceptions of the elements of provision to which schools most frequently contribute**

	primary n 185		secondary n = 75		cross-phase n − 18		total n − 278	
unity and community	176	95.1%	66 =	88.0%	17 =	94.4%	259 =	93.2%
celebration of achievement	171	92.4%	64 −	85.3%	14 =	77.8%	249 =	89.6%
spiritual awareness	146	78.9%	44 =	58.7%	10 =	55.6%	200 =	71.9%
identity and selfworth	161 −	87.0%	59 =	78.7%	17 =	94.4%	237 =	85.3%
opportunity for reflection	143	77.3%	52 −	69.3%	8 −	44.4%	203 =	73.0%
introduction to worship	122	65.9%	30	40.0%	10 =	55.6%	162 =	58.3%
moral development	164	88.6%	56 =	74.7%	16	88.9%	236 =	84.9%
sen e of wonder	129	69.7%	31 =	41.3%	6 −	33.3°	166 =	59.7%
religious & cultural diversity	143	77.3%	44 =	58.7%	7 =	38.9%	194 =	69.8%
sense of higher power	107	57.8%	31 =	41.3%	6 =	33.3%	144 =	51.8%
self-discipline	130	70.3%	55	73.3%	11 =	61.1%	196 =	70.5%
schools' values	173	93.5%	67 =	89.3%	15 =	83.3%	255 =	91.7%
development of ocial kills	125	67 6%	44 −	58.7%	15 −	83.3%	184 −	66.2%
cultural traditions	132	71.4%	38 =	50.7%	8 −	44.4%	178 =	64.0%
religious understanding	140	75.7%	37	49.3%	8 =	44.4%	185 =	66.5%
personal and social education	132	71.4%	41 −	54.7%	14 =	77.8%	187 =	62.3%
health education	66	35.7%	26 =	34.7%	2 =	11.1%	94 =	33.8%
general notices	108 −	58.4%	61 =	81.3%	10 =	55.6%	179 =	63.4%
pupil behaviour	118	63.8%	59 =	78.7%	8 =	44.4%	185 =	66.5%
reprimands	38	20.5%	39 =	52.0%	3 =	16.7%	80 =	28.8%
other	9	4.9%	2 −	2.7%	2 =	11.1%	13 =	4.7%

- question not answered: 1= 0.4%

Table 18 below shows the elements identified least frequently. Only half of the schools regarded themselves as making a frequent contribution to a *'sense of a power greater than selves'*, (although this figure rises to 75% in the case of voluntary schools) and similarly few secondary and cross-phase institutions felt that they contributed often to a sense of wonder. Only 40% of secondary schools regarded themselves as providing an introduction to worship, which correlates with the evidence of previous questions about content and practice.

Table 18   Features least commonly identified

primary n 185		secondary n 75		special/cross-phase n = 18	
		sense of wonder	41.3%	sense of wonder	33.3%
sense of power greater than selves	57.8%	sense of power greater than selves	41.3%	sense of power greater than selves	33.3%
health education	35.7%	introduction to worship	40.0%	reprimands	16.7%
reprimands	20.5%	health education	34.7%	health education	11.1%

Nevertheless, there are certain features where a closer correlation between the thematic content listed in response to question 18 and a contribution to pupil development might be expected. Respect for religious and cultural diversity, for example, which features in 70% of responses to this question is not reflected in the limited number of themes which focus specifically on non-Christian traditions or which make use of sacred texts (question 17), although it may nevertheless be an integral aspect of themes which address personal and behavioural attitudes, such as tolerance and respect. From the evidence of these responses, it appears that collective worship is not deemed to be an appropriate place for reprimands except in some secondary schools where more than half of respondents noted their inclusion. A general reluctance to incorporate reprimands may indicate that, even where formal worship does not occur, in most schools the period seeks to build a positive

atmosphere in which criticism and complaints have little or no place. Observations in schools did not always support this inference, however: reprimands were often threaded throughout the period, especially in primary schools, and were sometimes concealed in content material which used the opportunity to focus indirect criticism at the student body in general. A social desirability factor is probably influential here: teachers may be reluctant to reveal a negative picture of their schools.

Whereas the previous question was intended to establish teachers' perceptions of the intended contribution of collective worship to the life of the school, I hoped by question 24 to examine outcome. Whilst recognising the impossibility of assessing what, if anything, individual pupils acquire from collective worship, I was nevertheless interested to discover whether teachers felt that anything was gained by pupils generally, and what this might be. Consequently, I included an open question which enquired into teachers' opinions on this issue, and received 212 responses (76%). Perhaps predictably, a number of these replies (32=15%) simply referred back to the previous question. Most, however, expanded on distinctive features, and it is clear that respondents felt that the experience provided by this period of the day makes an effective contribution to pupil development. The major areas identified by teachers are (i) its effect on social relationships within the community, (ii) its influence on individual development and (iii) the opportunity it provides for religious encounter and experience.

First, however, the ritual itself is described as a positive experience which sets the tone and provides 'a quiet, ordered start to the day' (273 Ind. P). This may be one of the reasons why most schools choose the beginning of the morning for gathering together (see q.6). It offers celebration and enjoyment as well as a 'sense of occasion' (128 C11-16C) reaching out to both teachers and pupils. In some schools, the activity of worship binds the community together: 'The prayers have a strongly

cohesive effect giving both teachers and pupils a sense of belonging in a community' (021 Ind. P).

The importance placed by teachers on membership of the community features strongly in responses to this question. They report that individuals learn that living in a community involves shared responsibility for mutual care and support, and that pupils are encouraged to reflect on *'how they ought to lead their lives in relation to others'* (143 GM 11-18C). This may include the *'sharing of problems and worries'* (218 CP) as well as *'mutual support in difficult times, e.g. bereavement'* (164 RC/ 11-16C). Respect, responsibility, and a common purpose are regarded as important features of community. Occasionally, appreciation of cultural diversity and the celebration of difference is another attitude which respondents claim is developed. In multi-cultural schools, knowledge of the religious and cultural backgrounds of their peers is enhanced by the sharing of traditions, stories and music, providing an opportunity to bring pupils together *'as a group respectful of each others' culture and beliefs'* (107 CP).

At the same time, teachers are aware of the need to encourage individual development and a *'valuing of the self and of others'* (128 C11-16C; 244 CP). In primary schools, teachers refer to the sense of loving and of *'being loved'* (244 CP; 005 CE P), and in secondary schools to a *'sense of belonging'* (187 C11-18C) and *'togetherness'* (191 C11-16C). Teachers recognise the importance of reaching a balance between the needs of the individual and those of the community, and team-building is also emphasised, pupils being encouraged to share common goals. The worship period provides *'a vehicle whereby they can be praised'* (077 CJ) as well as an opportunity for *'target-setting for future achievement'* (179 GM 11-18 C; 191 C11-16C). Students may gain an insight into a world which is wider than their own (189 GM 11-18C) as well as *'a feeling of being unique yet part of a whole'* (244 CP).

Many responses from voluntary, independent and primary schools referred to pupils' acquisition of knowledge and experience of the Christian faith. In voluntary schools, prayer is recognised as a focus of the community where pupils can observe the example of committed adults (068 RC/11-18C) and experience the shared practice of faith (185 RC/11-18C; 064 GM 11-18C), leading to a: *'deepening understanding of God through Jesus Christ and relationships with others'* (124 RC/11-18C). Although what pupils gain from the experience cannot be assessed, some may find a faith commitment:

> *Some find a deep commitment and seek confirmation, though for others assembly may be just a period of calm before the start of the school day* (255 Ind. 8-13).

Respondents from all types of primary school indicate that pupils receive an introduction to worship and some respondents claim that children experience God's goodness, wonder and love (218 CP; 061 RC/P; 005 CE/P). An opportunity is provided for children to develop this relationship (221 RC/P), to recognise *'His importance in their lives'* (113 CE P) and to celebrate God in their everyday living (011 CE VC I).

Most pupils are unlikely to experience worship outside of the school, and respondents from both primary and secondary establishments remark on this situation:

> *They gain an introduction to worship that they may not get from home.*
>
> (149 CP)

> *For the majority of our children, the morning assembly is their only religious experience.*   (194 C11-18C)

116

The majority don't go anywhere near church so at least familiar readings

and hymns are on offer here, and an opportunity to listen, sing and pray.

(127 Ind.11-18)

In some schools, therefore, a major function of worship is seen to be the provision of an opportunity for pupils to meet a range of religious or spiritual experiences and to reflect on the *'possibility of more to life than is apparent'* (171 CP; 126 C11-16C).

The largely positive response to this question was not unanimous, however, and there were voices of dissent, although these were far fewer in number than anticipated: that the respondents were largely headteachers or senior members of staff with a responsibility for collective worship may account for the favourable attitudes which are portrayed. Nevertheless, one respondent commented, *'With the amount of time we have, not a great deal is gained'* (132 SM), and three others argued that there is little of benefit except the opportunity to be together once a day and to have some contact with senior staff whom most pupils would otherwise rarely meet. This may be of scant value, however. *'I do feel to meet daily in this form is of little use and time is better spent in classrooms'* (204 CP). Criticism of content features clearly. Pupils gain *'... Very little spiritually and morally due to content'* (092 C. Spec); and the existence of a gap between intention and achievement is recognised. *'What I hope they receive and what they do receive is a big question'* (075 CE/VC P). Another teacher states categorically that pupils gain nothing: *'...they hate assemblies, our assemblies are very very boring'* (121 C11-16C).

3.5.2   Teachers' insights into influences on provision   (question 25)

The purpose behind this question was to elicit information on the range of influences which lie behind schools' provision of collective worship. This was an open question and 186 replies were received (67%). Conformity to the legal

requirements of the Education Act was cited in 19% of the replies and, in addition, reference was made to the impact of OFSTED inspections. Other sources of influence include pupils' needs and backgrounds, governors, local members of clergy, the diocese, the school's aims and the curriculum.

However, the impact of various members of staff was identified most frequently, and clear and effective leadership, the quality of the support given to teachers and the '*commitment of senior staff to worth of worship*' (134 C11-16C) are seen as important features. Such commitment may be motivated by personal values, '*... the values of the headteacher and deputy headteacher and their belief in a multi-cultural/religious society*' (054 CI), or by religious faith:

strong faith of some members of staff including the headteacher.

(145 C.Spec)

a lot of teachers with religious backgrounds. (160 C11-18C)

their deep personal beliefs. (225 CP)

Sometimes, such references are ambiguous, and raise the issue of teachers' concern about the place of objectivity and neutrality: '*... influenced by our own beliefs, even though try to be open-minded*' (109 CP).

Comments from some schools, however, indicated clearly that the influence of the staff on collective worship is not always supportive, '*... withdrawal of all staff from leading worship*' (066 CJ). Reasons suggested for this include '*... fear, dislike of organised religious practices*' (155 C11-18C). Others feel that worship is personal, and will not therefore participate. '*Worship is a private matter. Very few staff will lead it*' (168 GM 11-16C). Where such attitudes are held by the majority,

those who are willing to participate may feel marginalised or intimidated (092 Ind.Spec) and may experience a sense of resentment:

> *For the majority of staff, including senior management, the word*
> *'worship' is unimportant - hence the lack of time and failure to allow*
> *those with the commitment to conduct the assembly.* (012 C11-18C)

Where teachers refuse to conduct worship, schools make alternative arrangements. *'The majority of school worship is done by outside speakers belonging to the various churches within the community'* *(192 C11-18C)*. Alternatively, especially in smaller schools, the headteacher assumes the responsibility: *'...[my] influence greatest because I prepare programmes and lead the majority of them without any staff present'* (059 CI).

Perceptions of pupils' needs and consideration of their backgrounds constitute another form of influence. Although all types of schools take the individual needs of their pupils into account, special schools make particular reference to their use of collective worship as a medium for the development of worth and self-esteem. Their provision is influenced by a desire to take account of the *'individual needs of pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties'* (022 C. Spec), as well as the particular levels of understanding of children with *'poor social and cultural development'* (055 Ind. Spec). In addition, the presence of different faith traditions is noted by multi-cultural schools who recognise *'the need to respect different faiths and meet the needs of all children'* (100 CP). Some teachers in rural communities report similar aims: *'The children come from a number of small villages - we aim to make them aware of the wider world - religious differences/similarities, feelings for others, respect, etc'* (290 CP). The effect of a secular society is also recognised, and schools are influenced by *'large numbers of agnostics, atheists'* (159 C11-18C) and by what is described as *'Christian/humanism'* (213 VC P). The local community

may be influential through its representation on the board of governors. Sometimes this is recognised as supportive, but there is also a hint that this may not be always welcome:

Pressure from certain members of the governing body to have Sikh, Muslim and Hindu assemblies in heritage language. (100 CP)

Inevitably, the aims and ethos of the school feature in responses, sometimes as reflections of Christian belief, *'aims, values and ethos, which reflect Christian beliefs'* (040 CP). In Roman Catholic schools, the influence of the faith tradition is freely expressed. *'Sharing our Christian faith which is mainly centred around our Catholic faith'* (221 RC/P). Anglican schools make broader reference to the Christian gospel and do not identify their denominational tradition to the same extent, while some community schools also acknowledge their Christian ethos and independent schools report the influence of their Christian foundations where appropriate.

Not all of the influences identified by respondents are beneficial. Schools in both sectors again complain of inadequate accommodation, lack of time, the restricting influence of the National Curriculum, and the lack of money and facilities for training, as well as the problems associated with split-site buildings. *'Different tutors for different days of the week because of split site'* (050 C11-18C). Finally, three schools identify apathy as an influence which results in minimal and poor quality provision.

3.5.3 The presence of a hidden curriculum (question 27)

Responses to the earlier pilot questionnaire had revealed an occasional identification of hidden features, such as hierarchy or authority and *'laddishness'*.

This open-ended question, therefore, sought to discover whether these or similar elements were identifiable in schools but it proved to be a difficult question, with a correspondingly low response rate (70=25%). The 'hidden element' of the question was identified by some respondents as an implicit but intentional agenda and was related by them to features previously listed as central to the function of collective worship in their schools, such as the encouragement of mutual support, a sense of community and the celebration of achievement. *'Underlying theme to do with respect, challenge and valuing'* (112 C11-16C). On the whole, however, teachers responded to the examples provided, with only occasional deviation, concentrating mainly on issues relating to equal opportunities and hierarchy, although some respondents also identified issues of control and eurocentrism.

Respondents claimed that active support for equal opportunities policy statements means that schools work hard to eliminate gender imbalances between pupils, while the student and staff body stand guard to point out any accidental infringements.

I'm never allowed to get away with sexist racialist remarks .

(175 C11-16C)

Colleagues sometimes comment (gently, I think) if I refer to 'boys' or
'girls' rather than 'pupils', so I have to be particularly careful! There
is a very effective equal opportunities working party on the staff, and
they attempt successfully to keep us on the right lines.

(164 RC/11-16C)

Nevertheless, one GM school reports fewer girls being in receipt of awards and displaying a reluctance to identify themselves before the school body. This may indicate the presence of a counter culture in which the approbation of peers is

paramount, a circumstance which probably applies to certain groups of boys also. Some respondents comment that they are too closely involved to be able to identify hidden features, although they are conscious of the need to avoid imbalance, particularly with respect to equal opportunities.

I am tempted to say that I am unlikely to recognise a hidden gender element as a woman priest, but that would be too extreme a view! I will admit that we don't follow 'politically correct' fetishes from the other extreme either. (258 Ind. 4-13)

In some schools, policies are designed to reduce examples of hierarchy, and adults sit amongst the pupils during collective worship, for instance, but generally schools seem to accept that messages of the hierarchical structure are inevitable (186 GM 11-18C) and reflect the status of pupils as well as of staff (144 CJ). Some respondents recognise that this is not an unavoidable circumstance, however:

Hierarchy is an issue. Myself and other senior staff sit on the stage for some assemblies. Perhaps we shouldn't! (182 C11-18C)

Frequently, hierarchy and control are perceived to be related:

Under a former head hierarchy/authority was an underlying theme.. but not under new head. (128 C11-16C)

I feel hierarchy and the imposition of school discipline is a strong organisational element (though not so much in the material delivered which is often little more than unfocused moralism). (155 C11-18C)

For some teachers, the emphasis on control at the expense of other features is

regrettable: *'Sometimes, assemblies take on too much Discipline and not enough Spirituality'* (136 CE/11-16C).

Racism is another focus for equal opportunities policies, although only four schools make direct reference to this dimension. Two of these refer to the paucity of their experience and regret the inadequate attention given to cultural diversity:

> *We have very few minority cultures and religions. We do try to*
>
> *celebrate and learn about these but maybe the overall emphasis tends*
>
> *to be European/C. of E.* (008 CP)

The question of maintaining a neutral position is raised by another respondent in reflecting on diversity: *'I have to be careful myself as I am a Christian believer not to impose my own faith on others'* (102 CI).

Two respondents recognised that messages can be communicated by omission, and complain of trends away from traditional Christian values, resulting in the presence of a hidden emphasis along individualist and self-centred lines (192 Ind. Spec; 050 C11-18C). Finally, one response revealed an insight into teachers' attitudes to children and worship which is communicated through a particular approach to discipline:

> *There is a clear distinction between those teachers who*
>
> *demand enforce quietness by verbal reprimand and those who*
>
> *encompass it in their attitude towards and opening of assembly with*
>
> *invited quietness/stillness, musical reflection.* (298 C Midd-Sec)

3.5.4 Teachers' additional comments.

A few respondents (19 altogether) took the opportunity to add final comments at the end of the questionnaire, and these revealed teachers' frustrations, experiences and perceptions as well as repeating some of the arguments in the debate surrounding collective worship examined in chapter 1. Some were clear about their opposition to the provision of worship in schools, arguing that this is the responsibility of the home and the faith community and that legislation should therefore be repealed (100 CP; 168 GM 11-16 C). Others, however, have no objections to its presence, provided the requirements are liberally interpreted. Some respondents express their concerns about its quality, viability and worth, stating that, without the leadership of practising believers, it is counter-productive:

Unless it is done well by teachers who believe in its value it will be harmful to future spiritual growth. (097 CP)

There are serious problems in trying to have Christian assemblies, when staff leading year groups are not practising Christians. (119 C11-18C)

Other respondents reflect on the motivation and attitudes of parents, whose commitment they question:

Parents are keen to have their children taught in a Church School! Question is, is it because they value the influence and involvement in the Church OR they can opt out and leave RE to the school? (211 CE P)

Teachers detect confusion on the part of some parents and argue for balance and understatement in meeting the legal requirements in order: '...*to be sensitive to the majority who are non-practising Christians'* (008 CP). Another teacher, exhausted at the year's end, claims to detect a growing phenomenon amongst parents which reflects a feature of contemporary society:

> *A rising large group of 'alternative' parents and children, i.e. 'Save the world', 'vegetarian', 'greens'!? Modern day hippy types. They seem to want a religion without a God. They are the first to start the 'Blue Peter Appeals' etc. Sorry. Just a cynical teacher. I'm really tired!!!* (038 CE/Comb)

In one of the few responses which presents a bleakly negative picture throughout, one respondent expresses her discontent with the situation in her school:

> *I am afraid the time used for assemblies is just wasted at this school. It is used to try and make the pupils behave and conform to society school rules. The assembly only lasts for about ten minutes but seems like half an hour.* (121 C11-16C)

Nevertheless, three other schools conclude by commenting that worship is a central and positive feature of their provision:

> *Assembly and worship are central to the life of this school. Staff and children usually enjoy them because a lot of thought is given to planning, maintaining interest, involvement and diversity.* (224 RC/P)

3.5.5 Summary of key points

- Teachers claim that the main contribution of collective worship is to the maintenance of a sense of the school as a community, to the communication of its values, and to pupil achievement.

- Respondents (who were mainly teachers with a particular interest in provision) present a largely favourable and non-critical picture.

- Teachers claim that the attitudes of headteachers and other colleagues have most influence on approaches to provision.

- Issues of neutrality and objectivity are identified as a matter of personal concern by some teachers.

3.6 Conclusion

The picture of collective worship which is revealed by this survey is one of wide variety in the details of provision set within a broad framework in which common patterns can be distinguished. In particular, it is clear that many of the customary aspects associated with religious worship are present in nearly all primary schools, but are frequently absent from community secondary schools, to the extent that pupils' transfer between sectors marks also a move from an act of collective worship held on a daily basis to a weekly assembly which, except in voluntary schools, contains few religious elements. In nearly all schools, the major function of collective worship lies in the contribution it makes to the generation of a sense of community: the importance of harmonious relationships is stressed within an organisation where scholastic achievement is the main goal.

Teachers' attitudes are regarded as most influential by their peers, and although the survey presents a largely positive picture of the value of assembling, conformity to legislation does not occur in those schools where there is opposition to

religious worship. In the next chapter, I report the findings of the data gathered by observation and interview, seeking to examine actual provision in schools and to determine the attitudes of teachers and pupils.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT ON OBSERVATIONS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND
INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS AND PUPILS

Overview

This chapter, which reports on the observation of practice in schools and on the interviews held with key participants, seeks to add colour and detail to the picture of collective worship which the questionnaire revealed, in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of schools' provision. It is divided into three sections. In the first, I describe the visits which were made for observation and the main patterns of provision which were encountered. In the second, I report on the interviews which were held with teachers and, in the concluding section, on discussions with pupils from both primary and secondary schools. A numerical identification of each school is provided in Appendix 30.

4.1   OBSERVATION IN SCHOOLS

In each of the primary schools which were visited, collective worship for all pupils as a single group was the norm. In secondary schools the assembling of separate year groups on a weekly basis was the approach most commonly encountered, except where accommodation was available to meet more frequently, confirming the data provided by responses to the questionnaire. Nearly all multi-cultural schools were opposed to the provision of discrete acts of worship for the traditions represented by their pupils, but one large primary school, with over 500 pupils, had decided to include twice-weekly faith groups in its programme, and separate acts of worship were provided for Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh pupils

according to the choice of their parents. Each was led by teachers accompanied by representatives from the community. For pupils whose parents had not selected any of these denominations, a fifth group known as 'Quest' was available, which was associated with no religious tradition and was known by pupils as the *'non-assembly'* (school 317 CP).

In the secondary schools of the city in the Midlands which was also visited for the purpose of observation, opportunities for Muslim students to meet for midday worship were provided on the occasions requested by the students (schools 302 C11-16C; 310 C11-16C; 311 C11-16C; 312 C11-16C). Usually a classroom and washing facilities were set aside for this purpose, but in one school the headteacher made his room available daily (311 C11-16C). Only a minority of students took advantage of these facilities, although one school reported that numbers rose during Ramadan (312 C11-16C).

With the exception of Mass in the small chapel of a Roman Catholic secondary school, all of the acts which were observed took place in halls of various sizes, although one year group met in a drama studio. As indicated in the questionnaire, the majority of teachers were present in primary schools and the children usually sat on the floor in horizontal rows, with the youngest pupils at the front. Most secondary schools provided chairs for their students but in four institutions, all in the south west, students sat on the floor. Teachers were present in variable numbers: at the start of the day in some schools the form tutors attached to the year group registered their students on arrival in the hall. Often they then sat or stood around the sides, but in one school they sat amongst the pupils during Eucharist (308 CE/11-16C).

In secondary schools, many students made their way to the hall on arrival in the morning, although in one school where collective worship was held later, they

entered in silent class lines of boys and girls (303 CTC). Usually students engaged in conversation until a signal was given by the teacher in charge: in some schools this was a preparation for the entry of a gowned headteacher, for whom everybody stood. In less formal situations, the approach adopted by teachers was more conversational. Reprimands about individual behaviours were rare in secondary schools but much more common in primary schools, where children, usually boys, were often chided and re-seated by teachers.

Music of various kinds was provided during the entrance of pupils in one-third of the acts of collective worship, mostly in primary schools, although it was used less commonly on exit. In the Roman Catholic schools, candles and a crucifix formed a focal point and in two primary schools, where the majority of pupils were Hindu, images of Krishna were displayed.

4.1.1 Traditional elements of worship: hymn, prayer and sacred text

Singing was common in all primary schools, but rare in the secondary sector, occurring on only three occasions during my visits (see table 19 below). In multi-faith primary schools, hymns which made no reference to God were introduced as songs. These included examples which would be regarded as hymns in a different context, such as *'The wise man built his house upon the rock'* (331 CP). None of the maintained secondary schools incorporated hymns but, at a service of Mass in an aided school, the organising students from a year 7 class included a 'rap' based on the story of the sower, performed by a group of boys, and 4 hymns in which most participated, accompanied by a student on her flute (309 RC/11-18C). Hymns were also included in the independent school, accompanied by a senior pupil on the organ, and at the city technology college.

The single prayer which most primary schools included daily was usually addressed to God as Father or Jesus as Lord, and leaders spoke inclusively on behalf of their pupils. Most began with thanksgiving, usually in the context of the theme being explored, before moving on to supplication for divine protection and help in the development of personal attitudes and behaviours. Prayers of repentance and intercession were rare and the Lord's Prayer was included in two primary schools only. In seven primary schools there were considerable numbers of pupils representing different faith traditions: in three of these prayer was addressed to God but never to Jesus and in the others prayer was always omitted. Of the six secondary schools which included prayer, two were voluntary schools, two had Christian foundations and two were community schools. None were predominantly multi-faith. Readings from the Bible occurred in three secondary schools (301 Ind; 308 CE/11-16C; 309 RC/11-18C) and from the Qur'an, by the local imam, in a school where most of the students were Muslim (304 C11-16C).

Provision ranged from secular assemblies to wholly religious acts of worship. Between these polarities of approach, which were present in both primary and secondary schools, there was a wide band of common practice in which it was possible to identify a pattern of provision which was also largely distinctive of each sector. Nearly all primary schools included hymn, prayer and a children's talk: nearly all secondary schools omitted the elements of worship, although references to religion were occasionally incorporated into the teaching content. Thus although practice in both sectors was ranged along the same continuum of provision, actual content was differentially clustered, being broadly Christian in most primary schools and usually non-religious in the secondary sector.

The inclusion of the traditional elements of worship, and the contrast between the sectors can be seen in the following table (19), which identifies the number of schools and visits. Because multiple visits were made to some schools a further table

(41), which indicates the customary inclusion of these elements according to the numbers of schools, is included in Appendix 31.

Table 19   The inclusion of traditional elements of worship during visits for observation

| | Primary | | | Secondary | | | | | |
	Comm-unity	VC	VA	Comm-unity	VA	Grammar	Indepen-dent	Other	Special
nos. of schools	15	2	3	9	2	1	1	1	1
nos. visits	34	2	3	20	2	1	1	1	1
prayer	24	2	3	2	2		1	1	1
Lord's prayer	1		1		2		1	1	
meditation	2								
hymns	29	2	3		1		1	1	1
songs	2								
Bible	1				2				
other sacred text				1					

In terms of the structural content of collective worship, observation in schools confirmed the findings of the questionnaire but the data presented there could give only an outline indication of the main focus of the didactic element of each school's provision. Although during some visits, the period was devoted wholly to administrative matters, the most common being the distribution of certificates of achievement and notices (305 Cl1-18C; 332 CP), the main focus in most acts was the teaching dimension. Observation, however, revealed the difficulty of attempting to classify this content into general categories. As teachers developed their themes, each approach proved to be distinctive, mixing religious and non-religious, moral and social references together to develop the main points. Usually, these strove to communicate some form of advice or encouragement which was often summarised in the prayer or in the concluding statement, for example: 'Failing to plan is planning to fail!' (311 Cl1-16C) and 'Truth is not only what we say but what we do' (319 VC Midd.P). At times, however, the focus was unclear and it was, in any case, impossible either to know what the leader intended the children to learn, or to identify

the myriad ways in which the material was understood or interpreted by the listeners. It was, nevertheless, possible to note the inclusion of references to religious material or practice, even if these were minimal. The titles listed in the questionnaire had given no insights into the extent to which the material was integrated with aspects of religion on any day, and one of the features noted during observation was the manner in which leaders developed their chosen themes. In primary schools, 60% of these contained references to religion. Although the comparable figure for secondary schools was lower, at 36%, this nevertheless reveals a higher level of religious references than the questionnaire titles alone had indicated. Whether this was influenced by the presence of an observer could not be ascertained: it seems possible that this was the case on some few occasions in primary schools, though not in secondary institutions. The following table illustrates the extent to which a religious reference was included in the teaching content, the themes of which are listed in Appendices 32 and 33.

Table 20   The incorporation of a religious reference in the teaching content during observation

	religious reference	no religious reference
primary schools n 40	24 = 60.0%	16 = 40.0%
secondary schools n 25	9 – 36.0%	16 = 64.0%
Total n 65	33 = 50.8%	32 = 49.2%

A closer examination of the religious material reveals a portrayal of God as active in the world, as creator, saviour and judge, as well as friend, guide, helper and protector. Where a religious dimension is presented in secondary schools God is also depicted as omniscient and immanent, and Christianity is shown to involve the exercise of faith, responsibility for others and reconciliation. There appeared to be no discussion of alternative or controversial interpretations of religious material, of

dealing with doubt or of the difficulty of commitment. Most teaching concluded with advice about particular behaviours, usually concerning relationships. In some schools, however, the emphasis was on discipleship and an invitation to Christian commitment was implicit in messages which were presented, as described below. By contrast, some institutions incorporated almost no reference to religion in their provision, concentrating instead on matters of importance within the school community such as classroom behaviour, the dangers of smoking, and the distribution of certificates for curriculum achievement (305 C11-18C). Unusual provision was observed in a primary school where a carved block of wood carried a symbolic candle and formed the central feature of worship. It was customary for children to write prayers on small scrolls of paper at any time during the week: these were placed in the cracks of the block and at the end of each week were ceremonially burned, unread. Most teachers sat on the floor amongst the children, and some of the youngest pupils sat on the laps of older girls. However, the content of the act of worship which was observed was similar to that of other primary schools, with singing and a non-religious story which featured animals as the heroes, told by a teacher who chose to sit on a chair at the side. This visit raised questions about the extent and limits of headteachers' influence in respect of collective worship, and whether it is possible for any distinctive vision to be shared amongst all members of staff. This seemed to be one of the examples where a gap could be observed between interview and practice (320 CE Comb).

Because the range of practice which was observed defies any but broad categorisation I seek, in the examples which follow, to illuminate provision by more detailed descriptions of some of the material which was observed, in order to present a more focused picture and to demonstrate the variety which occurs.

(i)   The importance and value of pupil participation was demonstrated in an inner-city comprehensive school where a group of year 10 students, most of whom were

Muslim, Sikh or Hindu, dramatised some of the difficulties and choices which faced them in their local environment, and warned of the possible consequences of certain behaviours. The dangers of involvement in burglary, mugging and joy-riding were acted out in front of their peers in the year group, with as many sound-effects as they could provide. As a subsequent discussion with members of this group showed, the performers enjoyed their participation and thought the audience benefited from the presentation. In order to make the performance more realistic for the audience and to maintain interest, one student argued that, *'There should be more swearing in assembly!'* (312 C11-16C).

(ii)   While the content of most acts of collective worship frequently combined religious and moral guidance for pupils' consideration, in some schools the provision incorporated a strong Christian message in which the emphasis was on discipleship and commitment. In an infants' school, an abbreviated account of salvation in the form of a poem about a *'jolly postman'* was presented, accompanied by a series of *'letters from God'*, which were delivered and read out by children. These were addressed to Adam and Eve, Noah, and Mary, concluding with one which said, *'Dear Everyone: here's my best present ever. Jesus wants to be your friend forever'* (327 CI). The presentation made use of pupils selected from amongst the seated group, and also incorporated pictures held up by them. The material had been carefully prepared by the leader, and the children listened attentively throughout.

In a secondary school, after an account of the story of Zacchaeus, students were reminded that *'Without Jesus we are lost'* , in an act of worship which ended with a prayer asking that Jesus *'will meet us and change us'* (303 CTC). Behaviour was well-disciplined, and students sat silently throughout. It was difficult to tell whether this indicated interest or concealed inattentiveness. Although expected to join in with the elements of worship, no other contribution was invited from the

students, although they indicated later that they would prefer to participate more actively.

Examples such as these were not widespread, but were a feature of the approach adopted in some schools and raised questions about a form of provision which might be regarded by some to border on indoctrination, an issue which will be examined in chapter 6.

(iii)   At an act of collective worship held in the grey breeze-block sports' hall of a secondary school, the headteacher talked about the origins and symbolism of Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday and the significance of fasting, incorporating a reference to Ramadan and pointing out the importance of self-discipline and reflection for the inner spirit (306 C11-18C). At the end of each day, he stood on the school drive and talked to passing students, reminding the observer of the importance of teacher-pupil relationships and the influence these can have on students' reception of the material offered in collective worship, a feature which may shed some light on pupils' responses during interviews. Coincidentally, during observation a week later in another grey sports' hall at a school where most pupils were Muslim, on the last day of Ramadan, the visiting leader also reminded students of the discipline of fasting, the importance of self-responsibility and awareness, and the development of inner character. On conclusion, this was greeted by applause (304 C11-16C).

Although the circumstances of these schools were very different, the approach demonstrated by these examples, which invites individual reflection on matters of personhood, is one which is adopted by some teachers who, for various reasons, feel more at ease with the presentation of material which is broadly spiritual and focuses on individual responsibility rather than that which emphasises religious belief. In both schools, students appeared to listen carefully: interestingly, neither presentation was accompanied by additional notices, the absence of which served to concentrate

attention on the message given, allowing the young people to leave the hall without the interruption of further information.

(iv)   Two hundred children gathered for an act of collective worship which was Hindu, removing their shoes before entry to the hall.   A statue of Krishna was displayed, an incense stick was lit, and the children bowed to the image before sitting down.   Like other acts in primary schools, a hymn and a prayer were incorporated, although directed to Krishna, and a story was told which explained that it is never possible to escape from the eyes of God.   The children were very quiet and still, and the dominant impression was of a worshipful atmosphere.   In a subsequent informal conversation, a year 6 Hindu pupil, whose family was non-practising, expressed his interest and pleasure (317 CP).   The provision of discrete acts of worship for a range of faith communities was a feature of the interviews held with teachers and pupils, and will be discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3 of this chapter.

By contrast, some institutions incorporated almost no reference to religion in their provision. In one secondary school which was visited on ten occasions, the year group assemblies mainly covered material associated with school events, various behaviours and the distribution of certificates for curriculum achievement.   These were largely informal gatherings and although pupils were mostly attentive, the lengthy distribution of awards was sometimes received with a degree of disinterest, boredom and increasing restlessness, while the names of particular pupils were greeted occasionally with laughter (305 C11-18C).   A detailed account of an assembly from this school is included in Appendix 34, together with one from a middle school and another from a primary school.

4.1.2 Additional features

The data gathered from the observations in schools provided many further insights into provision which could not be revealed by the questionnaire. Attentiveness, for example, varied and was at its most concentrated when pupils participated, particularly by performing prepared material or by reading. Answering questions was common in primary schools and sometimes helped to maintain attention but at other times led to unintended conversations amongst pupils and consequent restlessness. Although any form of involvement was uncommon in the secondary sector, institutions appeared to fall into one of two categories: in some few schools, pupil participation was the norm, with responsibility for theme and presentation delegated to the students, either voluntarily by group or according to a rota by class. In other schools, pupils were never invited to participate. The difficulties of organisation and the demands of the curriculum were reasons given for the decline in a practice which was previously more common, a claim which is increasingly being made by primary schools. In the primary sector, however, pupils were usually involved in the singing of hymns and songs, and some contributed to the music by playing instruments. In secondary schools, students were largely inactive recipients. Nevertheless, most appeared to be attentive, responding with laughter or brief but relevant interruptions which indicated that the material was being followed. Teachers tried to offer advice in their themes which would be relevant, although as section 4.3 below indicates, students did not feel that they were always successful in this. Often the dominant atmosphere was one of the acceptance of a familiar routine. Where, in secondary schools, there was simmering restlessness, this appeared to be symptomatic of the school, revealed by background interruptions and noisy movement around the building for example, rather than of the assembly itself. The atmosphere in primary schools was usually welcoming, but the disciplinary supervision required for the conduct of collective worship can provide a testing arena for teachers, particularly in the presence of other members of staff: one newly

promoted acting headteacher struggled to exert control, probably very conscious of her peers and of myself as researcher. Constant criticisms directed at children produced an atmosphere which was uneasy and irritable.

Other features revealed by observation included the ways in which humour was incorporated. In secondary schools, this appeared to arise naturally and was often directed at particular students: it was apparently well-received and served to develop a relaxed atmosphere. In primary schools, however, leaders found it difficult to meet pupils at an appropriate level, and inserted allusions which they felt would amuse children: thus references to nose-picking featured on at least two occasions. A further element which was noted was the way in which aspects of provision were self-contradictory. This occurred in instances where the approach seemed at odds with the message, for example where the class Mass described earlier was followed by a harsh disciplinary response which was crudely expressed, or where, following a presentation by a group of boys based on the story of Jonathan Livingstone Seagull, the headteacher declared that, unlike the gull's departure from the flock, there would be no deviance from the school's 'Way', identifying those students not wearing a blazer, without ties appropriately knotted, and those wearing ear-rings, reminding them of the rules and the consequences of failing to keep them.

A final point which observation revealed and which did not emerge from the questionnaire was the predominance of men as leaders of collective worship, particularly in secondary schools but also in primary schools, although most teachers in this sector are female. This factor may be of significance when considering the distinction in provision between sectors, and will be discussed in chapter 5.

Table 21   Leadership of collective worship by gender

observed leadership	female	male
primary schools	18	21
secondary schools	3	19
total	21	40

- missing cases (4): pupils took the leadership role on the day of observation.

4.1.3   Conclusion

Observation revealed wide variation in the responses made by schools to the legal requirements for collective worship, as well as much that was common. Some approaches were influenced by the balance of traditions represented within the community and the social circumstances in which schools found themselves. Others were more individual responses based on personal belief and support or opposition to legislation and these, revealing the central influence of the teacher on actual provision, will be examined in the next chapter. Where it was possible to make a series of visits, to an infant, a middle and a secondary school, the approach adopted to collective worship appeared to be consistent. Although visiting leaders might bring a different emphasis, schools usually checked that the approach they adopted was acceptable, and often visitors were friends and contacts of the person responsible for collective worship.

4.2   INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

Overview

In this section, I outline teachers' perceptions of the importance of community and their support for the provision of a regular assembly for pupils, before discussing

their views on the position of worship, the place of the spiritual dimension, and the difficulties many experience in their attempts to implement the legal requirements. I conclude with an account of teachers' perceptions of the benefit of the form of provision offered in their schools to pupils and also to teachers. The views of one school governor are also included in this section.

In analysing teachers' comments, I attempt to summarise the range of remarks which were made as accurately and objectively as possible. Some comments are paraphrased only, often because they are details which contribute to the wider picture. Direct quotations are selected either because they represent a cluster of opinions, are distinctive in providing an original insight identified by no other subject, or because they stand against the general line of argument. Where they were raised, contrasting viewpoints are incorporated. My original analysis sought to identify in the teachers' responses the arguments which are found in the public debate (chapter 1). The first draft was rejected however because it set an agenda which was insufficiently reflective of the spirit of the teachers' comments. Their support for, or opposition to, the legal requirements was secondary, in nearly all cases, to the contribution which the assembly could make to the schools for which they were responsible.

The use of interview as an element of the data collection was chosen because I considered that it would provide more informed insights than I could acquire from a questionnaire, which I anticipated would lack the immediacy of personal contact; and although teachers were unlikely to be critical of their own provision in either approach, I expected that they would nevertheless respond more openly to an identified person. As the leaders of collective worship, I considered that their opinions mattered and were an important part of the picture which I was trying to build. By an examination of their responses to legislation, I hoped to gain an insight into its effects and to identify further arguments in the debate which are related to the

particular circumstances and difficulties encountered in schools. Because I also visited the schools for observation, I was able to build a more clear image of the situations about which I was reporting.

All of the interviewees were senior members of staff or persons with particular positions of responsibility. Although the interviewees were not representative of all teachers, a fact which they themselves recognised in referring to the changes in attitude which seniority brings, there is some evidence to support their assessment of the value of provision in the interviews with students which are discussed subsequently. Although many were opposed to the provision of religious worship and some were confused about the legal requirements, they were all nevertheless favourably disposed towards the assembly of pupils in their schools. Their unanimous support for this arrangement is related primarily to the contribution which it makes to the sense of the school as a community, and it is this feature therefore which will be examined first.

4.2.1 The school as a community

There is a strong perception in the British educational system of the school as a nurturing community which seeks to develop an ethos and an environment in which mutually supportive relationships can flourish and a common sense of purpose can be encouraged and shared. Interviews with headteachers and their representatives revealed a common concern for their schools which encapsulates two questions: (i) what sort of community is this? and (ii) what sort of community do we want it to be? It is largely the answers given to these questions which determine the approach adopted to collective worship within each school. Sometimes answers are formally articulated in mission statements (SW, 302 C11-16C) and while in many established institutions these have evolved over time, new schools are able to begin with this debate:

We started saying this is a learning, caring, active community committed to high expectations and high achievements. That's what we've set out our school to be and everything that we have tried to do subsequently to that is to meet that particular requirement ... we have put a lot of thought and effort into the moral structure of a caring community within a secular environment in a pluralistic world.

(RV, 314 C11-16C)

Most commonly, the school is characterised as a family, a term which is used by teachers and pupils in both primary and secondary sectors, whose awareness of common membership and shared identity is reinforced when it gathers together (AB, 306 C11-18C; JC, 312 C11-16C; CJ, 326 CP; SN, 331 CP; VP, 335 C.Spec):

It gives a sense of purpose; it does indicate to pupils a corporateness.
It's to do with part of a family within a school, for the greater good.
(SW, 302 C11-16C)

Teachers as well as pupils are part of the community, and for this reason, their attendance is also seen as important (JM, 310 C11-16C) while in voluntary schools, there is an awareness that the children are an integral part of the wider parish community (ML, 322 RC P).

In drawing together pupils from disparate backgrounds and traditions, the moral and social behaviours which are encouraged are those most appropriate for the organisation of relationships within this community and for the achievement of the school's goals. The assembling of pupils is regarded as one of the most effective ways of transmitting the required standards and expectations (CJ, 326 CP; SN, 331 CP; BB, 335 C.Spec; TB, 311 C11-16C; SW, 302 C11-16C). Mutual care (DB, 302 C11-16C), honesty (TB, 311 C11-16C) and the exercise of consideration and

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forethought are amongst the values which are emphasised (JC, 312 C11-16C). These are described as common-sense (TB, 311 C11-16C) and *'straight-track and shared'* (DH, 304 C11-16C), and it is claimed that without the regular public rehearsal of these objectives, something crucial and cumulative would be lost:

> *It sets standards of concern; it rehearses codes of behaviour on a weekly basis - it is a manifestation of our mission statement and although codes of behaviour are present throughout the week, in terms of weekly strands, [without assembly] something categorical would be missing.* (SW, 302 C11-16C)

Subsequent interviews with students indicated their recognition of the importance of the regular reminder of the school's expectations, and in examination periods when meeting in this way is sometimes suspended, it is claimed that relationships and discipline suffer and that both pupils and teachers miss this form of contact (LG, 302 C11-16C). Some argue, however, that the moral values which are embedded in the daily routines and the relationships of their schools are more influential than any form of preaching in assembly (VK, 310 C11-16C; TB, 311 C11-16C):

> *It is this daily living out of our values and attention to them that is, in my view, the most effective and direct moral education. This is not preaching; it is a daily exploration of what moral values are all about.* (RV, 314 C11-16C)

In some circumstances, the legal demand for the provision of religious worship, which excludes those of no belief, conflicts with the goal of inclusive community (KT, 314 C11-16C; AJ, 318 CP) while in multi-faith schools the desire to promote harmonious relationships is one reason why the provision of separate acts of worship for the religious traditions represented in the school is rarely adopted (SW, 302 C11-

16C; TB, 311 C11-16C). One of the main aims of these schools is to draw pupils together as a united community, in order to foster a sense of equality and respect (SN, 331 CP) and to combat the racism and discrimination which occurs, often within cultural groups (JC, 312 C11-16C; TB, 311 C11-16C). Although the curriculum makes a significant contribution, bringing large numbers of students together in a shared gathering has a distinctive benefit in encouraging a sense of membership with one another (JC, 312 C11-16C; JM, 310 C11-16C):

We are endeavouring to develop a sense of multi-ethnic community through our assembly. ... We try to develop coherence through a process whereby issues may be introduced in assemblies, worked on in PSE time and where possible celebrated in a subsequent assembly. (JC, 312 C11-16C, from application to SACRE for a renewal of the school's determination)

Perhaps because of the emphasis on community, fewer respondents made reference to the contribution of collective worship to individual development. This is encouraged, in part, by the celebration of achievement (TB, 311 C11-16C; DB, 302 C11-16C), by participation in activities which enhance confidence (LG, 302 C11-16C), and also by an emphasis on the need for students to recognise their own intrinsic value and importance regardless of formal qualifications (JC, 312 C11-16C; VP, 335 C.Spec). Interviewees in primary schools made little reference to this dimension.

4.2.2   Teachers' attitudes to the provision of worship

Teachers' attitudes to the provision of religious worship were varied, and strong opinions were expressed both in favour and in opposition to the legal requirements. Worship was described as a freely offered response which arises from individual belief (JD, 307 C11-16C; JG, 312 C11-16C), and as a:

*... personal connection to the deity and therefore personal in capital
letters. I think worship is very much an individual thing.* (TB, 311
C11-16C)

It was argued that worship cannot be compelled (JD, 307 C11-16C) and that it is a
matter for the religious community (SP, 330 CI). Some teachers therefore argue for
the repeal of legislation in a society which is perceived to be secular and pluralist
(RV, 314 C11-16C; TB, 311 C11-16C; CJ, 326 CP). Others, however, accept a
responsibility for the introduction of worship to the young and argue for its continued
provision in those areas of the country which they regard as Christian, at least by
tradition (RX, 321 CJ; AB, 306 C11-18C; JD, 307 C11-16C). Two headteachers
were confused about the legal requirements. One argued that their intention was for
an act of corporate worship which reflected a short church service :

*I don't think you're going to make it like a church service at the
beginning of every morning, "From 9 until 9.15 we will hold a church
service in school," which is basically what it really should be or what
we get the impression it should be.* (CJ, 326 CP)

Another headteacher, of a large primary school 99% of whose pupils' families were
of Asian origin, claimed that collective worship is impossible in such circumstances,
because it would require prayers offered interchangeably to various deities:

*It would be unrealistic to worship because I couldn't worship a
Muslim god and I couldn't expect Muslim children to worship a
Christian god or Hindu gods.* (SN, 331 CP)

The former position, expressed by a headteacher with a strong antipathy to religion,
displays a lack of knowledge of the legal requirements and of what is expected in an

act of worship which is collective rather than corporate. The latter reveals a very literal application of legislation, and a limited understanding of its provisions in respect of multi-faith schools. Such misunderstandings of the requirements, from two headteachers in primary schools, may be more widespread than this study reveals.

The varying positions demonstrated by teachers are translated into practice in particular school situations and are themselves influenced by the contexts of school type, status and location. In the discussion which follows, therefore, I distinguish between community schools situated in regions which are described as either traditionally Christian or as secular, those which are found in multi-cultural areas, and those institutions which have a religious foundation.

<u>In community schools</u>

In addition to their individual belief positions, a perception of the wider society as either Christian or secular is one of the factors which influences, in different ways, teachers' attitudes to the provision of worship in their schools. One of the justifications put forward in its support is the argument that in a Christian society, students need to have a connection through hymn and prayer with the faith which has shaped their culture throughout many generations (BR, 303 CTC), a tradition which some teachers are content to maintain:

> *I'm not unhappy at all because the area in which we live tends to be*
> *wholly or mainly, in theory, Christian. It does mean that we spend a*
> *bit more time sometimes in terms of helping the youngsters in terms of*
> *the multi-cultural approach.* (AB, 306 C11-18C)

Because many students have no experience of worship beyond the school, it is considered important to provide regular opportunities for them to encounter what may

prove to be a significant experience for some, or an opportunity for reflection for others (AB, 306 C11-18C). Some teachers accept that they have a responsibility to provide an awareness of religious commitment to the young, in order that they can exercise choice:

> *I think we've got a responsibility there to make youngsters aware of*
> *the language of worship and the nature of worship and the different*
> *views which are held concerning it, and then there is a point at which*
> *they have to go ahead and pursue their own interests in that area.*
>
> (JD, 307 C11-16C)

However, strong opposition to collective worship is also expressed by both believers and non-believers. Describing the (same) local environment as secular, and society as pluralist, one headteacher argued that schools are not faith communities and that the legal requirements are therefore inappropriate and should be repealed:

> *Collective worship - my personal view (and I come from the Christian*
> *end of the spectrum) is that the quicker the requirement for collective*
> *worship is abandoned in schools the better and the more honest we*
> *would all be. ... Worship arises naturally in a community of faith.*
> *School is not a community of faith. ... I mean I honestly now think that*
> *a school such as this is not a place where worship is a normal or*
> *natural activity which is why I would rather like to be more honest, or*
> *placed in a more honest situation, where I didn't have to pretend that*
> *we did it - because frankly we don't!*   (RV, 314 C11-16C)

The requirement, in maintained schools, for collective worship for pupils who are non-believers which is led by teachers who are non-believers is described as bizarre (ML, 322 RC/P). Where, teachers ask, does legislation recognise the presence in

schools of teachers and pupils with no faith (AJ, 318 CP; CJ, 327 CI; KT, 314 C11-16C)? The legal requirements are a form of social manipulation and are '... *out of the territory of legitimacy*' (NA, 302 C11-16C). Some teachers find themselves in a moral dilemma, where obedience to legislation and personal integrity are in conflict:

> *I can't set myself up as someone who means what he says and says what he means and keeps promises and so on and so forth, if I act as a mouthpiece of something that I clearly don't believe. I think it would undermine my credibility with the pupils which is important. Even more important, it would undermine my own intellectual credibility with myself. I'd have to live with that.* (TB, 311 C11-16C)

A liberal education, it is argued, is concerned with investigation, experiment and reason, whilst religious worship involves the exercise of faith '... *which is irrational ... and I think that's the antithesis of education'* (KT, 314 C11-16C).

<u>In multi-faith schools</u>

Teachers in these schools argue that any form of collective worship is inappropriate for their pupils (JM, 310 C11-16C; SN, 331 CP; RG, 333 CP) and that there is no model of shared multi-faith practice which schools can follow, since this is an activity which does not occur in the world outside:

> *What I don't think is natural, I can't think of any area where it's done outside of school and therefore it must be artificial, is to put people of entirely different beliefs, in which I would include no belief at all, and ask them to collectively worship. ... I just find the whole concept so totally flawed, totally flawed, that intellectually there isn't a justification for it.* (TB, 311 C11-16C)

Because religious commitment is important to many of their students, schools are anxious to avoid anything which might cause conflict or division: the emphasis is, therefore, on the common elements of religion and on what unites people (TB, 311 C11-16C). A Muslim school governor argued similarly:

> *There are the readings, we have a talk and share that, so that*
> *everyone - we try to orientate it to fit the whole group because there*
> *are more similarities than differences that we try to share and*
> *incorporate, so that each individual would recognise "That's me".*
> *...The idea is to stay on that straight track of value, of sharing and*
> *morality and helping people to nurture what they have within them.*
> (DH, 304 C11-16C)

A tokenistic approach which meets only the letter of the law is therefore rejected in favour of gatherings which are less frequent but which allow more time for thoughtful preparation in order to make the experience meaningful for students (FH, 304 C11-16C; TB, 311 C11-16C; JM, 310 C11-16C). One school was planning to meet more frequently in order to provide an opportunity for reflection on spiritual and moral issues (VK, 310 C11-16C); it had also considered making an application for a determination on the grounds that, although Christianity was the heritage tradition of the majority of its students, few had an active affiliation to the religious community and these were out-numbered by practising members of non-Christian faiths.

As noted above, there is strong opposition in most multi-faith schools to the introduction of discrete acts of worship for the range of traditions represented in their communities. Such provision would be organisationally impossible and would conflict with schools' desire to promote unity (TB, 311 C11-16C; JC, 312 C11-16C; SN, 331 CP). Most teachers in these situations argue that separation for worship

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would be divisive and would also create further problems, exacerbating existing

unsocial behaviours (SN, 331 CP):

We have no desire for separate faith assemblies - we spend all our

time trying to get the children to work together! (RG, 333 CP)

However, in the only school in the sample to make provision for separate acts of faith

worship the headteacher claimed that, as a consequence, pupils' identity was

strengthened, that they were more knowledgeable about their own and their friends'

backgrounds, and that they related to each other more positively (JS, 317 CP).

Others, however, claim that such an approach could destroy attitudes of tolerance

which schools have worked hard over the years to develop (VK, 310 C11-16C); older

students would also be opposed to such an approach, which could serve to reinforce

prejudice (JM, 310 C11-16C).

In schools with a religious foundation

In the voluntary institutions that were visited, all of which were Christian,

there is a sense of responsibility for the presentation of Christian claims (CB, 301

Ind; WG, 319 VC Midd.P). Particularly in Roman Catholic schools, teachers who are

themselves usually members of the tradition accept that it is their duty to provide

nurture in the faith of the church community of which most pupils' families are

members:

Parents bring their child to us and what I see is them saying to us, in

effect, "We are Christians. We believe that there is something

worthwhile in what we believe that we wish to have transmitted to our

children and developed in our children", and they hand their children

to us, to our care, to develop - with them - their Christian faith. (ML,
322 RC/P)

Elsewhere, parents' selection of schools which have a religious foundation is
sometimes regarded as a statement of support for Christian worship and teaching
(NE, 303 CTC), but other teachers recognise that different factors, such as
examination results, have a greater influence (CB, 301 Ind). Anglican schools are
likely to include pupils from a wide section of the local community but argue that
parents either endorse or passively accept the school's position as an arm of the
church, and pupils are introduced to worship therefore as an affirmation of that
community:

*It is part of our brief as a church to invite people to enter into
Christian worship.* (WG, 319 VC Midd.P)

However, another headteacher argued that although his school is church-aided, it is
not a church. In seeking to respond to legislation, staff discussion had focused on
what could reasonably be provided to meet the needs of children from a non-
worshipping community where:

*...85%o were antagonistic to dogmatic, dictatorial mouthing of prayers.
This included staff members. Such collective worship was seen to be
damaging, detrimental and off-putting.* (AF, 320 CE Comb)

Nevertheless, some teachers regard it as important that pupils should experience
worship in the presence of leaders and other adults who believe the claims of religion
to be true (BR, 303 CTC; WG, 319 VC Midd.P). Although this may leave many
students untouched, it provides an opportunity for some to make the moment a
personal encounter with deity:

The first one [the claims of religion] you can put; the second you can

hope for and aspire to, and try and ensure there's a quietness and a

reverence that allows those who wish to make it a personal moment.

(NE, 303 CTC)

The act of worship contributes to preparing the ground and sowing the seeds of a religious faith which may not come to fruition for many years, however. Although collective worship may have some immediate impact, it is possible that its effect will only be recognised in maturity (CB, 301 Ind; NE, 303 CTC; WG, 319 VC Midd.P).

4.2.3 The spiritual dimension

Although not all teachers made any reference to this dimension, for some the provision of an opportunity for personal reflection is the preferred replacement for the religious dimension (BB, 335 C.Spec), although doubt was also expressed about whether the act of collective worship is the most appropriate place for what is an important part of pupil development (AJ, 318 CP). It was defined as a thoughtful awareness of an inner feature of human experience (AF, 320 CE/Comb) or as a dimension of life which is non-material (JD, 307 C11-16C). Sometimes it was used in contrast to the temporal (AF, 320 CE/Comb), to the physical and intellectual (JY, 303 CTC) or to faith traditions (AB, 306 C11-18C) although some teachers regarded the spiritual dimension as synonymous with religious faith (BR, 303 CTC; WG, 319 VC Midd.P). Despite difficulties with its definition, it was perceived as a distinctive form of experience and personal exploration:

I hope that the quality of being, experienced there, will touch pupils -

not all, not every day - the quality of what it means to be a spiritual

being with a potential to relate to otherness, not just to sameness.

(AF, 320 CE/Comb)

Where there is concern about the current narrowing of curricular goals, it is argued that the daily or weekly gathering together provides an opportunity to move outside subject areas to explore wider issues, and that the ethos which develops from such an emphasis permeates the fabric of the school (AB, 306 C11-18C; FH, 304 C11-16C; ML, 322 RC/P; AF, 320 CE/Comb). Difficulties are acknowledged however, and problems of inadequate and inappropriate space can prevent teachers from creating the opportunities they would wish to offer to pupils. It is claimed that silence is alien to the young in contemporary society, and that an appropriate context for reflection is becoming more difficult to create in primary and secondary schools (EH, 315 CP).

What I'm not good at ... is having contemplative silences in assembly.
I can see it with 30 or 60 or 100, but I can't see it when you're dealing
with larger numbers unless the richness of what you're giving can
produce the mood, but what I'm saying is that very often the
atmosphere is a damned wind blowing, the kids are sat on the floor
and it doesn't produce that kind of atmosphere. (AB, 306 C11-18C)

One teacher, however, expressed strong concern over the inclusion of the spiritual dimension, defined in terms of introspective interiority, in the curriculum:

A lot of people object to that kind of self-investigation because some
people find it (a) quite difficult (b) some people actually find it
disturbing. You do not know what you are doing when you play with
these things. ... If it is as deep and subtle as people who use the word
say, then how have you got a handle on this to know what it is in order
to explore it safely with children of all sorts and ages and
susceptibilities? (KT, 314 C11-16C)

The experiences which are the most meaningful are often spontaneous responses to significant events, particularly the deaths of pupils or teachers, which touch people deeply and combine elements of the spiritual and the worshipful in a natural way:

We had, sadly, a year or so ago, a lad who died from meningitis and we had some very meaningful assemblies with those youngsters, his year group. Call them acts of worship? No, I am not quite sure, but were they thoughtful? Yes. Were they prayerful? Yes, and for quite a lot of individuals present they were - spiritual? Yes, in that people stopped, stepped aside from the daily concerns, thought a bit more deeply about themselves and mortality and the world in which they lived in, and that particular lad . (RV, 314 C11-16C)

The opportunity to gather in this way is a significant feature of the school as a caring community, and was described as amongst the most meaningful of experiences by both teachers and pupils.

4.2.4   Practical difficulties

Teachers talked much of the practical difficulties they experience in the implementation of collective worship. In large secondary schools, they complain of inadequate and inappropriate spaces in scattered buildings (AB, 306 C11-18C; TB, 311 C11-16C; FH, 304 C11-16C; JS, 317 CP; AJ, 318 CP etc), and of a further erosion of the time required for the implementation of the National Curriculum (JM, 310 C11-16C; JC, 312 C11-16C; DB, 302 C11-16C; CJ, 326 CP):

The logistics of the daily act of collective worship are very very difficult to put into practice (a) because schools haven't got a place

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that is suitable enough, (b) the time that is actually required to make it

a meaningful experience.   (FH, 304 C11-16C)

Daily provision for all pupils in large schools is therefore impossible, although in some institutions twice-weekly provision would be acceptable (AB, 306 C11-18C; JD, 307 C11-16C; JM, 310 C11-16C). Primary schools claim that the age range of their pupils, from 4-11 years, also poses a difficulty and prevents a deeper examination of issues (CJ, 326 CP; AJ, 318 CP). These are logistical problems, however, which apply equally to the gathering of students for the communal assemblies which teachers claim to favour. Some of these comments also reveal an apparent ignorance of the flexibility of grouping and time which legislation permits.

The question of appropriate leadership constitutes a more salient dilemma. It is argued that, without a faith commitment on the part of the leader, it is doubtful whether any impact on pupils is possible (JY, 303 CTC). Others, however, claim that pupils may benefit from the material presented regardless of the leader's personal conviction (EH, 315 CP). In multi-faith schools, it was argued that few teachers are sufficiently well-informed about the faith traditions to address the range of pupils represented. At the same time, there is also a shortage of English-speaking volunteers from the community who are available at the times which would be required (JM, 310 C11-16C; JS, 317 CP), and no funding to support this work or to train volunteers in the use of suitable approaches and materials (JS, 317 CP). Concern about differences within local faith communities and a fear of causing offence is another obstacle experienced in some schools (JC, 312 C11-16C; JS, 317 CP) and this is not confined to multi-cultural contexts: in other areas, there are complaints of evangelical Christian ministers causing difficulties with both teachers and pupils (RX, 321 CJ), and schools find that they need to evaluate the backgrounds of volunteers (RT, 314 C11-16C).

The absence of parental example also provides an obstacle to schools' attempts to develop the practice of worship with students (RT, 314 C11-16C; CB, 301 Ind), but this is a hindrance which could be cited by most curriculum subjects. Some teachers complain that parents want schools to provide collective worship in order to avoid their own responsibilities in this respect (JM, 310 C11-16C), but others argue that a strong sympathy towards Christian belief continues to be prevalent and is in danger of being overlooked in the current debate (JD, 307 C11-16C):

> *... a huge number of parents want their children to be in contact with prayers and the Bible and worship. Now you may be cynical about that and say, "Well, okay, they want the schools to do their job for them," but I think there's probably something in them saying, "That is good. There is something good there. We want our kids to know about it."*
> (BR, 303 CTC)

4.2.5   Teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes to provision

During interviews, teachers in secondary schools occasionally made reference to the responses of their pupils and on the whole, the picture they presented was largely positive, reflecting the claims made by their counterparts in the questionnaire. It was claimed that collective worship is not resented by students (AB, 306 C11-18C) and that, in particular, material led by their peers or by their 'own' teachers is welcomed (RV, 314 C11-16C). In multi-faith schools, where students participate in describing their own beliefs and practices, the recognition and endorsement of their faith traditions and the opportunity to learn about others is valued (SW, 302 C11-16C). In some schools, there is strong and voluntary pupil participation (LG, 302 C11-16C), and there appears to be little support for discrete faith assemblies amongst students who consider separation from their peers to be unfair (JM, 310 C11-16C). Preaching, on any subject, is rejected by students (RV, 314 C11-16C) but some

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teachers feel that where material is relevant, young people are prepared to listen although they are reluctant to admit this (JY, 303 CTC). Despite claims of boredom, the teaching content is effective (JD, 307 C11-16C); pupils can be very perceptive about deeper issues (KT, 314 C11-16C) and are critical of frivolous and anecdotal material, preferring subject matter which is well-prepared and considered (JM, 310 C11-16C). However, one teacher was very sceptical about claims of pupil interest, arguing that students ignore much of what is said and fail to learn anything from the experience:

> *... most of what the adult thinks is communicated is totally lost on them.* (KT, 314 C11-16C)

This teacher was strongly opposed to collective worship, however, and it is as difficult to assess the accuracy of his assessment and the influence of his views on students' responses as it is to identify those of his colleagues who support its provision. There is some evidence, from pupil interviews however, that both evaluations are correct. Nevertheless, teachers claim that even where interest in the content or theme is maintained, there is no evidence that pupils are motivated towards personal commitment, and participation in religious practice is not acceptable to students unless it is a part of the family tradition (RV, 314 C11-16C):

> *The power base is the family. If the family doesn't support what we're trying to do, it's a waste of time.* (ML, 322 RC/P)

The question of pupils' rejection of worship seems not to have been a point of concern for teachers in primary schools however, and although some members of staff, who are also parents of teenage children, argued that the activity is inappropriate in the secondary sector (CJ, 326 CP; KT, 314 C11-16C), there is no suggestion that its provision in primary schools might be unwelcome to pupils.

Consequently, this issue, which causes considerable concern in secondary schools, was not raised by teachers in the primary sector.

4.2.6 Additional functions and benefits of provision

Finally, conversations with teachers revealed further insights. For pupils, there is a value in ritual itself (AB, 306 C11-18C) and in the establishment of a purposeful tone which encourages academic achievement and mutual concern (JG, 312 C11-16C; JM, 310 C11-16C; TB, 311 C11-16C; AB, 306 C11-18C; CJ, 326 CP). Students acquire some of the social graces which are required for conduct in large formal gatherings:

> *... a whole new mode of behaviours to be learned which I think is valuable, just in itself, in knowing how to conduct yourself*. (JM, 310 C11-16C)

In a (special) school, pupils experience '... *the sheer pleasure and enjoyment of being together'* (VP, 335 C.Spec).

Although it is pupils who are usually the focus of any discussion about the purpose of the act of collective worship, it has the capacity to address all who are present, and it is clear from some teachers' comments that they believe their colleagues also benefit occasionally from the religious themes (CB, 301 Ind; JD, 307 C11-16C) and sometimes material is directed at them (BR, 303 CTC; WG, 319 VC Midd.P):

> *It might well be that they gain more than the pupils sometimes. It's very difficult to know how to pitch something and sometimes it may*

well be that things are pitched and go over the heads of the youngsters

and sometimes teachers stop and think about it. (JD, 307 C11-16C)

In addition, senior members of staff recognise that the activity offers an opportunity to communicate a sense of leadership to the pupils which is also communicated to the teachers (JU, 306 C11-18C). Consequently, some claim to have developed a more favourable attitude towards provision since acquiring a leadership role, because of the opportunities provided to influence both students and staff (TB, 311 C11-16C; JC, 312 C11-16C):

> *If I am seen to treat the children with respect ... that I treat them like*
> *gentlemen - if I can do that in a way which demonstrates firmness with*
> *respect - that conveys a message to my staff as well, that this is how*
> *you treat children in this school; and of course there is a counter*
> *expectation that I will point out to them, and it works both ways. So*
> *it's actually a staff development exercise.*   (TB, 311 C11-16C)

This line of influence may be one of the ways whereby the ethos which is made explicit by the headteacher moves out into the fabric of the school. In a different sense, however, the teachers of one multi-faith school recognised that their assembling constitutes a significant learning process for both teachers and pupils, and claim that the teaching staff learn from the values transmitted by the students (SW, 302 C11-16C; DB, 302 C11-16C):

> *The nature of living faith and commitment - and spirituality - they*
> *have faith and you can see the way it leads their lives, following a*
> *strict code ... the nature of faith and spirituality evident in a school*
> *like this is very strong but you can't put your finger on it.* (NA, 302
> C11-16C)

4.2.7 Conclusion

It seems clear that headteachers and their representatives, whilst expressing broad agreement regarding the major purposes for which the period is utilised in their institutions, hold a range of opinions regarding the provision of collective worship in their schools. In the primary sector there is a general acceptance by headteachers that worship has a part to play in pupils' experience and that this activity is acceptable to children. Attitudes to the provision of religious worship in secondary schools are more varied: some teachers believe the activity has the support of parents and is an appropriate experience for their pupils (AB, 306 C11-18C; BR, 303 CTC). Others argue strongly that it is inappropriate, asserting that the evidence of fifty years of provision has demonstrated its failure to influence society, on balance causing more harm than good (RV, 314 C11-16C; TB, 311 C11-16C). Its abolition, which would require the Christian church to be more active in its outreach to the wider community, would therefore not be unwelcome in schools (WG, 319 VC Midd.P). Nevertheless, current practice in which the main emphasis is on the development of social and moral qualities within a united community would continue to be explored through the provision of assemblies for large groups of pupils. There is no opposition to the faith traditions which are brought into schools by pupils, but where these are non-existent, there is no desire to encourage or develop them (TB, 311 C11-16C), this task being the responsibility of the family (SN, 331 CP; SP, 330 CI).

Although the senior teachers who were interviewed saw value in the mode of provision for which they were responsible in their schools and believed that it was generally well-received by their students, the picture they presented was one of their own interpretation. In the final section, I report on the interviews held with the pupils of some of these schools.

Overview

In addition to a range of responses, interviews revealed some of the changes in attitudes and understanding which occur between infancy and young adulthood. In this report, I first outline the discussions which were held with children in the infant and junior departments of primary schools, before moving on to conclude this chapter with an account of the responses made by students in the secondary sector. The infant pupils attended a small town community school; two groups of junior pupils came from inner-city community schools, and two from a voluntary-controlled middle school deemed primary. Eight groups of students from a range of urban and rural secondary schools were also interviewed.

4.3.1 In the infant department

When the very youngest pupils enter school, usually with little or no experience of worship, the practice of daily assembling seems to be accepted simply as part of the routine of their new world, distinguished only by its particular venue and the activities which they encounter there:

> *In school we have two halls and the small hall isn't its real name. Its real name is Sembly, and we go to Sembly to sing songs.*
>
> (Matthew, reception class: 327 CI)

As the weeks go by, the children's familiarity with collective worship grows and it becomes an experience which they begin to associate with stories and specific rules of behaviour:

We listen to stories and do be quiet and don't fiddle with other things -

or don't fiddle with hair - or don't fiddle with shoes - or laces. And

otherwise you will get told off. Like Jack. He always naughty.

(Kylie, year 1: 327 CI)

From the stories which are told, and their work in religious education, the children begin to acquire a foundation of knowledge and understanding about God and Jesus. Both are described as very special:

...because they live a long way and God lives in the sky and we can see

him. Very long up, in space. (Damien, year 1: 327 CI)

God is seen as the creator of the world, maintaining a relationship with the children as their friend and helper. Prayer is a requirement but its purpose is unclear:

Because, because, without our prayers, we - er - we - er - if we don't

say our prayers - we won't - we don't know.

(Kerry, year 1: 327 CI)

In time, however, prayer becomes associated with a functional process related to behaviour and reward. Songs and prayers are offered to God and sometimes to Jesus, as an expression of the children's love and goodness, and in order to avoid unwanted consequences:

To tell him that we love him lots - else he won't be nice to us. If we

don't say our prayers, he won't love us or give us.

(Louisa, year 1: 327 CI)

(possibly a confusion with *'give us*, i.e. forgive us)

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However, the most memorable aspect for young children appears to be the singing element which features frequently in their comments. Because of their age, songs and hymns are learned by rote. As a result, much of their religious understanding and their confusion is derived from the words of their favourite hymns, albeit apprehended literally.

> *God's never busy when we talk to him – that's in our song, but we*
>
> *don't know if he was dancing or not - he like to dance.*
>
> (Briony, year 1: 327 CI)

> *He loves us... it's in the songs.*   (Max, year 1: 327 CI)

Most of these children enjoy the experience of collective worship, but complaints about non-participation and unfairness are beginning to emerge. First, the time consumes some of the children's precious playtime:

> *I hate assembly because you have to sit down and you never get out to*
>
> *play. Eight minutes you have to stay!* (Geoffrey, year 1: 327 CI)

Secondly, regrets are expressed that the children do not participate more frequently by performing to their peers: this is perceived to be the teacher's fault (Lucy, year 1: 327 CI).

4.3.2   In the junior department

Interviews with four groups of pupils, aged between 8 and 11 years, replicated some of the attitudes found in the infant department but, by the end of the primary school, these could be seen to be developing in ways which related significantly to the views which were encountered in the secondary sector.

At the junior stage, enjoyment of collective worship continued to feature in many children's responses. Singing was particularly popular, and stories which were interesting and contained an element of humour were valued, although amongst older pupils the repetition of familiar material, especially Biblical stories, was a source of complaint. Nevertheless, the children enjoyed gathering together as one body, which most perceived to be the main purpose of the activity:

So children can mix together and they know each other a bit more.
It's like a meeting of all the children who get together.

(Prabhar, year 5: 331 CP)

The gathering was also seen to be an economic means of communicating to the children messages about extra-curricular activities, sports' reports and other matters of information (Leo, year 5: 333 CP). For one child, the general purpose was only vaguely understood, however:

Well, it's just to get you out of the class, I suppose, or just get the teachers to have a cup of tea or something. (Delia, year 6: 333 CP)

Pupils' discussions revealed two major components to provision: in the two multi-faith schools the socio-moral dimension was the key element. In the voluntary controlled school, this was accompanied by a strong religious emphasis. Children's comments indicated that behaviour is a significant theme in many of the stories which are used, and some pupils claimed that these are effective. By examining the consequences of certain behaviours, children are encouraged to consider their own actions:

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Listening to some of the stories sort of makes you avoid doing that. It's like you heard what happened so you avoid doing it. (Sarah, year 4: 319 VC Midd.P)

However, under adverse circumstances, this influence may be short-lived.

Well, I try and behave my best. I've lost my argument, because I used to get a lot angry when people wind me up, but I think I am getting used to that - try not to think about it - so I can just forget it. I try to ... as long as people don't wind me up. (Leo, year 5: 333 CP)

In schools 331 CP and 333 CP, the children's conversation reflected an emphasis on obedience to sets of rules, and unintentionally provided a glimpse of concerted efforts by teachers to limit fighting, swearing, teasing, and bullying. Other rules attempt to encourage certain positive behaviours, such as looking after younger children, being friendly to each other, and displaying *'... best behaviour when visitors come'* (Meera, year 5: 331 CP). At school 319 VC Midd.P, however, none of the children made any mention of specific school rules, although they recalled stories about behaviour, suggesting the adoption of an alternative approach in a school situated in very different circumstances.

The collective worship period also contains certain elements which children dislike. The first is the delivery of reprimands and the second is unfairness, which are often linked in pupils' perceptions:

The wrong people get into trouble. I don't like it. It's not really fair.
(Prabhar, year 5: 331 CP)

What is also deemed to be unfair is the reduction of play-time because collective worship has overrun. In addition, children complain about punishment being applied to the whole school for the misdemeanours of a few (Stephen, year 4: 319 VC Midd.P). Although complaints against authority are a typical feature of group interviews, as noted in chapter 2, nevertheless they serve here to identify some of the difficulties which accompany the organisation of worship for large numbers of children, in an educational setting whose prime purpose is not religious practice.

Whilst the encouragement of certain behaviours was a point of discussion for all of the pupils in this age group, particular attitudes to Christianity could be detected in the interviews held with the two groups from school 319 VC Midd.P and with the two pupils from school 333 CP who identified themselves as Christian, revealing a growing sense of confusion and scepticism. By the end of the primary stage at least some of these pupils were beginning to express doubts about its teachings which culminated in an increasing opposition to pressure for belief and commitment and a dislike of adult assumptions about the children's religious position.

First, there is confusion surrounding the details of the Biblical narratives and their historicity.

> *You should know about this because Jesus died on the cross but he rose again, so we say, but we are not so sure.*
>
> (Leo, year 5: 333 CP)

This stage of their development appears to be a period of transition, as pupils strive to reconcile earlier learning, culled from various sources, with their growing knowledge of the world. A year 6 pupil articulated a similar confusion:

I think that Christians are sort of half true and half not true. I don't

think anything like God made the world, I don't think that's true, but I

do think there was such a person as Jesus.

(Jeremy, year 6: 319 VC Midd.P)

Events such as turning water into wine and walking on water are regarded as impossible: Jesus was described therefore as a figure from the past who *'... sort of thought he was the son of God'* (Mark, year 6: 319 VC Midd.P).

By this stage, a distinction is noted between the approach adopted to religious education in the classroom and that which is met in assembly where, pupils argue, Biblical material is presented for belief and not for debate:

Jeremy   *The assemblies try and make you believe in it. .. They*

teach us [in R.E.] about religious faiths but [in collective

worship] they try and really relate you into Christians

when you don't really want to be.

Mark   *And all we ever hear about is things about Jesus's life and*

we never really have discussions about believing it.

Jeremy   *They all just think we all believe in God. They just tell us!*

School 319 is, however, a voluntary controlled school: some children therefore accept that the school has a particular responsibility to promote this tradition:

But it is a Church of England school so people should believe in

Christians. They're nearest to Christians than any other religious

faith.   (Sarah, year 6: 319 VC Midd.P)

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However, children's conversations revealed that their parents were not themselves religious and had no strong feelings about the extent of their children's commitment. The school had been chosen not because of its denominational links but because of its catchment area and the unacceptability of alternative institutions in the locality. The children were happy to learn about Christianity, but were unhappy about pressure to believe what they were taught.

> *Well, it's good to know about it; it's just when they teach you that you have to believe in it.* (Brendan, year 6: 319 VC Midd.P)

By the end of their years in primary school, the understanding of prayer as an activity which invokes divine reward or displeasure, noted in the infant department, has evolved into a perception of its instrumental purpose. The absence of effective response leads to doubt and rejection:

> *I don't see what praying is actually going to do, like you pray for something like wars to stop and they don't. Like Northern Ireland. That's been going on for twenty-five years or something.*
> (Brendan, year 6: 319 VC Midd.P)

For this reason, some of these pupils were uncomfortable with the requirement that they should participate in an act which contains no meaning for them:

> Brendan   *They [i.e. teachers] look at you if you've got your eyes open.*
>
> Jeremy   *They expect you to actually pray!*

Confusion about the term 'worship' could be identified also in the responses of some of these children. Comparing their experience in school with formal services of

worship at the neighbouring Roman Catholic school which are led by the clergy, these pupils argued that their assemblies were not really acts of worship. Some, however, argued that worship should be included in the school's provision, because it was a necessary practice for children who were members of the faith, but that the position of non-Christians in the school should also be taken into account:

> *I just think, like, if there's so many non-Christians in the school, it*
> *shouldn't be so perfect for Christians. Yes, it should be, like, people*
> *should be more interested in what everyone thinks.*
>
> (Brendan, year 6: 319 VC Midd.P)

Another child agreed with this, arguing for greater choice and self-responsibility:

> *Well, I think they could do it if they wanted to, but give us a choice and*
> *discuss it with us so that if we want to, we can, and if we don't want to*
> *then we can listen but think about it.*
>
> (Marie, year 6: 319 VC Midd.P)

At the multi-ethnic schools 331 CP and 333 CP, religious content was limited to the celebratory performance of the major festivals of the traditions represented by the pupils. Prayer was usually omitted from everyday provision, although it was incorporated exceptionally on one occasion after the Dunblane tragedy, despite the headteacher's assertion that prayer was impossible:

> *We do it when someone - like happened in Dunblane - the Dunblane*
> *primary, what happened there - we had prayers, a sort of a worship.*
> *We bow our heads and think about it, and put the prayer half way*
> *through.* (Jayesh, year 5: 331 CP)

When questioned about the inclusion of worship, these pupils argued that many children would reject it and their behaviour would put pressure on others:

Because other people won't like it and they start - because as we do sometimes, I do what the teachers tell me to, but those people go, "Oh, look at him!" so I don't think they could put up with it.

(Leo, year 5: 333 CP).

Two children from this school were in favour of faith assemblies, feeling that they would learn more from this arrangement, but another child felt it was more important for the pupils to mix. The four pupils at school 331 CP, who were all Hindu, were willing to participate in worship provided there was a division along faith lines, which again would be necessary to avoid comments from peers:

Be all right to do worship in assemblies if it's your own religion, if your own person and if you have your own time, but if it's all together, like, people might say, "Eh, look at them praying!" But that's - means you have it a separate, separate time. (Davyesh, year 5: 331 CP)

4.3.2.1   What do children think they learn?

What children thought they learned from collective worship came largely from the explicit content: in addition to some knowledge of religion, as we have seen above, they also learned about the rules of *'sensible behaviour'* (Meera, year 5: 331 CP). The year 6 children from school 319 VC Midd.P however, identified other processes at work. The pressure which they claimed to experience in respect of religious commitment was mirrored in another agenda. First there was some doubt about whether assembly *'...is really a lesson type thing'* (Mark), or whether only Christians learn anything. This raised further difficulties for the children because

they recognised that, in spite of their cultural tradition, '...*not a lot of people are Christians in this school*' (Jeremy). Marie suggested however that they all learned from the stories which contained morals but Brendan identified these as '*the sort of ones like they all want you to be really similar and not be different.*' This opened up a new avenue for discussion.

Int.   *When you say it teaches you all to be the same, did you mean all of you to be the same, or did you mean to be the same as the persons in the story?*

Brendan   *Well, no. Just to sort of be normal, don't be totally different, just be - all live sort of similarly.*

Jeremy   *I hate people who try to rule your lives, turn you into something you're not, because it's just ridiculous. You want to be who you are. You don't want to be who somebody wants you to be.*

They argued that only some of the material presented helps them to be themselves, mentioning poetry and the life stories of certain people e.g. Gandhi. Furthermore, these pupils, noting the strong influence of the headteacher on the approach adopted by teachers, argued that they were nevertheless receiving mixed messages, some of which encouraged individuality, while others were telling them '*to be a safe Christian and not to be different basically*' (Jeremy). They were aware that they faced an important and difficult choice, and that they were also influenced by their desire to please their teachers:

I think you're always very affected by what teachers say and I think

you always want to know what the teachers think so that you can

relate to that. (Marie)

Already, these young pupils were beginning to identify the dilemmas which were articulated succinctly by their peers in secondary schools, of uncertainty in matters of religion, and of the search for a personal identity, freedom and individuality.

4.3.3 The secondary sector

In the secondary sector, participation in worship is regarded by many students as an activity suitable for the primary school which no longer has a contribution to make to their needs:

Assemblies have changed a lot because when we were little they were

more about worshipping people's beliefs but now they are more about

life, more about the problems that people face in life and more

dilemmas and we are learning more from that than worshipping.

(Lauren, year 11: 314 C11-16C)

Nevertheless, gathering together as a large group was an activity which many students valued, arguing that this contributed to a feeling of identity and mutual awareness and gave a sense of being part of the larger community:

It's good to get the year group together at least one time in a week,

because otherwise you're just lots of people walking around the

school. You're not a school because you don't know each other;

you're not aware of the other people. (Jane, year 11: 310 C11-16C)

Although some students challenged this, arguing that all pupils sit in class groups and have no communication with other members of the school, it was generally agreed that the assembling nevertheless fulfils a valuable function:

It's just good to get everyone together once a day. If it's routine, it gets you in the same frame of mind ... you feel part of school. It can give you more of an identity. (Natalie, year 13: 313 GM/GS)

Elsewhere students commented that, '*We would miss it if it didn't happen; it's part of the natural school day*' (Tim, year 10: 302 C11-16C).

Although students were often critical of the pressure placed on them, they also recognised the importance of the regular reiteration of the school's standards of work and achievement during this period. In one school, the ethos is codified as the 'Langley Way' and expectations are rehearsed with the year groups: although students regard its demands as excessive, they nevertheless perceive its value for them as individuals (years 8 9: 311 C11-16C). In addition, the celebration of achievement was felt to be an important feature. Some, though not all, pupils enjoyed receiving a tangible award to mark their hard work. *'It's your chance to have a little shine, if you get called up'* (Jane, year 11: 310 C11-16C), and the communication of information was useful: '*It's quite good finding out things, what is going on, sort of like a human noticeboard*' (Keiron, year 10: 308 CE/11-16C).

4.3.3.1   Attitudes to collective worship

In community schools

Despite the value placed by students on these features, there was also much criticism levied at both content and presentation. The religious dimension was a

particular focus for this, sometimes because it was seen as irrelevant and at other times because it was presented in a manner which obscured its worth. The burgeoning doubts and confusions, and the distinction which some senior pupils in the primary sector are beginning to make between participation in collective worship and the learning element of its content, is accentuated during the secondary stage, leading to a sense of uncertainty and the rejection of religion as a personal commitment. Others, however, were prepared to condone the presence of a religious dimension for the purpose of learning, provided its presentation was interesting and relevant to their needs. While some students, therefore, thought it would be advantageous to incorporate material from different faiths and from a variety of Christian denominations (school 310 C11-16C; school 313 GM/GS), others claimed that, in their schools, when material with a religious element was included, little attention was paid:

Then assembly isn't assembly, because they don't pay attention and they ignore what people say and they talk and it defeats the whole object of the assembly. (Charlotte, year 11: 314 C11-16C)

Conversations revealed a range of attitudes to Christianity: some recognised that its moral values are meaningful, but argued that material was inadequately presented and that its relevance was not articulated:

Christianity's kind of, in assembly, just a cloak for general meaning and it would be really useful if they could make it more realistic, more day to day, so it's easier to relate to and not so detached, because there's a lot of Christian parables that've got quite a lot of meaning for life today, but if you relate it to people walking on water and stuff, it kind of removes it a bit. (Edmund, year 13: 313 GM/GS)

Furthermore, contact through religious education with the world's faith traditions serves to accentuate the dilemma of the choices which students face and their desire for proof on which to base belief:

Saul.   A lot of people don't really want to get into any belief in particular because it can change your mind so much and you don't really want to commit yourself because, and I don't know about anybody else, but it seems pointless believing in something when you don't even know if it's true or not.

Ian.   You don't know the difference between one and the other. You can't prove about God and you can't prove that Muslim whatever beliefs are true either. You don't know which is right or if any of them are right.

Saul.   If you can't really believe in it then you shouldn't believe in it and I think that is the problem so many people don't know what's right and what's wrong and what's true and what's not.
(year 11: 314 C11-16C)

Even where their parents had strong Christian beliefs, it did not follow that the children would follow their practice:

Yes, my mum and dad are Christian but I think I'm atheist or something like that. I don't know, just nothing. I don't know. I'm just floating   (Nathan, year 11: 314 C11-16C)

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Consequently the requirement for collective worship in the absence of belief was regarded as foolish (year 13: 313 GM/GS) and students claimed that few of their peers had any religious commitment:

Most people don't believe in God at all, like humanists or atheists and

stuff like that, so it should cater for those needs as well.

(Karen, year 11: 314 C11-16C)

The presence of a majority of disinterested pupils in schools results in an atmosphere which is not conducive to worship (school 311 C11-16C), and the legal requirement that pupils should participate was seen to conflict with other social principles:

It seems to go a bit against the democracy of the country though,

because they're saying, " You've got freedom of choice but you have

to worship". I'm glad we don't. I think we would resent it if we had to

sit down and pray every day; you'd just feel like you shouldn't be

doing it. (Charles: 313 GM GS, year 13)

Schools, it is argued, have a responsibility to teach about all traditions, not to select one for worship:

The schools should teach you about people's different beliefs so you

are tolerant because there are so many beliefs now that you need to be

tolerant, and they shouldn't really pick any one of them to give you in

assembly. (Kate, year 11: 314 C11-16C)

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Attitudes to collective worship in schools with a religious foundation

In the schools where religious worship was held regularly, two different patterns of response were encountered. At an Anglican voluntary-aided school, students made a distinction between the liturgical worship which they encountered in the service of Eucharist, attendance at which was not compulsory, and year group collective worship where the emphasis was seen to be the development of Christian attitudes and morals:

> *Mostly Christian attitudes they try and put across, which I have got no*
>
> *problem with but God's place may be, like, in services not assemblies.*
>
> *... Most people think any assemblies are mostly Christian attitudes and*
>
> *end up being completely boring.* (Ryan, year 10: 308 CE/11-16C)

Others argued that collective worship has no place in schools, except as a voluntary activity, and that religion should be relegated to curriculum lessons:

> *It should be in R.E. ... In assemblies you can talk about lots of other*
>
> *things more interesting, about social life, than just religion. When they*
>
> *give you talks about religion, it just goes out of your head ... got more*
>
> *interesting things to think about.*(Tariq, year 10:308 CE/11-16C)

The constant repetition of Christian teaching was a focus of criticism: although pupils accepted the school's denominational status, they felt that there should be a more balanced and less pressurised approach, with more variety (Paul, year 10:308 CE/11-16C). Compulsory attendance and material which fails to recognise the students' stage of development result in inattentive compliance:

After they start, you just drift away. You don't listen at all to what

they are saying. You are just staring at the floor and waiting till they

finish and just go. It's not really aimed at our age, I don't think.

Things they talk about, just kind of puts you off, and you just don't

want to listen. If you don't want to go, you are not going to sit there

and listen to it! (Patrick, year 10: 308 CE/11-16C)

Visits by evangelical groups are not well received: their efforts to modernise Christian stories are ignored and their members are regarded as pretentious, annoying and hypocritical:

It just doesn't work. ...They make a meal of it really. It's hard to

believe that they stick to the things they actually say. They are saying

all the things that they do and making themselves so good, but we

don't believe they actually do all the stuff they say.

(Emma, year 10: 308 CE/11-16C)

However, some pupils recognised that the provision of regular acts of shared worship provided a religious and cultural framework which was of value, despite their complaints, even though they knew that this view was not shared by all:

We complain about it gets boring but we listen to it and it's like, for

me, it's like Sunday, it's our religion, but for others either it doesn't

make any sense or they just don't want to know, it doesn't interest

them. It's just a waste of time really. (Daryl, year 10: 308 CE/11-16C)

Similarly, at school 303, where Christian worship is central to its ethos, there is a recognition that there might be something of value in the religious content.

Nothing can be lost by listening for half an hour, and it may result in

spiritual contentment. (written response, boy: 303 CTC, year 9)

This was a school based on *'Biblical principles'.* Complaints of boredom were directed at long expositions of the Bible, the lack of modern and relevant material and the absence of variety. Nevertheless, there was no opposition expressed to the provision of worship, provided its presentation was improved, and teachers *'didn't only look to the Bible for inspiration'* (boy) but drew examples from their own experience and literature. Although this was one of the interviews where the tape recording was of poor quality, students had provided written responses to some of the questions (a copy of which is provided in Appendix 7). The purpose of collective worship was seen to be the provision of an opportunity for pupils to think about God's claims, to offer worship and to reflect on the relevance for life of Bible teaching:

So that a group of people can meet and share thoughts, listen to a

speaker and worship God. Listen to Bible teachings and learn from

them. (female, year 8: 303 CTC, written response)

Despite expressing a sense of anxiety lest their behaviour or inattentiveness was noticed and although they claimed that much of the morning's material was forgotten by the afternoon, students were able nevertheless to identify broad areas of learning about Biblical teaching and its application to life.

I learn a lot about what is right and what is wrong through the Bible.
(female, year 9: 303 CTC, written response)

I learn that spending a little bit of time with God each day is a good

thing. (female, year 7: 303 CTC, written response)

Christian messages about the creation, the acts of Jesus, parables and problems with the world today.

(male, year 9: 303 CTC, written response)

Whether written responses produced a reply which was not inhibited by the remarks of other students, or whether additional care was taken to give answers which were thought to be correct, rather than sincere, needs to be taken into account in these statements.

Attitudes to collective worship in multi-faith schools

In multi-faith schools, students argued that collective worship was an impossible undertaking, basing their arguments on notions of fairness and justice, or on its unacceptability if they belonged to a particular tradition:

If you did it in assemblies then I don't think that would just be right, because at my old school we had it and we were always doing Christian songs and everything and I could see a lot of Hindus and Muslims. They didn't really enjoy it and we didn't do anything to do with their religion and I don't think it was fair on them.

(James, years 8/9: 311 C11-16C)

Other students, who had felt excluded and distressed during such periods when they were younger, argued that they were now no longer prepared to accept such a situation, revealing an attitude which mirrors that of the headteacher of school 333 noted earlier:

I think it's because in my old primary school it's when we all got together and we did prayers in the morning but the problem was

everybody had to do prayers for what the Christianity did and most of us weren't Christians, so that's why in this school we don't do it because, for example, if we all did prayers for, say, Hinduism then some of us would disagree or walk off or whatever, so that's why we do assembly instead. (Malika, year 10: 312 C11-16C)

Furthermore, it was argued, it would be as unfair to exclude pupils whose differing faiths prevented their participation as it was to expect them to worship together. The effect of the withdrawal of one pupil would lead eventually to the withdrawal of all and to the subsequent abolition of assembly which pupils would regret (years 8/9: 311 C11-16C). Students argued that worship is a voluntary, private and personal matter which should be pursued in one's own time (year 10: 302 C11-16C; years 8/9: 311 C11-16C), according to the cultural tradition which it is the responsibility of parents to encourage (schools 311 C11-16C; 314 C11-16C).

They were also strongly opposed to the introduction of separate faith assemblies, although it was suggested that if students were allowed to miss lessons in order to attend worship, it might lead to a considerable number of conversions (school 311 C11-16C)! In addition to practical obstacles of accommodation and leadership, they argued that separation would not contribute to the development of good relationships between students, teachers and parents, which was part of the school's aims. They would be reluctant to be separated from each other, and felt this would be unjust: *'It's not fair to separate the girls'* (Khushbe, year 10: 310 C11-16C). They also feared that division could lead to racism and further arguments:

I think that if there were separate groups then - when you separate a community there is always racism so if you separated the different faiths, Monday was Muslim and Tuesday was ... they'd always differ, they'd have arguments - so I think it is better if we all get together, mix

together. Then we can all realise what the differences are. It is no

good separating them, that will start, like, racism and stuff.

(Manjut, year 10: 312 C11-16C)

This would not the serve the socialising purpose of education, which is to prepare students for life in a multi-cultural environment (Shahida, year 10: 312 C11-16C). The preferred approach in most of these schools was, in addition to the moral and social dimensions, to offer opportunities to learn from each other's traditions at appropriate times especially by the annual celebration and presentation of major festivals (schools 302 C11-16C; 310 C11-16C; 312 C11-16C). For some pupils this could also serve as a reminder to their peers of their religious duties:

The school does help you a lot plus it does celebrations and all that, so

it does help and it probably makes other people realise too. Some

Muslims are a bit out of track and they need to come on track. So the

school, when it has Eid celebrations and all that, it does try and help

them psychologically to think, "Oh, I am a Muslim. Why am I doing

this? I should be doing that!" I think it is good for the school.

(Malika, year 10: 312 C11-16C)

However, where traditional celebrations, such as Christmas, had been set aside, students claimed that they were no longer missed (school 311 C11-16C).

4.3.3.2   The moral, social and personal dimensions

Despite students' reluctance to engage in religious worship, their criticism of presentation and their complaints of boredom, most nevertheless acknowledged the worth of some features of provision. The importance of shared moral values was

recognised and this perception was accompanied by support for their presentation to the school body:

> James *I think that morals should be mentioned in assemblies because they - because I know a lot of people will forget those sort of things. I mean they will get told them, or they will get told off and then while they are getting told off the morals will come out and then they will be good, and then after a while they will forget, and if they forget then they will carry on.*

> Elliot *You would constantly need being reminded in assembly. Yes, they would be reminded so then there's a faint chance of them trying harder, but you have got to take that chance otherwise it will just be chaos.* (years 8/9: 311 C11-16C)

Values identified in discussion included honesty, consideration, tolerance, goodness and respect, which were acknowledged to be a necessary element of life in the community (schools 302 C11-16C; 313 GM/GS). Usually, mutual benefit and responsibility were emphasised: '*...it's just, like, we're part of one big happy family*' (Jane, year 11: 310 C11-16C). Some students, however, felt that their needs were not fully understood by their teachers who, in accounts of the exemplary lives of positive role models, failed to recognise the reality of everyday life for young people:

> *I think it's another thing, like, in assemblies and morals and stuff everyone tries to put over a perfect world, but we are here now and that's not the way it is, so why talk about it if it's not going to happen.*
> (Chloe, year 10: 308 CE/11-16C)

There was little reference to the spiritual dimension in students' discussions, although it is clear that some material, such as poetry, causes them to think more deeply. In school 302 C11-16C, the regular inclusion of a 'thought for the day' to which students contributed passages seemed to be an effective approach to reflection and discussion in tutor groups:

> *wrong, love, hatred, religious quotations, greatness - things that make you think.* (Objani, year 10: 302 C11-16C)

> *In the 'thought for the day' you really feel that the teachers practise and believe in it themselves, so they are better able to teach it to the pupils.* (Heena, year 10: 302 C11-16C)

In particular, solemn commemorations which follow loss and bereavement have a powerful significance for students, drawing the community together:

> *When Mr. Blandford died, that had a lot of meaning. It just brought home the realism of life.* (Russell, year 13: 313 GM/GS)

Concern extends beyond the institution, and external events can produce a communal response which is best shared within the larger group. The tragedy at Dunblane Primary School drew together teachers and pupils in a shared act of grief:

> *And sometimes we talk about what's in the news like we had quite an emotional, shall I say, awful assembly when there was the accident at Dunblane, because some teachers were crying. It was quite good to get the whole school together for that.* (Khushbe, year 10: 310 C11-16C)

The development of personal relationships is important for students at this stage and gathering together provides an opportunity for the communication and reinforcement of the school's ethos: students relate this to the quality of the relationships which they experience and observe. Young people also valued the insights they gained into teachers' individual identities and claimed that from their leadership of assembly, they acquired a deeper understanding of them as persons: '... *rather than just as figureheads*' (Helen, year 13: 313 GM/GS). The manner in which they are addressed contributes to the development of their attitudes and their own practice. Sensitive to condescension, which can cause them to reject both speaker and advice, they recognise that positive examples serve as models for good relationships: '*You learn how to get your own way nicely, putting everything across in a nice way*' (Jane, year 11: 310 C11-16C). On the other hand, students in one school noticed that some teachers' attitudes appeared to indicate their disinterest, especially those who stood beside the door in what was described as '*the cynics' corner*'.

> *I just get the impression that most people are sitting there thinking*
> *something else all the time and people only go because they have to.*
> (Jonathan, year 13: 313 GM/GS)

As they matured, they also became aware of changing relationships with the teachers:

> *I think assemblies get better as you go up the school because of the*
> *way they treat you and because of the way they realise, "This might be*
> *boring them slightly" so they try and put it over in a more adult way.*
> *Once you get into year 9 or the upper school ... they just sort of treat*
> *you better, don't they? They're more speaking to you as people a lot*
> *more and not students.* (Khushbe, year 10: 310 C11-16C)

Students were also aware of the benefits of their participation in leadership, although not all schools provided this opportunity. The pupils who were most enthusiastic were those who felt most closely involved. As noted earlier, at school 312 C11-16C, students valued the opportunity to perform in front of their peers and, more importantly, to present themes which they hoped would challenge thinking and result in improved behaviour. Recognising the existence of ' *serious issues'* in the wider community, they dramatised the consequences of certain actions:

It is a good practice for other people to realise what is going on in the outside world, so like yesterday if we did crime, we can say what good points are there and what's the bad points and what are the punishments and students there realise what is happening.

(Trupesh, year 10: 312 C11-16C)

Whilst recognising that they would not always be influential, they argued that their assemblies had a cumulative effect over time, both for the performers and for the viewers:

That's the whole point of it, if you make it more interesting and then they do realise. "This is what happened in assembly and would this really happen if I do this?" Not immediately though. Immediately they won't completely change from what they saw. It builds up slowly after each assembly. (Shahida, year 10: 312 C11-16C)

However, students recognised that, as learners, they themselves constituted an obstacle to the efficacy of any teaching content, since they were not always prepared to accept direct advice:

... depends how subtle they're being. If they're too superficial then people just ignore them because they're rebellious, I expect.

(Russell, year 13: 313 GM/GS)

Students objected strongly to any form of external pressure, particularly in respect of religious commitment, because they felt that this was an area they should freely discover for themselves:

It's difficult because, it's like with teenagers, they are always - you know - you are growing up, you are trying to find out what kind of suits you, you've got people sort of pushing Christianity across. I think you tend to get people then rebelling against it because that's expected of you, you know, C.of E. school, to be really Christian and I think people just, like, want to discover for themselves.

(Chloe, year 10: 308 CE/11-16C)

However, in all schools, groups were able to identify certain useful features and admitted to being influenced on occasions when material was well-presented and thought-provoking (Adrian, year 13: 313 GM/GS). Overall, students recognised that teachers were attempting to support them but they nevertheless complained that their needs were rarely met:

They think they are helping us and you have got to give them credit for that but they just need to work out what we want, really, for it to work.
(Kate, year 11: 314 C11-16C)

As we have seen, the quality of provision and relationships within schools varies and consequently students' attitudes reflect the particular situation they encounter and some young people recognise no value in the experience. Like headteachers,

however, the majority of secondary school pupils in this sample were reluctant to abandon assembly although they would like to see an improvement in its quality. In some almost indefinable way, they feel that, although hidden, it has a positive influence.

I'm sure we all have learned but we've forgotten when, where and

why. (William, years 8/9: 311 C11-16C)

It builds up on you. You don't realise it's happening but by year 11 it's had quite a big effect. It's hidden, but it's working though!

(Jane, year 11: 310 C11-16C)

4.3.3.4 Conclusion

Amongst the findings of the data reported in this chapter it is possible to detect gradual changes both in the approach adopted to the provision of collective worship in schools and in pupils' attitudes to the requirement to participate in what both teachers and students regard as the traditional elements of worship. For the majority, this is accompanied by an understanding that religious practice is distinct from curricular knowledge, and is a matter of personal and private choice. By the secondary stage of education, many young people experience doubt and confusion and begin to drift away from any faith commitment which they might previously have had. Cynicism was seldom revealed, but this may have been due to the largely teacher-selected membership of the groups, their unfamiliarity with myself as interviewer or the brevity of the time available. Interviews with less articulate students might have presented a different picture, but the over-riding impression in this sample was one of students who recognised, occasionally almost grudgingly, some value in the assemblies held in their schools. In the next chapter, the findings from the different sets of data will be drawn together for discussion and analysis.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter examines some of the layers associated with the provision of collective worship which are revealed by reflection on the data, and is presented in three sections. In the first, and incorporating only minor comments where immediacy serves coherence, I discuss the main findings which emerge from the study. In the second, I examine the underlying reasons for the variety of provision which exists between schools, and in the final section I consider deeper perceptional currents which influence attitudes and responses to collective worship. By way of preamble, however, I begin by drawing attention to general issues which are pertinent to this analysis and have relevance to the data.

5.1   INFLUENCES ON THE DATA

Three considerations need to be taken into account in the discussion of the data which follows. The first concerns the extent to which respondents present an unbiased and balanced picture of provision in their schools. Although the questionnaires were completed anonymously, they were addressed to teachers of religious education or headteachers who might be expected to present a favourable picture of their schools, and adult interviewees were almost always in similar positions of responsibility. Most of the pupils were selected by their teachers and it is probable that they were generally amongst the more articulate members of their schools, although they regarded themselves as representative of their peer group. Consequently, the picture of actual provision which these respondents reveal may be weighted in schools' favour. However, the broad satisfaction with practice which

teachers and pupils express does not inevitably extend to a positive response to religious worship, and attitudes to provision and to the legal requirements will be discussed further below.

Secondly, it is important to recognise certain aspects of the wider context which may have had an influence on teachers' responses. These include the publication of the Education (Schools) Act, 1992, which introduced new assessment and inspection procedures and required reports to be made on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was followed by *Religious Education and Collective Worship: Circular 1/94* (DfE, 1994), which defined the aims and nature of collective worship in schools. In addition, governmental concern about moral standards, which gave rise to the 'back to basics' campaign of 1996 and was accompanied by demands for teachers to be more active in the field of moral education, prompted some resentment amongst teachers who felt that criticism was being directed at the profession in respect of spiritual and moral development which were more properly the responsibility of parents and of society.

Finally, the continuing dilemma of the extent to which definitions of terms are shared in common must also be taken into account, and it is important to note that differing interpretations of key terms, such as truth, belief and learning, are held by adults as well as by young people. In particular, one of the difficulties which has accompanied this research since the outset has been the question of how to define worship. I have chosen in this study to adopt a position which follows the everyday usage of the term, identified in Circular 1/94 (DfE, 1994, para.57) as concerned with *'reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power'*, because this appears to be the way in which it is understood by the respondents. I recognise nevertheless that a superficial quantification of its articulation in prayer and hymn may be misleading and that worship, which may be expressed in a variety of ways, is an inner and spiritual experience which has sacramental significance for believers.

5.2 THE MAIN FINDINGS WHICH EMERGE FROM THE DATA

In this section, I draw attention to the conclusions which emerge from the data and also to areas where the data is silent. I outline the main elements under 5 sub-headings: the religious dimension, the spiritual, the moral and social, the cultural and, finally, the hidden dimension. These aspects allow the findings to be integrated and seem to be the most significant categories for examination, allowing comparisons to be made and also providing a context within which to explore unexpected features. An earlier draft, describing the findings according to type and status of school, was discarded because it implied a greater distinction in provision than is the case and involved overmuch repetition. Similarly, a formal comparison of the different sets of data was rejected because, although there is a clear relationship between them which will be identified as appropriate below, the main intention behind their collection *'was not to triangulate the two sets of data ... but to allow the quantitative component to map out general patterns and the qualitative phase to reveal processes and the perspectives of those actually involved'* (Bryman and Burgess, 1994, p.222). The structure adopted here will allow each of these elements to be discussed and will meet the chosen criteria of comprehensiveness, coherence and interest, providing also a foundation for the central issues associated with the compulsory dimension of collective worship which will be the focus of chapter 6.

Any analysis of the provision of collective worship is confronted by the wide variety of practice which exists between schools and by the presence also of common features which do not necessarily follow clear lines of division. Consequently, while it is inappropriate to generalise without caveat, broad patterns can be identified which distinguish between primary and secondary sectors, and between community, voluntary and multi-faith schools, and these will be examined below. First, however, I draw attention to the distinction, revealed in the data, between the presentation of teaching material which is religious, and participation in worship. Because

understanding of the former is closely related to pupils' willingness to engage in actual worship, I begin with an examination of the religious dimension which forms part of the teaching element but which is supplemented by the learning which pupils acquire from the curriculum subject and, occasionally, from their family backgrounds. The data indicate that pupils' understanding of religious belief and practice is associated with declining levels of pupil interest, and I shall therefore also make reference to the relationship between religious education and collective worship, and the development of religious understanding.

5.2.1 The religious content of the teaching element

Few acts of collective worship follow entirely liturgical forms, and in most the teaching element is the central focus of attention. This may, to some extent, be a reflection of the centrality of the sermon found in many branches of protestantism but its presence is common in all types of maintained school, and it is more likely that the inclusion of a teaching element, which has been customary at least since the Education Act of 1944, is an indication of the manner in which teachers have sought to make use of the relationship between religion and social morality to explore issues which are considered to be of relevance to the school. Whether teaching should have a place within collective worship raises further questions about the application of religious teaching to experience, a feature which is relevant to the committed life which is encouraged by worship. Only a very small minority of schools claims to exclude any reference to the religious dimension from their assemblies. Less than 1% of responses to the questionnaire stated openly that there is no religious content, and only 1 of the 35 schools visited for observation indicated that its assemblies are wholly non-religious, although elsewhere the inclusion of religion is sometimes minimal. Most schools incorporate religious material, at least occasionally, as part of the teaching element of collective worship, where it is used to support the main theme which is usually moral and social. The questionnaire indicated that 25% of themes

have an overtly religious title, while observation indicated that there is actually a higher level (60% in primary; 36% in secondary schools) of reference made to aspects of religion, even though this may not be the central theme (chap. 4.1). Where this material, which is almost exclusively Christian, is well-presented and relevant, some young people recognise its potential application to life, but the majority complain that too often material is presented which is over-familiar, repetitive and irrelevant. In secondary schools many students argue that, although a knowledge of faith traditions acquired in religious education lessons is necessary in a pluralist society, commitment to religion has no value or interest for them. This circumstance applies particularly to maintained community schools and extends into the voluntary sector, but is an attitude met less commonly in multi-faith community schools, as will be discussed below. The influence of a secular society and the absence of religious practice in the family background of most pupils are powerful pressures which contribute to this circumstance, but a further factor which emerges from the data is that of the nature of the religious understanding which pupils also acquire from their curricular lessons. Interview data reveal that this learning, which relates both to content and to attitude, is of particular relevance to pupils' approach to collective worship, raising questions about belief development and responsibility for the transmission of faith.

Conversations with infant pupils demonstrate that God is perceived initially as an anthropomorphic sky-dwelling deity. Accepted as creator, friend and helper, who both rewards and punishes followers, the expression of children's devotion and gratitude is encouraged through hymns and prayers. Learning and belief proceed hand in hand and no distinction is drawn between them. During the junior phase of schooling, however, this image is questioned, and uncertainty is expressed about Biblical accounts of the creation, stories of miracles, the resurrection and the divinity of Jesus. Doubts are articulated chiefly by boys who, equating prayer with supplication, challenge its authenticity in the absence of divine response. During this

key stage, pupils are also introduced to a range of faith traditions through the syllabus for religious education, in a non-confessional approach which allows of debate and which contrasts with the confessional approach which they are beginning to identify in collective worship (chap. 4.3). The syllabus for religious education introduces new material appropriate to pupils' stage of learning: by contrast, the content of collective worship remains apparently static in a non-developmental approach which is presented to children from the ages of 4 to 11 years. Pupils also begin to acquire a concept of science which emphasises empiricism: for young people, their understanding of the importance of evidence and proof leads to a perception of truth as only that which is capable of verification and casts doubt on religious material previously accepted by them as historically correct and authoritative.

During the years of secondary schooling, doubts continue to grow for many young people, and are not confined to those with no religious family background. Consequently, many students describe themselves as uncertain, confused and uncommitted. Faced, apparently, with a range of alternative belief systems, there is a reluctance to make any commitment without some assurance of the 'truth', and this is accompanied by a perception of a general absence of belief amongst this group which is shared by both teachers (chap. 3 and 4.2) and students (4.3). In the light of this deep uncertainty, participation in worship is regarded as unacceptable (chap. 4.2; 4.3). Further discussion about pupils' development will take place below: suffice to say at this point that the doubts which many young people and their teachers bring to collective worship in schools reveal an understanding of religious commitment as rooted in existing substantive belief. This is a major determinant of the attitude to collective worship which develops as pupils move from responsive childhood to an increasing independence of thought.

5.2.2 The religious dimension: the act of worship

Next I discuss four aspects of collective worship: (i) the approach adopted in schools of different type and status; (ii) the attitudes of teachers; (iii) the attitudes of pupils; and (iv) perceptions of the nature of worship as revealed in conversations. The findings which are of most significance include the difference in provision and experience which occurs between the primary and secondary sectors; the wide variation in the extent of teachers' support for, and opposition to, worship; the changes in attitude which occur amongst pupils; and perceptions of the nature of worship as a belief-dependent mental activity.

<u>The approach adopted in schools of different type and status</u>

Both questionnaire and observation show that the activity which serves as schools' response to the legal requirements ranges from acts of theistic worship to secular meetings for the purpose of communicating information about forthcoming events. Overall, provision in schools is a closely interwoven web of related elements containing material from the social, moral and religious dimensions in differing proportions and emphases. One of the key findings which is consistent throughout the data is the difference in provision, experience and response which occurs between the primary and secondary sectors. This is a circumstance which is subject to further qualification with respect to different categories of school, however, varying between institutions which are community, multi-faith or denominational schools.

5.2.2.1   Community schools

In most primary schools, questionnaire and observation agree that worship which is wholly or mainly broadly Christian is a regular and usually daily element of provision. Except for denominational emphases, most explicit in Roman Catholic

schools, there is little observable difference in approaches to collective worship between community and voluntary schools in the primary sector, a point noted by Levitt (1995). Although observation reveals that there is more stress on discipleship, commitment and nurture in some schools, this appears to be a reflection of the faith orientation of the leader rather than the status of the school (chap. 4.1). Provision is logistically simple to organise: commonly, all pupils and their teachers gather together as a single unit and the headteacher leads the act of worship on a regular and frequent basis, often with additional support from teachers on a rotational basis. The period usually focuses on a teaching theme which is accompanied by songs or hymns and often concludes with a prayer. Stories are a common feature of the programme; these are often Biblical or hagiographic but, equally frequently, fictional stories are also used. The very occasional inclusion of material from other world religions reported in the questionnaire was not observed in any primary schools during visits.

In the community secondary school worship plays a minimal role. Logistical difficulties mean that only the smaller institutions gather as a single unit, not necessarily daily, and in most schools assembling in administratively convenient year groups, on a weekly basis, is the most common approach. Although the questionnaire indicated that the headteacher may lead or be present, observation noted that attendance only occurred when leading, and in very large schools it is possible that many students seldom meet their headteacher in this role. Frequently, heads of year take responsibility for the weekly gathering, accompanied by supervising teachers attached to the tutor groups who are less likely than their primary counterparts to take a leadership role. Although both questionnaire and observation identified the use of religious material to support the teaching theme, visits revealed that few institutions incorporate elements of prayer, praise or silent reflection. A response to the questionnaire claimed that singing is inappropriate at this stage, although it was nevertheless a feature which was observed in three schools during visits (4.1) and is maintained in the independent sector (chap. 3). The maintenance of an established

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tradition and the availability of musical accompaniment may be amongst the reasons for its occasional retention. The inclusion of prayer, although infrequent in some schools, is nevertheless more common than the singing of hymns, but this feature requires only the leaders' participation whereas the inclusion of hymns requires the willing engagement of students and accompanying support on the part of teachers. Data from the questionnaire indicate that, although most secondary schools claim to incorporate prayers and hymns at least occasionally, 10 schools in the sample (13%) never do so, of which only 3 are multi-faith institutions. In addition, claims made in the questionnaire that material from non-Christian traditions forms part of schools' provision appears to be exaggerated; only one such example was observed during visits, although students argued that they would welcome the inclusion of such material. Some institutions take advantage of the flexibility of grouping written into the Education Reform Act (1988) and make provision for tutor-led acts of classroom worship, usually in the form of a 'thought for the day', but the questionnaire indicates that this is not widespread and interviews with teachers confirmed that this approach is often rejected as inadequate and tokenistic. Nevertheless, it is an approach which works well in some circumstances (chap.3; chap. 4.3), and students' comments indicate that its success is related to the relevance of the material, the sincerity of the leaders and opportunities for students to contribute to the compilation of themes. In addition, pupils' existing commitment to a faith tradition may be an influential factor (chap. 4.3). Teachers' reluctance to participate in this approach may be caused by a number of factors, of which shortage of time, disinterest, inadequate support materials and the ambiguity of the relationship of this format with collective worship, for which it is a substitute, may be influential.

5.2.2.2   The voluntary sector

As noted above, there is little to distinguish provision between primary schools in the maintained and voluntary sectors. In secondary schools, however, the

difference is significant, and in both Anglican and Roman Catholic institutions, worship continues the pattern found at the primary stage although the doctrinal content of some of the themes reflects strongly the teachings of the denomination, especially in Roman Catholic schools. In the latter a high percentage of teachers and pupils are baptised members of the tradition, and teacher-led classroom prayers are a feature of provision in both primary and secondary sectors. Church of England schools cater for a wider sample of the population and not all pupils have links with the church. Observation noted that a distinction may be made therefore between voluntary attendance at the celebration of the Eucharist and compulsory assemblies where the emphasis is on teaching Christian moral and social values (chap. 4.3).

5.2.2.3   Multi-faith schools

The picture of provision in multi-faith schools, revealed by the data, is conflicting.   Of the 9 secondary schools (12%) in the questionnaire which were predominantly multi-faith, six claimed to incorporate elements of worship at least occasionally.   This practice was not confirmed during visits, although interviews indicated that the major festivals celebrated in the community are marked by student presentations and that facilities for extra-curricular voluntary worship are made available, as appropriate.   In primary schools, however, provision follows the structural pattern established in this sector but with little reference to religion in the teaching element, although half of the schools visited for observation included prayer, and all usually included songs, some of which could be identified as 'godless' hymns. Nevertheless, in the questionnaire, the only schools in the primary sector which claimed to incorporate no forms of religious worship were multi-faith institutions. Why the picture of provision presented in these schools is contradictory is unclear: respondents' desire to be seen to be conforming to legislation in some respect may be an explanation.   In the primary sector, the weight of custom may mean that teachers in these schools seek to adapt to familiar practice and to incorporate unifying

elements, such as singing. It is also possible that, where the school's approach is not based on a previously agreed policy, leaders act independently of each other.

In a minority of schools, separate acts of faith worship are organised on a regular basis, along with assemblies which bring all traditions together. In responses to the questionnaire, only 2 secondary schools reported this provision and only one example of this approach was observed during visits: the headteacher was herself a Sikh, and this is likely to have been an influence on her decision to adopt this approach. Many teachers and students argue, however, that such an approach is a divisive practice which undermines the school's goal of forging a coherent community. Practical considerations, the difficulty of recruiting leaders from local faith communities, and concerns about the use of mother-tongue language which would restrict teachers' control, are amongst other possible reasons for the rejection of this approach. Nevertheless, the presence in multi-faith schools of significant numbers of students with an active religious commitment ensures that the value of each tradition, which is present in students' consciousness and expressed in the regular celebration of key festivals, contributes a respectful awareness of religion and its importance which is a subtle and non-quantifiable element in many of these schools (chap. 4.2; 4.3).

Interviews indicated that in multi-faith schools the approach which is adopted reveals three characteristics, in which teachers' desire to show respect for the religious traditions held by their students is accompanied by a concern for even-handedness and neutrality, and by a fear of causing offence or of inadvertently showing preference between local groups. In primary schools, an approach is adopted which concentrates on common values and restricts religious material to the occasional presentation of major festivals. In secondary institutions, attempts are made to resolve the dilemma in two ways: first, respect is demonstrated by making facilities available for voluntary worship during non-curricular time and, secondly,

impartiality between groups is maintained and giving offence is avoided by delegating responsibility to the students. Religion is thereby both respected in the school and marginalised from collective worship, in an approach which frees schools to use the assembly period to forge a communal identity to which all pupils can ascribe. Although the celebration of religious festivals is also commonplace, these may be extra-curricular activities which draw together the wider community. During visits for observation in multi-faith schools the content of the assembly was concerned chiefly with features of discipline, behaviour and achievement, themes which all secondary schools share in common.

5.2.3   Teachers' attitudes to the provision of collective worship

Actual provision in schools is closely related to teachers' attitudes to religion and to collective worship. Although some responses to the questionnaire remarked on its value in providing an opportunity which pupils do not experience elsewhere, others commented on its unimportance and the need for its abolition (chap. 3). Interviews identified a similar range of attitudes. Amongst the factors which influence primary teachers' responses is the extent of any religious commitment they hold, and their sense of what is appropriate for pupils at this stage of their education. At the secondary level, factors other than personal belief appear to be more significant, especially perceptions of the local community as either Christian or secular, and of the nature of the education process as critical and rational. Consequently, teachers in the same locality hold opposing positions and implement different approaches in their schools either because the local community is regarded as Christian, at least by tradition, or as secular and pluralist (chap. 4.2). Where the latter perception is held, it is argued that compulsory provision results in dishonesty in the face of inspection and constitutes a personal dilemma between obedience to the law and individual integrity (chap. 4.2). While some believers regard provision as an opportunity for witness to both pupils and colleagues, others argue that worship is the

responsibility of the faith community and is impossible in the presence of a majority of non-believing pupils. Many regard worship as outside the province of education and argue that its compulsory provision is not a legitimate demand (chap. 4.2). Arguments reveal a strong perception amongst teachers that collective worship is only possible where there is a level of shared belief, a conclusion which is indicative of an understanding of worship as a corporate act. At the same time there is an equally strong desire for the assembly to be an inclusive activity from which nobody is excluded and in which all can share. Logically, these positions cannot be reconciled in school communities where there is no common commitment to the faith tradition.

5.2.4 Pupils' attitudes to worship in schools

This is a feature not covered by the questionnaire and in the small sample of primary schools where interviews occurred, pupils' responses were reflections of age, experience and the social environment of the schools. While the youngest children simply enjoy provision, two different lines of argument opposing participation in religious worship can be detected in older pupils. In multi-faith schools, where the family background often maintains the faith tradition, pupils who would be prepared to worship in school argue that its practice is impossible in the face of verbal hostility from non-believing peers. Elsewhere, however, senior pupils question the requirement to participate in worship in terms of their right to exercise choice in the matter of belief (chap. 4.3). This is a claim which becomes increasingly significant as pupils move through the secondary school.

In the secondary sector, the absence of worship in many institutions meant that criticism was strongest in the voluntary school where the provision of Christian worship was most consistent. Although accepting the school's status, major complaints were directed at the constant emphasis on religion, on grounds of its

irrelevance, although there was some recognition that it forms part of students' cultural identity (4.3). In other schools, unease was expressed at, albeit infrequent, invitations to join in prayer (4.3), and was accompanied by indications of resentment and claims of the inappropriateness of the activity for young people with no commitment or belief (4.3). Observation indicated that passive inattention was the usual response.

5.2.5   Perceptions of worship

Engagement in worship, in which listening, singing and prayer is regarded as central (chap. 3), is understood to involve reverence and a recognition of the truth of religious claims (chap. 4.2). Underlying teachers' responses three positions can be identified: first, there is a perception that adult worship is belief-dependent and that its practice is a personal and therefore voluntary matter, although it is also described by believers as involuntary insofar as it is a response to divine initiative. At the same time, there is a general acknowledgement (though not without challenge, as we shall see below) that participation in worship is an acceptable introduction for children to the practice of the faith tradition into which they are born. Thirdly, however, it is also clear from responses to the questionnaire and from interviews that many teachers in primary schools, although prepared to lead collective worship, do so with a concern to maintain a neutral position. Comments refer to teachers' attempts to be open-minded, to respect the different faiths and needs represented amongst their pupils, to avoid undue influence and to be sensitive to non-practising 'Christians' (4.2). Observation did not, however, always confirm the adoption of this approach and some teachers would argue that worship and neutrality are contradictory.

Young people share many of these perceptions, regarding commitment as a matter of personal choice (chap. 4.3). Although there is some confusion expressed by primary school pupils over the application of the term 'worship', senior pupils

identify a fundamental association of belief with prayer which is viewed as the vital core component of worship. Older students also regard prayer as its central feature, dependent on individual belief and established within specific faith traditions, for which reason the inclusion of prayers in multi-faith schools is regarded as unacceptable (chap. 4.3).

5.2.6 The spiritual dimension

Although the questionnaire indicated that over 70% of schools claim to make a contribution to spiritual awareness and to provide opportunities for reflection, observation revealed that this was a low priority in actual provision. Interviewees struggled to define the term. Regarded as an inner and personal experience, it is most commonly distinguished by reference to contrasting dimensions, so it is described as non-material, non-temporal and non-intellectual, and related to a process of thoughtful awareness. For some it is a feature of a transcendent and religious approach to life: for others, it is a non-theistic consideration of deep issues of human concern. One teacher argued that, rather than a process, it is a quality of being; but another, perceiving spirituality as a form of introspective self-examination, was very uncomfortable with its presence in schools. Despite a general recognition of its importance, however, observation revealed that only three schools invited students to engage in self-reflection and none provided an immediate opportunity for quiet thought.

Students made little reference to this dimension by name, although they valued the presentation of material which made them think about values, emotions and human experiences, such as poetry and the lives of certain people, citing Gandhi and Mandela. In particular, both teachers and pupils commented on the importance of joining together on solemn occasions following loss and bereavement. It seems that, at such times, the shared commemoration has a deeply moving effect and I

suggest that it meets the needs of the community to mark significant events in a manner which is openly respectful and may also be implicitly spiritual, in the sense of enabling individuals to reflect on deep human experiences and at the same time to empathise with others (chap. 4.2; 4.3).

5.2.7 The moral and social dimensions of the community

All sets of data reveal the primacy of the social and moral dimensions in collective worship. These are a central feature of the major emphasis on community which is found in all institutions, the maintenance of which is the prime reason why all headteachers who were interviewed indicated that they would continue to provide assemblies even if the requirements for worship were repealed. Its importance influences the organisation, process and content of actual provision and is reflected in the preference for assemblings of large groups of pupils, and in the attendance of teachers who are part of the community, even when they have no desire to worship. In all schools the period of collective worship is used as an opportunity to develop a common identity and to draw pupils together in supportive relationships. The view of community is largely restricted to that of the school itself: opportunities to examine the concerns and dilemmas of the wider society or to prepare pupils to take their part in the extended community are seldom taken. The picture which is presented is one in which the period serves as a medium for the development and maintenance of a shared socio-moral framework within which the achievement of high standards, which is the central aim of the educational enterprise, is facilitated and encouraged. Two main approaches are pursued: the reiteration of behavioural rules and guidelines and a concomitant emphasis on the maintenance of harmonious relationships. Data from the questionnaire and from interviews indicate that there is little attention given to the exploration of controversial issues or to the problematic implications of the general advice which is given. Young people appear to regard morality as a learned code which directs immediate social behaviour, rather than as an ethical process

involving the application of moral principles: consequently, some students claim that this code was learned in the primary school and does not require reiteration although, elsewhere, other students recognise the fragility of the moral structure of the community and support the provision of constant reminders delivered through collective worship (chap. 4.3). The effect of a rural or urban environment on differing levels of sophistication may account for the difference in students' responses here.

Both questionnaire and interviews claim that, in a quest for common ground between disparate groups in multi-faith schools, the moral dimension serves as an acceptable unifier by emphasising similarities and incorporating values which are common to all traditions. However, observation (chap. 4.1) demonstrated that, in practice, leaders present personal viewpoints which are cultural-specific and intend students to consider to what extent these values are part of their own tradition (chap. 4.2). There appears to be little attempt to identify areas where values conflict or are distinctive of a particular group: consequently, this can lead to a narrowing of debate and to a restricted agenda.

Although responses to the questionnaire referred to the personal and emotional dimension, little reference was made to individual development in any of the schools visited, except in scholastic terms, through the process of awards for curricular attainment. Sometimes, the emphasis was on group achievement where the focus is on all members of the team or class working in co-operation to reach particular goals: most commonly these relate to attendance or punctuality and are designed to support the school's aims of educational success.

Finally, although money-raising for charities is a feature which is often publicised and encouraged through collective worship, there appears to be little discussion of alternative approaches to meeting human needs, and there was no

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evidence of the politicisation of assemblies which Cox criticised (1988, HL, 496:1345). The picture which emerges is of an inward-looking community, concerned for its own wellbeing. This was also reflected in the prayers that were offered, which were largely expressions of thanksgiving and requests for personal help and protection, although it is possible that this is a feature of the primary stage which is usually the main arena for prayer.

5.2.8 The cultural dimension

Although the questionnaire indicated that 70% of schools claim to make a contribution to religious and cultural diversity and 64% to a knowledge of cultural traditions, there was no other evidence which might confirm such provision. The content revealed by the data reflects British cultural traditions, including civil celebrations such as Remembrance Day and Guy Fawkes' night, or incorporating material from books such as *Cider with Rosie* which describe customs of the past. The use of material from non-Christian religions, noted in the questionnaire, was not reflected in responses to other questions. References to world religions listed amongst the themes represented 4% of the total, and although some schools reported the 'celebration' of non-Christian festivals these were rarely to be found except in multi-faith institutions, a practice confirmed during visits and interviews. As noted above, other comments in the questionnaire suggested that, in such schools, the emphasis is on shared moral guidelines which are not specific to any tradition, indicating a marginalisation of diversity in favour of common values. None of the comments in the questionnaire about the benefits of provision made any reference to its contribution to pupils' cultural development or to their awareness of cultural diversity, although some responses mentioned the encouragement of tolerance and respect. Observations in schools presented a similar picture: only one reference was made during collective worship to more than one faith tradition. Almost none of the biographical accounts mentioned in either questionnaire or interviews described non-

Europeans, except for Gandhi and Mandela. There was little evidence of an exploration of the wider and international world or, except in multi-faith schools, of the pluralist nature of society.

The absence of a wider cultural dimension may be caused by leaders' limited background knowledge, by provincialism and insularity, by a lack of easily accessible but current materials, or poor programme planning. Where worship is led by believers, it may also be the case that they are unwilling to deviate from their mainly Christian focus. The findings conform to the picture of an inward-looking community discussed above, whose main priorities are self-supporting.

5.2.9 The hidden dimension

Here, I discuss those features which are part of the hidden dimension of schools' provision of collective worship. First, however, I draw attention to those situational aspects which are not revealed either by the questionnaire or by conversations but which are sensed or intuited. In this category I include issues of pupil control and family mobility which exert a central influence that permeates provision in some schools. In any theoretical discussion about responses to legislation, it must be recognised that circumstances vary widely and that some demands are so immediate and pressing that they take precedence in schools' provision. Thus the need to draw pupils from a range of different backgrounds and traditions into a coherent and stable community, in the face of daily problems of indiscipline and disruption, is a feature of provision not taken into account by sets of figures or, usually, revealed in interviews. Similarly, adolescent rebelliousness is another hidden feature which is present but largely obscured in the data, except in students' self-descriptions. The impact of the local environment on pupils' wellbeing also varies widely. All of these influences serve to remind that provision in schools cannot be readily understood without recognising these hidden contexts.

Amongst the features of provision which I describe as covert are issues of gender, hierarchy, eurocentrism and, for want of a better term, what I refer to as 'pastism' or preterition and, finally, issues of evangelism and indoctrination.

5.2.9.1   Gender   In common with much of the literature which is available for children, the stories which are used in primary schools as vehicles for the teaching element of collective worship generally describe male characters, even when these are also animals or inanimate objects. Biblical material and biographical accounts of famous lives have a similar bias. An examination of teaching content encountered during observation revealed that references to males and females occurred in a ratio of 2:1.   In addition, further messages about gender are demonstrated in the fact that more men than women lead collective worship (chap. 4.1) and during observation, all visiting speakers were also male. More boys were seen to be in receipt of awards generally, a point also noted in the questionnaire, and their interests, such as football, were used more commonly as examples. At the time, these features did not appear significant: only in reviewing the data has this dimension revealed itself, and it appears to be a reflection of gender roles in society generally, and to be an unconscious accompaniment to provision.

5.2.9.2   Hierarchy   This is an element which is regarded by teachers as unavoidable as well as necessary. For a variety of reasons, it is customary for younger children to sit at the front of the gathering, and for their movement through the school over subsequent years to be tangibly marked by their progress to the back of the hall or to the benches or chairs which are provided in some schools for senior pupils. Students in one school described their sense of intimidation when they were younger in the presence of older pupils and of sixth-formers.   Interestingly, in secondary schools where year assemblies are the customary approach, students remarked on their preference to meet in a group which incorporates pupils of different ages (chap. 4.3). The status of teachers is demonstrated not only in respect of their

seating positions, usually at the end of class lines where they can supervise behaviours but, as the questionnaire indicated, also in the frequency with which they assume a leadership role in some schools. Observation indicated that, in the secondary sector, only senior teachers are usually involved in this responsibility. Some headteachers wear a gown and this too can add to the formality of the occasion, serving as a reminder of distinction as well as of academic goals. In the questionnaire, although some respondents queried their own practice, others remarked on the importance of status, and interviews revealed that many headteachers and their deputies make direct use of collective worship to impress their position on students. By contrast, where teachers and students sit together in, for example, services of Eucharist, there is more of a sense of a common worshipping body which is sharing together in one act.

5.2.9.3 Eurocentrism

One of the marked features of the content of collective worship which has been noted above, and will not be discussed at length therefore here, was its parochial and insular nature, a point which was identified by a small number of respondents in the questionnaire. Indeed, anglocentrism would be a more accurate description. Almost no reference was made to people or events outside Britain nor was there any recognition of Christianity as a world faith. No mention was made of churches in countries such as South America or South India, or of groups represented in Britain, such as the Orthodox Church. As has been noted above, although schools claim to incorporate material from other religious cultures, this is not confirmed by an analysis of themes in the questionnaire or by observation. In multi-faith schools, the desire for unity leads to a search for shared values, but it is difficult to tell to what extent these are western values and how far learning incorporates emphases from other traditions. During interviews, only one headteacher identified the problem of tackling situations where values are not shared.

5.2.9.4   Preterition   Another hidden dimension which was revealed by an examination of the material presented in collective worship is its emphasis on the past.   Content which is overtly religious is frequently historical, making little reference to contemporary activities: only four biographies made reference to persons still living.   Whilst it is possible to argue that insufficient information is available about contemporary figures who may prove in time to be less than heroic, there is no recognition that it might be possible to present flawed figures and to examine the reality of human problems.   This is an omission commented upon by students, who argue that this would be a much more relevant and realistic approach to adopt (chap. 4.3).   The result of this emphasis on past accomplishments and events is the relegation of religion to history, a failure to present religion as a living tradition and a marginalisation of contemporary problems in favour of broadly heroic ideals.   This is not to suggest that such ideals are not of continuing value but to recognise students' arguments for a more balanced and immediate programme.

5.2.9.5   Evangelism and indoctrination   Observation   revealed   a dimension of provision which, although infrequent, is related to a form of evangelism.   This appears in two modes. In the first, visiting speakers, who often consist of groups of young people, seek to present their faith to pupils.   Students' comments reveal that although these performances may be entertaining, the message which is purveyed is regarded as unrealistic and hypocritical (chap. 4.3).   Teachers may also feel uncomfortable with this style of presentation, and some schools refuse offers from such groups to lead collective worship (chap. 4.2), although their presence can be a regular feature where the teacher responsible for collective worship is sympathetic to this form of evangelism generally.   The second form of approach, observed in primary schools, is concerned with the regular repetition of phrases, such as *'Jesus is still looking for friends today'* and *'Jesus wants to be your friend forever'*, which carry overtones of religious influence and pressure.   As discussed earlier (chapter 4.1) these claims may be statements of belief by teachers rather than

overt intentions to persuade, and the influence of such remarks, if any, is short-lived. Nevertheless, it raises questions about whether the maintained school is an appropriate place for such claims, and the issue of indoctrination is one which will be examined in chapter 6. A further feature revealed only by interview was the recognition by some teachers that their witness extends to colleagues who are present during collective worship, not only incidentally but sometimes intentionally (chap. 4.2).

5.2.10 Conclusion

To conclude this section, I draw attention to the generally positive response to provision which permeates the data. Whilst there may be an element of respondent bias present and a general desire on the part of both teachers and pupils to portray a favourable picture, evidence points to three additional factors. The first indicates that many pupils enjoy the opportunity which collective worship offers to gather together in large groups and to feel part of the wider community of the school, sharing together in moments of celebration as well as mourning but more commonly gathering information about the institution's activities and encountering their peers and teachers. The second reminds that schools attempt to provide, during this period, an experience which they think will be acceptable to their pupils and will meet their needs. Although they are not always or wholly successful in this respect, many pupils recognise their teachers' concern for them, and value this. Thirdly, the emphasis placed on the social dimension and the opportunity which collective worship also provides for students to gain insights into teachers' lives and personalities, reflects the quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils. Consequently, although students and teachers are increasingly critical of worship, the value of the assembly results in a broadly positive picture of provision.

5. 3   COMMENTARY ON THE FINDINGS

In this section I examine the underlying causes of the marked difference in both attitude and provision which is evident in the primary and secondary stages of schooling, a circumstance which serves to identify some of the connections and dilemmas which are central to the issue of collective worship. This part incorporates a consideration of the perceptions of religion which are revealed and addresses briefly the understanding of the nature of worship which is implied.

5.3.1   Differences between primary and secondary sectors

The variation which is apparent between sectors is demonstrated in the attitudes of participants as well as in the structure of provision. In both dimensions, difference exists along a continuum and although a generalised view sets a dividing line between primary and secondary schools, there is much in actual provision that is common to voluntary and primary institutions, and the division is rather between that group and the community secondary school. Similarly, although there is a distinction between teachers' attitudes in the primary and secondary sectors, these are not uniform, while the disaffection which pupils show during the secondary stage has its roots in the primary school. Middle schools follow the pattern established in the sector to which they are attached and although independent schools are able to make provision for collective worship on a regular basis, there is no evidence that pupil responses are significantly different from those of their peers in equivalent maintained schools.

5.3.1.1   Teachers' attitudes and their influence on provision

As indicated above, a variety of positions can be discerned in teachers' responses: some are believers with an active membership of their faith community,

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although this does not necessarily imply support for collective worship; some might be described as Christian agnostics in their expression of non-affiliated sympathy for the tradition, while others are strongly opposed to religion in any form. During interview, with the exception of those working in multi-faith institutions, all but one of the senior teachers in primary schools who took responsibility for collective worship made reference to their religious identity, and all favoured the provision of collective worship. In the secondary sector, personal association with a faith tradition, which was less common, was not a predictor of attitude. Opposition in these schools is largely grounded in a perception that neither teachers nor students are believers and that their engagement in worship is therefore impossible, that religion is a matter for personal pursuit within a faith community, and that the school is not an appropriate place for worship in a secular and pluralist society.

It is easier to identify the reasons for these differences in response to the legal requirements than to ascertain why such disparate attitudes are held amongst teachers between the sectors: gender differences, graduate status, and perceptions of child development and of the aims of education at different stages of schooling may have some influence.

The size and organisation of most primary schools allows the leadership of collective worship to be delegated, if necessary, to a single person, and questionnaire responses indicate that this is the approach adopted in some schools. Most commonly, however, leadership is shared with class teachers and, in this sector, the majority of these are female. In contrast, the majority of senior teachers in secondary schools are male (DfE, 1996), and observation revealed their predominance in the leadership of assembly. In the general population, more women than men are church members and they display more interest in spiritual matters (Brierley, 1991; Bruce, 1995). Davie (1994) claims that their religiosity appears to be different from men's. Women are more likely to communicate an image of God as loving and forgiving, a

feature which corresponds to the emphases revealed during observation in primary schools (chap. 4.1). Men, conversely, depict a God of power, design and control, and Bruce suggests that, with the privatisation of religion, there has been a movement in the churches away from the political and public sphere towards more domestic matters which have traditionally been seen as the province of women: ' *The modern divide between the private world and the public world, with religion relegated to the former, increases its relevance for women and diminishes it for men* ' (Bruce, 1995, p. 116). In the primary sector, however, men as well as women expressed their support for collective worship and more identified themselves as churchgoers than their secondary colleagues. One of the possible explanations therefore of the different perspectives revealed between interviewees is that teaching in the primary and secondary sectors attracts broadly differing personality types, with the primary school, which characteristically has a particular concern for caring and nurture which it shares with the church, appealing to those with a religious commitment.

Whether graduate status influences professional attitudes to the teachers' role and to the nature of education is speculative: it seems possible that in secondary schools, where 68°o of teachers are graduates (compared with 45% in primary schools) (DfE, 1996), a more rationally critical approach, influenced by a liberal higher education, prevails. The emphasis on subject specialism in the secondary sector may also be indicative of a different approach to both teaching and pastoral care: in the primary school the teacher is responsible for all aspects of development for a single group of children for one or sometimes two years and may perceive her role as incorporating a strong element of nurture. The organisation of large secondary institutions into smaller divisions means that teachers have much less contact with individual students and, during collective worship, may be engaged in professional duties with other classes. Unlike their primary colleagues, they may well feel, therefore, that their responsibility lies with the curriculum subject rather than with the development and practice of collective worship.

In addition, differing perceptions of the nature of childhood and of pupils' development towards independent status are of relevance. Acting *in loco parentis*, teachers of young children regard their socialisation into cultural modes of behaviour and practice as an important element of their professional role: the transmission of the religious tradition is therefore considered appropriate as a foundation for subsequent choice. Levitt (1996) claims that parents, especially mothers, also regard provision as desirable for young children; attendance at performances of class-led worship and the seasonal celebration of festivals earns their nostalgic approval and meets a need for an undemanding tradition. Students who were interviewed claimed that, by the secondary stage, their parents were prepared to let them make the decision about religious commitment and attendance at collective worship (chap. 4.3): pupils choose not to withdraw, however, because of their desire to be part of the student body and also because, in the community secondary school, religious worship is minimal. As noted above, by this stage, there is a perception that young people, having received an introduction to religious practice in the primary school, are able to exercise choice in this matter. Where commitment occurs, this is in association with a denominational group and these students have no desire to worship amongst their uncommitted peers. The relegation of religion to the private sphere and the prevalence of non-commitment is regarded as a reflection of the wider society. Consequently, in a dialectical process, teachers' unwillingness to conduct or participate in collective worship, which is consequent on their own difficulties with religious faith, projects onto pupils a similar expectation of dissent and refusal, which then justifies teachers' approach. However, in voluntary schools, different factors come into play. These are institutions which have been selected by parents either by reason of the religious background which they offer or with an acknowledgement that this is the framework which will be provided. There is, therefore, a recognition that such schools have a responsibility to conduct collective worship and an expectation that parents will support this. Interviews with pupils in Anglican schools indicated that they accept the voluntary status of their institutions but, despite the steady emphasis on Christianity,

many revealed the same responses to collective worship as their peers in community schools. Parental choice is often made primarily for academic reasons and voluntary schools may be selected in preference to those which are considered less socially or academically desirable. Attfield (1990) argues that:

An Anglican church school in practice largely serves a constituency of nominal Christians who probably just want a good general education and nothing specifically religious for their children, beyond a vague moralism. (p.169)

Similarly, independent schools recognise that although parents are uncommitted, they also value the encouragement of moral values in collective worship. Such schools are better able to provide regular acts, often led by a chaplain, especially where student numbers are small and a chapel is set aside for the purpose. Parents' financial commitment to these schools, the continuance of an established tradition and the general ethos mean that customary provision continues, but headteachers complain that scepticism is now more widespread amongst their pupils and, where there is a religious foundation, recognise that their role in collective worship is to prepare the ground for possible commitment in later life (chap. 4.2).

5.3.1.2   The influence of the headteacher

Whilst these factors may go some way towards explaining the variation in provision between the primary, secondary and voluntary sectors, they offer little explanation of the differences which exist between schools of similar type, status and geographical location. Cheetham (2000) rightly draws attention to the *'substantial influence on the content and style of an assembly of the teachers who lead it'* (p.77) but behind the circumstances of daily provision the key influence on the approach adopted and on the style of provision in any school appears to be the attitude of the

headteacher, a situation which is perceived by primary school pupils (chap. 4.3). Most adopt an approach with which they feel at ease, using the period primarily for self-presentation, for exploring particular concerns and for reinforcing expectations of staff as well as of pupils. The strength of this position is communicated to colleagues by action, comment and example, and by what is omitted as well as what is included. Most headteachers value the contribution which assembling makes to the school as a community and as an organisation, and, except in the very largest schools, set the pattern for leadership on a regular basis. Where provision is regarded as unimportant, the withdrawal of teachers, sometimes with groups of pupils in primary schools, is considered to be a commendable use of time (chap. 4.2). The dominance of the headteacher's influence can lead to some tension and resentment on the part of teachers who adopt a contrasting position but these may be in a minority. This is not to suggest that headteachers are themselves immune to influence from colleagues or, occasionally, from pupils: most, however, seek to adopt an approach which has the support of the majority of staff while meeting the perceived needs of the school and of its pupils. Their recognition of the importance of teacher support is revealed in attitudes to tutor-group worship, where there is a conscious decision not to check individual teacher's co-operation with its implementation, or to abandon this approach where there is sufficient opposition.

5.3.2 The spiritual element

In an attempt to explore common ground, some teachers recognise the presence of a spiritual dimension to human existence and seek instead to encourage young people to reflect on this experience. As noted in the first section, however, this feature is difficult to define and little evidence was found of its actual provision, despite claims to the contrary. For many teachers, it may be an area which can only be encountered in an imperceptible blending with the moral and the social. They may feel, therefore, that when morality or social relationships, personal identity or

emotional development are discussed, the spiritual dimension is inevitably engaged. On the other hand, it may also be the case that the very inaccessibility of the term to definition means that it is also largely hidden from recognition or identification. Some teachers feel that, by its nature, the spiritual dimension may be too intimate to explore in the presence of large numbers of students. So individual is it, that its development cannot be quantified nor can the experiences which motivate some people to spiritual reflection be assumed to have an impact on others. This can leave the teacher in a vulnerable position, particularly in the presence of students who are not well-known. The shortage of appropriate supporting materials and environmental difficulties may mean that collective worship, although it might be an occasion of incidental spiritual experience, is not the place for its intentional presentation. Tutor groups may provide a more appropriate environment, where students are familiar with each other and with the teacher, but this familiarity may itself be a hindrance, and we have noted teachers' reluctance to be involved in this form of classroom provision. Without training and possibly without any reflection on the spiritual dimension in their own lives, this can be a very difficult area to explore as a planned programme.

5.3.3 The religious status of pupils

The provision of collective worship influences and is influenced by the pupils who are its participants, and an examination of the reasons which underpin differences in provision is inadequate without a consideration of the part played by pupils and by teachers' perceptions of their religious status. The changes in attitudes, noted in section 1, reveal a transition from a simple acceptance of the teaching given in the lower stages of the primary school to widespread doubt and confusion which is consolidated during the secondary sector. No single factor is causative of this change: reference has already been made to cognitive features which influence pupils' attitudes to religious commitment. *'Both scientism and the perception of*

Christianity as necessarily involving creationism are important factors in helping to shape both attitudes to Christianity and interest in science' (Francis, Gibson and Fulljames, 1990, p.16). The belief in a creator God acquired during early childhood begins to disintegrate under the challenge of a liberal education which encourages critical thought and presents a wide range of alternatives and influences. Older students also recognise the attractions of the immediate social environment and the difficulty of religious commitment and discipline and, at the same time, express a developing awareness of individuality which is accompanied by a demand for independence in the exercise of personal life-choices. These are attitudes which are shared by a significant number of their teachers and which advert also to their perception of the status of religion itself.

At this point, it seems important to identify three further issues which permeate the context of collective worship and which seem to warrant further discussion. The first relates to views regarding adolescent religiousness, and I argue that current assumptions ignore the unfolding and gradual nature of pupils' conceptual understanding. The second concerns the widespread perception of religion as an orthodox and uniform credal tradition, rather than as a search for meaning, while the third raises the question of the understanding of the nature of religious truth.

5. 4   PERCEPTUAL UNDERCURRENTS WHICH INFLUENCE ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES

5.4.1   Perceptions of religious development

In a previous era when religious doctrine was widely accepted, there was an assumption that belief was a natural corollary of teaching religious knowledge to

children and, although individuals might reject this teaching, there was a hope that it would lead to deepening understanding and commitment. In the present day, it is recognised that knowledge and belief do not develop symbiotically, and although religious educators take responsibility for the development of knowledge and understanding of the subject area, there is widespread doubt in contemporary society about the objective truth of religion. The question of who is responsible for the transmission of the religious faith which worship is perceived to require, therefore, is one of the dilemmas which is at the heart of the controversy surrounding the provision of collective worship.

In primary schools, there is a general assumption which is revealed in the language of exhortation and prayer that children are, if not believers, at least putative members of the faith tradition, and sufficient teachers in this sector are prepared to lead collective worship on their behalf as an introduction to religious practice. In the secondary sector, except in voluntary schools, this perception is no longer widespread and teachers, in the main, do not regard themselves as having any responsibility to continue the tradition of worship begun in the primary school. In society generally, commitment to religion is regarded as a matter of choice made by decision-taking individuals. By the time students have reached the secondary school there is an assumption that responsibility has passed to the individual. Both students and teachers infer that the decision about religious commitment has already been made and that those students who are believers will celebrate their faith within the appropriate tradition (chap. 4.3). It may not be without significance that although some teachers in the secondary sector describe their students as agnostic, atheist or humanist (chap. 3), these are not terms which are applied to pupils at the primary stage, indicating that the transfer between the sectors is a watershed not only in terms of provision but also with respect to assumptions about pupils' religious status.

The extent to which children can be regarded as believers and adolescents as non-believers is open to question however. Attfield (1990) argues that the younger child, although sincere, is conceptually incapable of understanding the beliefs which faith and worship require. This view can itself be challenged, however: an argument which adopts a summative approach to belief fails to recognise that conceptual understanding develops slowly over a period of time, continuing throughout adulthood. Astley (1992) describes five main types of religiousness, claiming that most practising adults hold unorthodox beliefs. It might therefore be argued that worship is dependent on intention rather than on credal orthodoxy.

Although they classify the majority of their peers as non-believers, student representatives in this sample describe themselves as confused and undecided (chap. 4.3). Research by Francis, Gibson and Fulljames (1990) indicates that, although there is a consistent decline in attitude to Christianity during the years of secondary schooling, there is nevertheless a higher level of private religious belief than students' remarks infer, and Gibson (1995) claims also that young people consistently underestimate the religious beliefs of their friends. It may be the case, therefore, that there is a general failure to recognise the developmental stages of religious enquiry, with the result that pupils' doubts and confusions are regarded as evidence of disbelief rather than as a transitional phase. Drawing on Nipkow, Reich (1997) distinguishes four types of atheism: (i) atheism due to religious indifference (probably the most common category), often related to the competing interests and attractions offered by life; (ii) philosophical, continuing atheism; (iii) unchurched atheism, which includes the estranged, the indifferent and the nominal, whom he describes as those with no beliefs and for whom religion has no relevance, and (iv) transitional atheism, which may describe the period between the developmental stages identified by Fowler, Nipkow and Schweitzer (1992). It seems probable that students in secondary schools may fall into any of these categories, but it is possible that the doubts expressed by many of the pupils in this sample are indicative of a

transitional stage of development. Whether it is the responsibility of the school to address issues of belief, doubt and commitment is a different and crucial question, however, and is one which will be discussed in chapter 6. Nevertheless, if collective worship is to have any relevance for young people, the existence of doubt must be addressed:

> ... *scepticism is an essential feature of ancient, modern and postmodern thinking ... if pupils are to be engaged at all, it is this scepticism that needs to be engaged.* (Gearon, 1997, p.70; p.72)

One of the reasons why teachers are unable to confront pupils' doubts is that they, too, may share the same confusions. Another may be a concern that, by bringing issues of doubt into the open, they might introduce or increase its prevalence and cause offence or distress to those young people who are believers.

5.4.2 Perceptions of religious belief

Underpinning the concept of religious commitment and worship is a perception, which pervades the data, that the holding of specific doctrinal belief is a central and essential element. Research into young people's understanding of what it means to be a Christian indicates that, for them, belief is '... *consistently rated as an essential or very important element'* (Astley, 1992, p.6). This dimension is regarded not only as a matter of choice but as a unitary commitment in which there are no degrees or levels of understanding and acceptance: the existence of *'half-belongers'* and *'in-betweeners'* (Astley, 1992, p.9) is not recognised, nor is there any consideration of the variety of ways in which doctrinal belief is interpreted. Rudge (1998) argues that the standardised picture of the faith traditions which is presented in religious education is remote from the reality of everyday diversity, makes little reference to the range of interpretations held by the majority and ignores the beliefs

and values of the student. Although this claim overlooks the good work which is also part of subject teaching, it points to a widening gulf between the acquisition of religious knowledge and its possible relevance to the life of the individual. Perceiving religious worship, therefore, primarily as an expression of belief in the existence of a realist deity, to which they are unable to give unqualified assent, young people are no longer willing to participate in worship. Many of their teachers hold the same conceptions of the nature of orthodox religious belief and are, consequently, unable to make the links between pupils' uncertainties and the range of positions held in society. This is not to advocate unorthodoxy but to argue for an approach to collective worship which allows more space for the open exploration of beliefs and values. This is an issue which will be discussed further in chapter 7.

5.4.3   Truth and correspondence

At the heart of the dilemma which confronts both teachers and pupils, therefore, is the question of the 'truth' of religious claims and the relationship of worship and belief. Competing versions of truth have, according to Woozley (1973), produced bitter battles. The correspondence theory, which states that a judgment or a proposition is correct if it corresponds to a fact and false if it does not, appeals to common sense and is widely held. It is not my intention here to explore truth theories, but the evidence arising from the data suggests that, in a society which has been dominated by the pursuit of rational autonomy and marked by scientific empiricism, many individuals tend to adopt a position which is tied to the correspondence theory and assumes the existence of a factual reality beyond the thought-claim or proposition. This has a particular application in the development of religious understanding. Carr (D., 1994) argues that:

> *the question of how to believe is inseparable in the domain of religious*
>
> *discourse from that of what to believe and this question is liable to*

attract a wide variety of responses ranging - at one extreme - from a relatively unreflective acceptance of all religious language as concerned to state what is literally true, to - at the other - a highly intellectualized view that statements of religious discourse are to be construed as never literally true or, even more radically, as statements of which it is entirely inappropriate to predicate any sort of truth whatsoever. (p. 221-2)

We have seen already that young people wrestle with literal interpretations of the Biblical material which they encounter during the early years of schooling. Unable to reconcile their previous acceptance of religious teaching with their subsequent perception of a rational and scientific world, young people begin to question and then to reject a personal belief in the faith tradition. O'Connor (1975) argues that: *'Any sincere expression of a belief is an assent to the proposition that the belief embodies'* (p. 30): worship is understood to be an expression of belief and in its absence both teachers and pupils claim that its practice is untenable. This is not to overlook other versions of the nature of truth, of symbolic ways by which it can be expressed or of different approaches which emphasise practice rather than belief, but to argue at this point that the variety of ways in which religious truth can be explored are not understood either by many young people or by the teachers who are required to conduct collective worship.

5.4.4 Conclusion

Underlying the practice of collective worship in schools it is possible to identify certain traits which are characteristic of contemporary liberal society. After reaching a certain level of independence, religious belief is regarded as a private matter which is the responsibility of the individual, the family and the faith community. Teachers are anxious, therefore, to be seen as impartial, objective and

respectful to all belief systems (chap. 3; 4.2) and, in the main, attempt to avoid any approach which reveals preference. The neutrality which is demonstrated reflects the distinction between the public and private domains and is accompanied by an emphasis on individualism and the right to make personal decisions which is a key feature of modern life and is adopted by young people from an early age. Nevertheless, there is also a strong body of opinion in society which maintains a link with religious tradition and which regards the provision of collective worship for young people as a feature of educational and cultural development. The contentions and arguments which surround the provision of collective worship in the schools of a liberal democracy, therefore, reveal many of the key issues of individualism and rights, of the separation of the public and the private, and of education and belief, which are features of wider current debate, and will be the focus of the analysis of chapter 6.

PART THREE

CHAPTER 6

A PHILOSOPHICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ACT OF COLLECTIVE
WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Overview

*From the outset of this study, the question of the justifiability of the
compulsory provision of a daily act of collective worship in the schools of a liberal
democracy has been central. In the first part of this chapter the key issues which
emerge from the data are explored from a liberal perspective, giving particular
attention to questions of autonomy, rights, indoctrination, the distinction between the
private and public domains and the neutrality of the state, in a search for
justification. Finding that the compulsory provision of religious worship cannot be
justified from a liberal perspective, I then examine the challenge to liberalism which
is expressed most strongly by communitarianism, before concluding that compulsory
provision in its present form can only be supported from a position which accepts
state intervention in the private realm. However, recognising that the distinction
between liberalism and communitarianism may be less clear than it appears, I turn
thirdly to a brief consideration of the extent of any contribution which collective
worship might make to aspects of social and religious commitment.*

6.1   INTRODUCTION

As chapter 1 indicated, the contemporary debate which surrounds the
provision of a daily act of collective worship for all registered pupils in maintained
schools incorporates two central issues. Since the publication of the Education Act of
1988, discussion has focused mainly on the instrumental question of the type of
provision which is appropriate in the schools of a pluralist society. This has

somewhat obscured the more philosophical but critical question which asks whether religious worship should be a compulsory feature in the education system of a state which, although displaying features of a society which is described variously as secular, pluralist, Christian and post-Christian, demonstrates, in its political structures, most of the characteristics of a liberal democracy (Levinson, 1999). In a culturally diverse society in which many shades of opinion are present, there is no simple answer to this question, nor should it be supposed that a single response is necessarily possible, particularly where education is provided through a dual system of schooling. Salient to the debate which surrounds the issue of compulsory worship are questions of individual rights and the development of autonomy, the status of children, the extent of parental responsibility for their upbringing, and the role of the state in respect of competing versions of the good and of the transmission of the cultural tradition to future generations. Nor is this simply an abstract debate: as chapter 4 (sections 2 and 3) demonstrates, the persons within schools, at the practical end of the formal decision-making process, hold strong opinions which themselves have a powerful effect on provision regardless of the legal requirements.

By the secondary stage of schooling, there is a steadily increasing rejection of certain aspects of external authority and a corresponding growth in independence as young people move away from the constraints of parents and other adults and begin to take responsibility for their own lives. Emerging from the interview data of chapter 4 was a widely-held perception, expressed in various ways by both young people and their teachers, that personal freedom and choice are central to individual identity and that the government has no right to intervene in matters which are regarded as private. One of the chief amongst these is commitment to religion which, as chapter 5 demonstrates, is perceived as being based on doctrinal belief and as such is particularly open to controversy in the largely secular environment in which young people are growing up. Where there is opposition to collective worship, therefore, it is grounded in the claim that religious commitment is a matter of personal choice.

The main objection to its provision is not directed, it should be noted, at the presence in assembly of religion *per se*, but at the compulsion to participation. As we have seen, the boundary between the private domain and the demands of the state is drawn by the individual at the point where active involvement in the contestable arena of worship is required. This argument reflects the prevailing emphasis on the priority of individual rights in contemporary society and it is to this liberal position that I turn in order to establish the wider context within which the debate surrounding the act of collective worship is set. First, however, it seems appropriate to consider briefly the nature of worship itself before moving on to examine the issue of its place within the education system of a liberal society.

6.1.1 The nature of worship

As chapter 1 indicates, religious education, as a curriculum subject, has largely adopted an approach which accords with the liberal concern for reason and objectivity. The act of collective worship, however, pursues a course which is established on an assumption of belief in a divine being or power, the existence of which is a matter of disputation in contemporary society. Faith in this infinite object of worship involves an orientation of the whole personality (Heywood, 1988) in a relationship which is articulated in adoration and demonstrated in trustful commitment: *'The experience which worship tries to express is the numinous and the object of worship is [...] perceived as awe-inspiring'* (Smart, 1972, p.51). For Christians it is a non-functional response of gratitude to the offer of God's salvation (Thatcher, 1997), and Phillips (1970) writes: *'One cannot understand what praising, confessing, thanking or asking mean in worship apart from belief in an eternal God'* (1970, p.19). Although these descriptors refer to an ideal and affective experience of committed believers, nevertheless: *'To the lay person, to most parents and perhaps a majority of teachers, a plain, even minimal understanding of [worship], is that it is an expression of belief with a sacred reference point'* (Webster, 1990, p.156).

The nature of belief itself is an equally complex issue: as the discussion in chapter 5 indicates, whereas many observers assume it to be a unitary state, others recognise it as a matter of degree and identify *'half-belongers'* (Astley, 1992, p.9) and Davie (1994) points to the prevalence of *'unattached belief'* (p.69). Nevertheless, any discussion of school worship should not fail to recognise that its provision constitutes a declaration of an institutional commitment to a divine focus and that its experience may generate a hidden influence on its participants: *'Through participation in the worship and identification with the doctrine of the community, the individual learns the inward aspects of belief and worship and this brings about a change in his perception or primary orientation'* (Heywood, 1988, p.67). Despite the claim that the legal requirements for collective worship in schools recognise that it is intended to be an educational activity which cannot be symbiotically identified with corporate worship (Hull, 1990a), its presence in all maintained schools poses a dilemma which is both theological and philosophical and which cannot be justified by reference to the contribution which the gathering for assembly makes to pupils' social and moral development. Opinion regarding the provision of worship in schools is divided not only between believers and non-believers but also amongst believers themselves, as noted in chapters 1 and 4. Whether the state has any right to make such a personal and publicly controversial activity a compulsory element of the education system is open to debate: next, therefore, I examine the arguments from the liberal perspective within which both society and education are established, before moving on to consider current challenges to liberalism itself.

6.2   CONTEMPORARY LIBERALISM

For a generation, liberalism has been strongly influenced by Rawls' theory of human rights (1971) which identifies two procedural principles of institutional justice: equal rights to equal and compatible liberties between persons, and the arrangement of existing social and economic inequalities in a manner which benefits

the least advantaged under fair and equal conditions (p.302). These principles are derived from Rawls' abstraction of a notional agent who is placed in a position of ignorance concerning his own situation in society and is required to identify the principles on which that society should operate. Within this ethic, human rights are perceived primarily as individual rather than collective, and emphasise an agent's capacity to make decisions independently and without interference: *'Persons are at liberty to do something when they are free from certain constraints either to do it or not to do it and when their doing it or not doing it is protected from interference from other persons'* (Rawls, 1971, p.202). Although there is no agreement on which rights are fundamental, they include the ownership of personal attributes and the exercise of free agency in the pursuit of chosen conceptions of the good (Callan, 1997a). One of the means by which liberalism protects the individual from unauthorised intervention by the state is to make a distinction between the private and public domains, seeking to maintain a position which is agnostic between competing conceptions of the good life (Raz, 1986). Except in circumstances of harm to persons, liberalism argues that the state has no right to interfere in individual decisions in the private sphere or to align itself with particular versions of the good. *'The state exists to provide a secure framework within which individuals may pursue their own particular goals. What those individuals do or believe privately is no business of the state's provided they do not interfere with other individuals or threaten the state's good order'* (Wringe, 1995, p.286). This understanding permeates the responses of both teachers and pupils revealed in chapter 4, and is expressed most strongly by the young as they seek to assert their independence from authority.

Within the liberal framework the exercise of rational autonomy is regarded as the means whereby the agent is enabled to make personal choices from among competing versions of the good, of which religion is but one alternative. Education, as a mirror of the society within which it exists, is grounded in the values and practices of this prevailing version of individualist liberalism. Its aim: '... *is the good*

of the individual, with its content and process designed to enable individuals to determine for themselves what that good shall be' (Jonathan, 1993, p.175). Consequently the liberal argument in opposition to the act of collective worship is vested in the claim that commitment to religion is a decision which resides within the private arena; the state has no right to privilege one specific culture over others and it is not, therefore, within the purview of the common school to preference this concept of the good in the activities it presents as part of its compulsory provision. Any attempt to exert coercive influence on the young is indoctrinatory and denies to them the legitimate exercise of individual and rational autonomy. This is a feature which is reflected in teachers' concern for neutrality and pupils' rejection of pressure to believe or to worship, as discussed in chapter 5. As Hirst (1972) makes clear:

> *An education based on a concern for objectivity and reason, far from allying itself with any specific religious claims, must involve teaching the radically controversial character of all such claims. An understanding of religious claims it can perfectly well aim at, but commitment to any one set, in the interests of objectivity it cannot either assume or pursue.* (p.9)

6.2.1 The liberal perspective: a question of rights?

For the citizens of a liberal state, there exists an inviolable but contestable area of personal freedom (Berlin, 1969). Although a line is generally drawn most decisively between liberalism and religion (Macedo, 1995) as demonstrated in countries such as France and the United States of America, the position is less clear in Britain where there is an established church, a historic tradition of voluntary schools (which now include Islamic and Sikh, as well as Jewish and Christian institutions), and where religious observance in all maintained schools has been customary since public education was first introduced. The problem of where the boundary between

the private and the public domains is to be drawn is perhaps nowhere so apparent as in the upbringing and education of children (Jonathan, 1997) where parents and the state exert responsibilities and where both claim certain rights. However, children are in a constant stage of transitional development from dependence to independence, and the concept of a right is itself ephemeral. *'It is hard to supply any definition that does not beg the question'* (Dworkin, 1977, p.90). In this debate there is, on the one hand, a recognition of the right of parents to transmit their beliefs and values to their children: on the other, there is an expectation that the state will present to children a range of sometimes competing versions of the good and will also, on occasion, compensate for any omissions on the part of parents. In this respect, the role of the school is both substantive and procedural in its presentation of a range of options and in its drive towards the exercise of choice. The provision of collective worship is ambiguous in respect of these liberal aims, however, and thus presents a conflict of intentions. In offering to the young an experience of a dimension of practice which is central to religion, it presents a viable but optional conception of the good life, whilst at the same time it makes the activity compulsory and withholds the exercise of choice. Unlike other compulsory school activities which are based on general consent, religious commitment is the subject of strong and well founded public controversy. Therefore, in a democratic society where freedom of religion is a background right (Dworkin, 1977), its pursuit by the citizens of the state cannot be compelled. This raises the question of whose rights have primacy in respect of the provision of compulsory worship in schools to children who themselves claim to have rights in respect of their privacy and self-determination as they move towards independence.

6.2.2 Children's rights

No discussion concerning rights is straightforward: although the usual distinction between legal and moral rights is useful it is also inadequate (Miller, 1998). In the case of children, the debate is perhaps more complex still. It is argued

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that, as minors under the law, children have neither responsibilities for their actions nor obligations to society and, strictly speaking therefore, no legal rights. *'Their presumed incapacity to make responsible decisions - the characteristic that makes them inappropriate subjects of duties and liabilities - makes them equally inappropriate subjects of powers and liberties whose possession is precisely what having rights amounts to'* (Steiner, 1994, p. 245). Nevertheless as human beings they share, with adults, general rights to freedom, welfare and protection (Wringe, 1996), although the practical application of these rights is set broadly within a framework of adult supervision.

In considering this issue I distinguish first between rights of protection and welfare that incorporate certain entitlements, such as those to health care and education which are made available to children regardless of their capacity to make rational decisions, and the right to freedom and self-determination. As we have seen, where the legal requirements for collective worship are concerned, children are deemed to be under the control of their parents: consequently the right of withdrawal is proffered only to parents who may then choose to exercise this right on behalf of their children. The provision of collective worship can be seen as resting on a notion that an introduction to the religious dimension of life, which incorporates the experiential aspect of worship, should be provided for the young because it is believed to be in their best interests as developing human beings, as well as to the advantage of society more generally in its contribution to moral development. This paternalist ruling prioritises the rights of parents and allocates none to pupils and is in conflict with the exercise of general rights of freedom of self-determination and belief. These are held in abeyance for children on the basis that they lack, by virtue of their youth, the rational capacity to use such freedom wisely. However, this takes no account of the gradual emergence of young people's sense of responsibility and independence. Aviram (1990) draws attention to the contemporary neglect of the issue of children's moral status, and calls for a re-assessment which would gradually

extend option and participation rights to young people, beginning with those between the ages of 14 and 18 years. Interview data reveal that, by adolescence, young people anticipate that their parents would accede to requests for withdrawal from collective worship. Most students, however, choose to remain with the peer group during the assembly period rather than to be excluded and, recognising that freedom of, or from, the practice of religion incorporates a liberty which cannot be subject to legislation, exercise their right to withdraw by inattentiveness and non-participation when aspects of worship are incorporated (chapters 4.3 and 5). This is a freedom which young people experience as they begin to develop conceptually and which they articulate in the language of rights. Incidentally, although teachers can also exercise their right of withdrawal, for some this poses a moral dilemma and they are torn between a sense of responsibility to accompany their students during this communal activity and a desire to respect their own integrity by the exercise of their rights (chapter 4.2).

6.2.3 The rights and responsibilities of parents and communities

The circumstance that the legal right of withdrawal from collective worship is available only to adults raises questions about the extent of the rights which are held by parents and communities in respect of children. Libertarians such as Nozick (1974) extend to parents the widest possible freedom in the upbringing of their children but this view is criticised by feminists on the grounds that it may conceal patriarchal inequalities and also that it treats children as members of a family unit rather than as individuals. Van de Ploeg (1998) argues that although children are born amongst their communities they are not members: this requires a degree of socialisation, and to ascribe a cultural identity to children as a collective right is to deny them their individualism, an argument which van de Ploeg extends also to adults.

This leaves the young in a transitional position and although they may not be regarded as citizens in a full sense, membership of their situating communities is at

least one of naturalisation as they move by degrees towards the confirmation of their full status. In practice, children are presumed to belong to the cultural and familial communities into which they are born but this raises further questions about collective rights, the assignation of which to communities, argues van de Ploeg (1998), poses insurmountable problems since both families and groups may promote illiberal tendencies amongst their members which constitute risks to the wider society, or may exercise restrictions which imperil individual rights. Viewed from different perspectives, both compulsory attendance and withdrawal from collective worship might be regarded as setting a limit on individual autonomy. However, membership of the community is regarded as an important dimension of a child's upbringing, providing security and coherence, and an induction into the religious tradition of some cultures is part of this process of socialisation. As chapters 3 and 4 indicate, in circumstances where schools provide discrete acts of worship according to the religious faiths represented in their communities, pupils are usually grouped according to their birth tradition and/or their parents' choice: only occasionally are students themselves allowed to select from amongst the available alternatives, which do not include the option of non-attendance. Autochthonous children are usually ascribed Christian status, but as chapters 3 and 4.2 demonstrate, this is a descriptor which some teachers find increasingly difficult to apply to their pupils in the absence of any evidence of religious attachment, although they do not appear to have similar qualms in respect of the children of non-practising Hindu or Muslim parents, for example, who are identified according to their community rather than by actual practice.

Nevertheless, despite their legal position as minors, children are pursuing a path to full membership of the political community. Whether parents should have the right to make decisions about their children's participation in religious practice is open to debate but here, as in other matters, in reality this becomes a matter of familial negotiation. As young people mature, they begin to question the legitimacy

of adults' demands: increasingly they take control of the decision-making process with respect to their own lives. However, parents and teachers have a continuing responsibility to guide their choices and to secure for them the conditions necessary for autonomous judgment. As Ackerman (1980) argues, the mission of the liberal school is '... *to provide the child with access to the wide range of cultural materials that he may find useful in developing his own moral ideals and patterns of life*' (p.155-6). Nevertheless both he and Jonathan (1997) argue also that rules and regulations imposed by educators are necessary in the pursuit of the child's enculturation process, and that developing selves '... *must be constrained in the present in the name of their own future liberty*' (Jonathan, 1997, p.171). It can be argued that only through the nurture provided by participation in religious worship can a child acquire the necessary understanding of the faith and practice which is required to make a mature, autonomous decision. In this respect, the experience provided by the school may be regarded simply as a foundation for a choice to be made available in later life and its compulsion might be justified on this account. As chapter 4.2 demonstrates, this is a position held by some teachers who accept this responsibility. In addition, it is argued that religion makes a particular contribution to the development of moral ideals and the act of worship provides a distinctive opportunity for reflection on this aspect of life. The latter is a weak justification, however, since such reflection can be accomplished in the school assembly without recourse to non-voluntary participation in worship. Insight to the faith tradition can be effected also through the provision of religious education as a curriculum subject; by contrast, participation in an act of worship which is contingent on a measure of belief and commitment fails to respect the child's moral right to autonomy. *'Although [children] may be subjected to special limitations when necessary to assure their future standing as citizens, they may not otherwise be denied their right to pursue their good in the way they think best'* (Ackerman, 1980, p.159).

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Such an argument appears to favour the child's autonomy and to limit adult control to an extent that some would find unacceptable. One of the practical difficulties is the question of the development of autonomy in the young: differing views are held in respect of the age or stage at which a child may exercise its right to pursue its own good. It seems clear that the ability to make rational decisions, as distinct from choices, based on a comprehension of alternatives and their potential effects on others as well as on the self, is a gradual achievement, although young people themselves may not recognise this. Within the family, it is inevitable that differing conceptions of the good sometimes result in conflict. All parties insist on the validity of their preferred versions: achieving a balance between competing demands can be difficult and, as we shall see below, there are strong claims that, at the present time, control of the young and the promotion of the autonomy which a rights-based ethic promotes lacks sufficient guidance and has led to an excessive individualism. However, even where there is a measure of agreement about the nature of the good, there is controversy about the means whereby it can be achieved. A liberal educator, asserts Ackerman (1980), will not use his power over the young '... *to indoctrinate them into one or another of the competing ideals affirmed by members of our political community'* (p. 159). One of the accusations against collective worship is that it is just such an infringement of autonomy, and it is to this issue, which was raised more frequently by pupils than by teachers (chapters 4 and 5) that I turn next, examining first the defining characteristics of indoctrination before considering the extent to which collective worship might be described as indoctrinatory.

6.2.4 Moral rights and indoctrination

In a liberal society in which an individual's right to pursue his own conception of the good has primacy, respect for the concept of autonomy should, under normal circumstances, permit each individual to be the author of his own life, even though on some occasions it may be necessary to act against his desires

(Norman, 1994). Any form of coercion or manipulation such as occurs under conditions of indoctrination or hypnotism is, therefore, an unacceptable invasion of personal agency and diminishes the exercise of autonomy (Morgan, 1996). The concept of indoctrination is, however, difficult to define with any clarity. Most descriptions of the term focus on the relationship between the indoctrinator and the learner, and fundamental to current analyses of the concept, which Crittenden (1972) equates with mis-education, is an examination of the generic characteristics associated with all teaching. These include aims and intentions, method, content, and learning outcome, each of which may be incorporated to a greater or lesser extent in indoctrination, although there is as yet little agreement on the essential characteristics of the concept. Although originally understood to refer to any form of teaching, but having particular reference to the transmission of political, moral or religious doctrines, in the limited and negative sense in which it is now customarily used the term is taken to relate to the inculcation of beliefs and attitudes in a manner which overrides rational enquiry and is not open to subsequent reason. How, and whether, this can be achieved is a matter of dispute. Thiessen (1990) argues that, in the absence of an acceptable classification of the term, the teaching of both science and religion is prey to accusations of indoctrination, and that '... *we should be very cautious in charging someone with indoctrination in any area, including religious instruction'* (p.227). The issue of indoctrination itself is a concern which has been largely dormant during the last twenty years, but nonetheless is one which continues to be expressed with reference to collective worship.

In attempting to clarify the concept, some definitions emphasise belief content as the essence of any indoctrinatory practice. However, in circumstances where beliefs are commonly shared and are perceived to be beneficial, their communication is encouraged. Nevertheless, the prevalence of a belief is not a sufficient commendation for its acceptability: shared beliefs and values are themselves in

competition with each other while some, such as a commitment to 'racial cleansing', may be popularly held but are nevertheless unjust. Flew (1972, p.86) argues that:

> *Indoctrination, where it is taken to be a bad thing, is a matter of trying*
> *to implant firm convictions of the truth of doctrines which are in fact*
> *either false or at least not known to be true; usually, of course, though*
> *not necessarily, the indoctrinator himself believes mistakenly that the*
> *doctrines in question are both true and known to be true.* (p.86-7)

The difficulty with this argument is that many beliefs cannot be assessed on the basis of external proof but the fact that the veracity of a doctrine is unknown reveals nothing about its truth-status. On the basis of available evidence, it is possible for people to reach different conclusions. Kleinig (1982) argues, furthermore, that: *'The passing on of false beliefs, or at least sets of beliefs based on assumptions that are false, is not necessarily indoctrination'* (p.57). When the beliefs which are to be communicated are presented according to the only information available at the time, this cannot be regarded as indoctrinatory, even though the learner is taught beliefs which are subsequently found to be false. Although indoctrination is clearly concerned in some way with the transmission of beliefs, therefore, it cannot be characterised simply by reference to such content. Indeed, despite the similarity of content between religious education and collective worship, the former is usually no longer classified as indoctrinatory.

For some, the crucial element of indoctrination lies in the aim of the indoctrinator. Wilson (1972) argues that it '... *is an intentional activity'* (p.18) which cannot be effected accidentally. *'What characterises indoctrination is that another person is responsible for implanting the belief'* (p.18). However, this claim can be criticised on various counts. Since knowledge and beliefs are usually acquired socially (though not necessarily from direct personal contact) the presence of an agent

reveals little: furthermore, his action may be conscious or unwitting, as Wilson recognises. *'It is possible to indoctrinate without knowing that you are indoctrinating: and it is also possible to try to indoctrinate but fail, without knowing that you are failing'* (p.19). If it is unwitting, can it be described as intentional? An emphasis on intention also overlooks the unwitting persuasion which occurs when the indoctrinator is operating within the only framework of knowledge or experience he possesses. This singular worldview may be so all-encompassing that he is unaware of the existence of alternatives: the content of any teaching may incorporate a set of assumptions which are so taken for granted that they are part of the common discourse. Secular materialism is an instance of this. Indeed, Crittenden (1972) argues that indoctrination is crucially related to a worldview or philosophy of life, citing the Marxist understanding of history and the liberal belief in continuous progress as examples. *'When the world-view being presented in the school is, in fact, the official ideology of the social order to which both teacher and student belong I think we have the paradigm situation for the use of "indoctrination"'* (p.145).

Perhaps what is more characteristic of indoctrination, then, is the method adopted to transmit beliefs. *'It is also logically necessary to the concept of indoctrination that the indoctrinated person arrives at the belief by non-rational methods'* (Wilson, 1972, p.19). Two actions are present here. The first refers to the approach adopted by the indoctrinator; the second to the learner's reception of the beliefs. The former describes any method of teaching in which reason is marginalised and which incorporates the exercise of authority, fear, promise of reward or charisma that blinds the listener to the absence of supporting arguments. Although an adult may utilise these methods with the very young in the interests of their safety, to adopt such an approach with older children is generally regarded as unacceptable. Nevertheless, where a teacher is dealing with large numbers of pupils and where reason fails to bring about the desired results, the question is then raised whether recourse to other influences such as the offer of extrinsic rewards may be

justified in the light of the potential outcome. Teachers might well argue at this point that such an approach is a necessary bridge to bring pupils to a greater level of accomplishment, and that this will ultimately free them to make rational decisions. A counter argument might claim that this example cannot be indoctrinatory unless there is a doctrinal element involved: nevertheless, the outcome of such a practice may well lead to the assimilation of implicit values and beliefs, for example with regard to the importance of extrinsic reward, motivation and competition.

From the perspective of the argument implied here, that what is acquired by non-rational means will be held by the recipient non-rationally, it appears that what is chiefly distinctive of indoctrination is the absence of rationality. This line of argument also appears to provide an inadequate account: while some beliefs may be held thoughtlessly and without examination, others are supported by numerous reasons which have validity for the holder. Such is the case with relational or religious attachments: the difficulty for the observer is the absence of a shared mode of discourse and experience. While some religious believers may have grown up within an unquestioned religious code, or adopted the doctrines of their faith on a wave of emotion and subjected them to no further analysis, others would argue that their lives subsequent to their entry into faith provide them with evidence on which to rely. Convinced therefore of the validity of their positions, the desire to offer freely of their experience to others for acceptance or rejection is not indoctrinatory, they might therefore argue, because their faith is rational. Sometimes, impressed simply by the 'evidence' of an exemplary life, an individual might accept associated beliefs: in this case, the person responsible will not have intended to indoctrinate, and will have utilised no verbal persuasion or expressed any doctrinal content. *'A person may be indoctrinated as a result of his/her contact with another even though there was no way in which the other could have anticipated the result'* (Kleinig, 1982, p.60). Snook (1972) however, argues that this is not indoctrinatory, since the effect was unavoidable.

'The outcomes criterion', says Kleinig (1982), *'is rarely espoused yet it seems to be the most plausible one. Simply stated it is that indoctrination is teaching in which the beliefs, attitudes, values, etc. taught are held in such a way that they are no longer open to full rational assessment'* (p.62) The essence of indoctrination seems then to be a transference of belief in a manner which ensures both that its content and its acceptance are closed to rational and objective appraisal:

> *The crucial thing in indoctrination is that the indoctrinator tries to implant beliefs unshakeably, i.e. in such a way that they will never be questioned. Indeed, I am not sure now that <u>implanting</u> beliefs is a necessary feature of the concept. For the pupil may already have the beliefs which the indoctrinator wants him to have. But I would still want to talk of indoctrination if the teacher began to employ all sorts of methods to <u>reinforce</u> those beliefs and prevent him reflecting on them* (White, 1972, p.199-200)

Two distinguishing features, then, characterise indoctrination. The first is the attempt to inculcate beliefs, attitudes and values (which are usually inter-related) by means which do not provide an opportunity for reflective and critical examination. This occurs most commonly where the learner is vulnerable to persuasion, by reason of age, environment, ignorance, conditioning, psychology, or emotional instability. The second feature is found in the outcome itself: indoctrination occurs only when the learner accepts the transmitted beliefs without subjecting them to rational examination. In the absence of such acceptance, indoctrination cannot be said to have taken place. Nevertheless, it is an assault, not only on individual autonomy but on personalities (Kleinig, 1982, p.65). It is the antithesis of education, which:

... involves initiation into the best available body of theory for explaining and interpreting man and his world and for guiding human action, along with the various methods of inquiry through which the theory has been developed; and the acquisition of skills for applying, at least in part, this theory and the methods of inquiry. (Crittenden, 1972, p.138)

However, where rational approaches to enquiry are an implicit part of the social and educational process, prolonged exposure to alternative versions of truth and falsity is likely to result in the erosion of indoctrinated beliefs (Kleinig, 1982). The dilemma for the rational observer is that some individuals might well prefer the security of their beliefs, however acquired, to the insecurity of uncertainty. To summarise, it appears that indoctrination is a distinctive activity which is a combination of its defining features: for indoctrination to occur it must involve the communication of beliefs and values in a manner which closes their content and the nature of their acceptance to rational examination. It must, generally, seek to persuade listeners to accept these truths as having an application to their lives by an approach which marginalises critical reflection. Finally, it must be effective in its outcome.

To what extent, then, and in what sense can it be claimed that the act of collective worship is indoctrinatory? In order to discuss this question, it is necessary to make a distinction between the principle of its presence in schools and its actual implementation. We need also to recognise the difference in situation between community and denominational schools, with their emphasis on nurture with the tacit consent of parents. In addition it is also important to bear in mind the position of children from non-Christian or non-religious families. Although many Muslim groups, for example, value acts of collective worship which are appropriate for their children, there is also some concern that the provision of Christian worship in schools is a form of indoctrination; and it may be the case that this is an intention, however

covert, of visiting evangelists. Although these are not welcomed into schools where the majority of pupils are from non-Christian traditions, their presence may be ignored where they form a minority. Children from families which are non-Christian or non-religious may feel particularly uncomfortable during such visits.

In its circular for guidance, the government makes clear that worship is regarded as separate from other school activities in its concern with '... *reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power*' (DfE, 1994, para.57). This presents a particular worldview and declares the existence of a deity without any reference to the controversial nature of this belief: indeed to indicate uncertainty would be to make a nonsense of the activity of worship. Furthermore, the circular requires that '... *a special status*' be accorded to Jesus Christ (para.63). In its intention to exert a Christianising influence on children and young people through a prescribed and non-voluntary activity the content of which is not open to debate, in a society which is largely secular in its practice, the principle of such provision in all maintained schools can be described as indoctrinatory on the count that it infringes the personal autonomy of the young, and on the grounds that its content is not known to be true or is untrue. From the worldview of a religious believer, however, the picture may appear very different: for some Muslim or Sikh parents, for example, the provision of an appropriate act of collective worship as part of a child's education is an acknowledgement of the created order, an encounter with which is necessary for the growing child's wellbeing, even where the family has seceded from the tradition. Some Christian believers would adopt a similar approach: not all would do so, however, and the existence of conflicting perspectives is not without significance in this debate. Nevertheless, the liberal principle of autonomy insists that participation in religious practice is a matter of personal choice. However, in its non-disputable assumption of the existence of a divine figure and in its insistence that worship of the deity is presented in schools, the legal requirement for an act of collective worship

makes a statement which gives rise to the claim that its inception is itself indoctrinatory.

However, as has been discussed in chapter 5, there is a difference of approach between the primary and secondary sectors, and between community and voluntary schools. The most pertinent feature of the guidance of Circular 1/94 is its assumption of a superior focus which is worthy of reverence and veneration. How this is interpreted varies widely and we need to consider the extent to which the aims, approach, content and outcome of the act of collective worship can be classified as indoctrinatory in actual practice. The character of these generic features differs between schools and between leaders, and can change on a daily basis. As has been demonstrated in chapter 4 (sections 1 and 2), some teachers in both community and denominational schools regard the act of collective worship as an opportunity to instruct pupils into religious faith: the content which is selected, the language which is used, and the manner of its presentation as truth indicate a desire on the part of the leader to inculcate his or her version of belief to others. Sometimes personal witness is accompanied by an awareness that this may have an impact on attending adults as much as on children. Although this is not expressed as an intention, nevertheless it forms a covert hope. In some circumstances, however, there appears to be no awareness of the distinctive nature of the approach which is adopted: some leaders are committed to a worldview which is so much a part of their personality and the way they conduct their lives that they are convinced that their version is an accurate account of how the world is, and that it is part of their role as teachers to present this to children. However, these teachers represent a very small minority: as discussed in chapters 4.1 and 5, this faith presentation is usually more prevalent in primary schools and the approach which is adopted is an expression of caring concern: observation revealed very little material likely to influence pupils by the generation of fear or shame, however, and that only from visiting clergymen, in both community and voluntary schools, who made passing reference to judgment after death. This

was a minimal occurrence, however. Nevertheless a measure of persuasion is sometimes implicit in the presentation and encouragement of beliefs regarding the nature of the salvific relationship of the deity with the child, the youngest of whom initially accept the authority of the teacher's words. Although young children are more susceptible to adult influence, the findings of the interview data discussed in chapter 4 indicate that this diminishes as pupils mature, and if indoctrination is to be judged chiefly by outcome, then it cannot be said to occur as a consequence of teachers' activities in collective worship. Indeed, young people's resistance to adult pressure is strengthened by overt attempts to influence their religious beliefs. Ackerman's assertion that there is a need for mechanisms to '... *deny access to adults who seek the educator's role simply to further their own self-interest by taking advantage of the child's inexperience*' (1980, p.155) may be unnecessarily restrictive. It is impossible to exclude all teachers who hold strong opinions: indeed, secular humanists are amongst the most evangelical contributors to the debate surrounding collective worship. A liberal school which seeks to offer a range of cultural materials and viewpoints to its pupils might, at an appropriate stage of development, welcome such diversity of argument. Furthermore, in the light of Crittenden's claim (1972, above) that indoctrination is critically associated with a world-view or philosophy of life, then it might be argued that the unchallenged presentation of a secular ideology is itself indoctrinatory.

In denominational schools, where worship is an integral dimension of provision and where the religious tradition is emphasised, although the intention is to nurture children in the faith this again appears to have little immediate effect except on very young children or where worship is part of the family tradition as is often the case in Roman Catholic schools, for example. Indeed, where there is an assumption of belief or an attempt to demand outward compliance, it is often counter-productive in the face of the secular environment in which young people spend most of their time, and chapter 4.3 demonstrates that, at least in the sample of Anglican schools

where interviews took place, opposition to religious worship is more vocal where it is a regular occurrence than in community schools where it is less frequent. Research reported by Francis (1995) also suggests that attendance at such schools may lead to a less favourable attitude towards Christianity. Davie (1994), however, claims that this apparent ineffectiveness may be one reason why these schools are popular, because they meet people's notions of an acceptable level of religiosity which is not over-demonstrative or devotional but may transmit nevertheless an indefinable and lasting quality of experience. Where visiting evangelistic groups lead worship, pupils in secondary schools may display interest in a novel performance but are nevertheless hostile to attempts at proselytisation. Such visits are not common, especially in the primary sector, and most schools exert care when inviting or permitting external leaders to visit their schools. If outcome is the main distinguishing feature of indoctrination, there seems little to give cause for concern in respect of collective worship. Indeed, as chapter 5 notes, many teachers are concerned to present an impartial perspective and to conceal their own positions, although they may be less successful in this respect than they realise.

Finally, however, it is important to consider the effect of the daily rituals. The teaching element of collective worship is, particularly as pupils move into secondary school, transparent to the listeners. Open therefore to acceptance, criticism or rejection, the religious content of the teaching component very rarely meets the criteria for indoctrination. What may be more permanent is the effect of the regular experience of the rituals of prayers and hymns. Although infrequent in secondary institutions, these are common in the primary school. Prayer is usually short and seldom remembered but the ritual of head-bowing, although unheeded, is a sign of submission to the divine focus of worship. Together with the familiar words of hymns which are learned by constant repetition, it is these features which become internalised and which provide the adult population, I suggest, with the foundation of what Cox and Cairns (1989) describe as a folk-faith. This lies dormant during

adolescence and adulthood, but is drawn on at particular times such as periods of celebration or bereavement. Because such features bypass reason and are absorbed into sub-conscious memory, it is this dimension of collective worship which has the potential to be indoctrinatory. That religion appears to be latent, sometimes for many years, is a point often made by believers who argue that the effect of schools' provision may only appear in later life: as indicated in chapters 4.2 and 5 some teachers are therefore content to sow the seed. When reflection and autonomous judgment are brought into play in later life, however, the individual may exercise his right to reject or to pursue the religious concept of the good. There appears to be little evidence that the act of collective worship has, over the years of its existence, been an effective means of religious indoctrination. Further research would probably find that the impact of collective worship declined steadily throughout the century, along with church-going and Sunday school, in line with changes in society and in education itself. Nevertheless, Davie (1994) argues that: *'Christian nominalism remains a more prevalent phenomenon than secularism'* (p. 76) and it may be the case that collective worship in schools continues to make a contribution to this situation.

The issue of indoctrination raises other questions, however, regarding the nature of religious belief. Whilst it is unacceptable in a liberal culture to inculcate beliefs and attitudes in a manner and with an effect which excludes the exercise of rational autonomy and choice, there must at times be a very thin dividing line between indoctrination, persuasion, influence and the teaching process. How are religious beliefs to be acquired? Once acquired, should they be open to revision in response to reflection, experience or argument? Should teachers encourage their pupils to examine critically the beliefs, religious or non-religious, which they possess?

Although liberalism stresses the primacy of individual rationality, other

approaches to decision-making are available. Gluck (1999) suggests that some problems are best solved without recourse to rationality and that there are circumstances where a problem might be better solved by reference to custom, general agreement and other devices: *'An educational system that extols 'rational' solutions to the exclusion of those other kinds of solutions will be a disservice to students, just as much as one that fails to teach methods of rational appraisal'* (p.274).

However, although collective worship may be a largely ineffectual form of indoctrination, it is claimed that compulsory participation is nevertheless an invasion of personal privacy: the liberal argument is that the state has no mandate to intervene in the private domain but must remain agnostic with respect to competing versions of the good, and it is to the issue of state neutrality that I now turn.

6.2.5 State neutrality and individual autonomy

Where there is no common agreement in respect of versions of the good liberalism argues that, in order to support the individual's right to choose between alternative conceptions, the state must avoid any alignment which would favour one model in preference to another.

> *A distinctive feature of contemporary liberal theory is its emphasis on 'neutrality' - the view that the state should not reward or penalise particular versions of the good life but, rather, should provide a neutral framework within which different and potentially conflicting conceptions of the good can be pursued.* (Kymlicka, 1992, p.165)

Making a distinction between neutrality of procedure and of aim, Rawls argues that the latter incorporates the intention that the state shall secure equal opportunity for all citizens to advance any permissible conception of the good which is freely affirmed

and '... *that the state is not to do anything intended to favour or promote any particular comprehensive doctrine rather than another, or to give greater assistance to those who pursue it'* (1993, p.192-3). Procedurally the state should adopt an approach in which decisions are reached in accordance with the principles of justice. '*Everyone is assured an equal liberty to pursue whatever plan of life he pleases as long as it does not violate what justice demands'* (Rawls, 1971, p.94). From the liberal perspective it would appear, therefore, that the imposition of compulsory worship in the state's education system is a derogation of the neutrality principle, in its active promotion of a religious conception of the good amongst young people which is a matter of controversy in society and which is also in conflict with other important values such as diversity and pluralism, a dilemma which is a matter of concern in multi-faith schools, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5. It is not the responsibility of the state to preserve any one culture or version of the good: freedom of speech and association will enable different groups to flourish or wither, creating a market place of ideas. However:

> *... how well a way of life does in this market depends on the kind of goods it can offer to prospective adherents. Hence under conditions of freedom, satisfying and valuable ways of life will tend to drive out those which are worthless and unsatisfying.* (Kymlicka, 1992, p.166)

It is not only unworthy groups which fail to flourish in a just society, however; some forms of worthwhile life also disappear. In the competitive social arena, the consequence will be that some minority cultures and religious traditions will be allowed to disappear if they are unable to maintain their positions. Although such a circumstance is regrettable, Rawls acknowledges that: '... *there is no social world without loss: that is, no social world that does not exclude some ways of life that realise in special ways certain fundamental values. The nature of its culture and institutions proves too uncongenial'* (Rawls, 1993, p.197, n.32). Nevertheless,

versions of the good are ranged along a continuum, and there is no clear division between valuable and worthless ways of life or between those that can only survive under sympathetic conditions and those which can flourish in the market place. Rawls reminds us that the notion of space implied in the image of the market is metaphorical: the parameter is set by the principles of a reasonable and defensible conception of justice to which citizens can give their full allegiance (1993, p. 198, n.33).

Raz (1986) distinguishes two conceptions of neutrality, which Kymlicka (1992) labels justificatory and consequential neutrality. Whereas one form maintains an impartiality between claims to the truth or falsity of moral ideals or conceptions of the good, the other model requires that governments exercise neutrality regarding different people's conceptions of the good: *'That is, that governments must so conduct themselves that their actions will neither improve nor hinder the chances individuals have of living in accord with their conception of the good'* (Raz, p.108). This, says Kymlicka, permits government to help some forms of life more than others but not that it should support some over others. Accordingly, the state may give more support to some groups in order to sustain their viability as contributors to choice, but not to the extent that those groups would be placed in a more advantageous position than others or to preserve their character. Feinberg (W., 1995), however, suggests that in a pluralist society fragile cultures may need special protection, and that the state might choose to act in a manner which will strengthen these.

However, this model of perfectionism requires the state, through its administrative processes which may be collective or may be restricted to the decisions of a dominant group, to discriminate between the worth of competing cultures in the allocation of support and is dependent on an ability to identify the good which it cannot unerringly possess. Cultures and organisations change over time, and the commitment to long-term support which would be a necessary feature

of their maintenance might be incapable of responding to variations in circumstances and a possible change in their worth. Where cultural forms require collective engagement they are unlikely to survive if they are rejected by the public, even though their demise might be slowed by state support. On the other hand there seems, on the surface, to be insufficient evidence that in a state neutrality model the competitive market place, which is dependent on individual judgment and action, will provide an environment which will give support to weaker cultures. There is a danger that, in their vulnerability to powerful groups which may take advantage of the laissez-faire attitudes of disconnected individuals, once tolerant and diverse societies may move towards homogeneity and possibly to illiberalism. On balance, both models contain flaws: state perfectionism, however, carries with it the power of government to distort the conditions of individual choice. State neutrality, therefore, seems to offer the best opportunity for differing cultures to promulgate their conceptions of the good and for individuals to select from amongst a wide range of alternatives.

Whether the application of these arguments can extend to the provision of additional support for religious groups is a different issue, however. Although help for some fragile cultures will indirectly result in support for the religious character of those groups, this is distinct from the direct promotion of a specific religious tradition by the state. In its legal requirements in respect of collective worship, the government, by making provision for worship which is in accordance with the major cultural heritage, is demonstrating a preference for a particular cultural form. In the face of the overwhelming secular influences which surround the young, it might argue that one of the reasons why it privileges a religious conception of the good in schools is not to give preference over others, but to provide a level of support in order to sustain it, along with other religious traditions, as a viable alternative in a society which values pluralism (Haberman, 1994). However, the desire to support minority cultures should not extend to legal demands for active engagement by all young

people in a practice which has been largely rejected by the population and, from a liberal perspective, religious worship is a matter of personal liberty in which the state has no right to intervene. Support for any conception of the good life cannot extend to the active creation and promotion of membership of any cultural tradition, which is what the act of collective worship seeks, ultimately, to do. There appears to be, therefore, no justification from this position for its compulsory provision in the common school although a case may be made, on the basis of parents' rights, for its continuation in the voluntary sector, but it is difficult to see how far this can be maintained effectively in the face of students' opposition and non-compliance revealed in chapter 4.3. This is variable in extent and degree, however, and the presence of additional factors which influence students' levels of engagement over a period of time should be recognised, particularly those of parental example, the quality of provision and the relationship between pupils, parents, school and parish.

However, trends in contemporary society have led to expressions of growing concern and liberalism itself has come under increasing attack. At the heart of the criticism is opposition first to the emphasis which liberalism places on the priority of atomistic individual rights and, secondly, to the neutral position the liberal state seeks to maintain in respect of competing versions of the good. This is not to deny the importance of autonomy, but to recognise the conditions within which its exercise can best be achieved and to acknowledge that the liberal values of plurality and diversity require the continuing survival of alternatives which may disappear under the competitive principles of the social marketplace. As chapters 1 and 2 indicate, one of the features of contemporary society is not only the steady decline in the membership of religious communities, but the even sharper reduction in affiliation to trades' unions and political parties, demonstrating a general lack of commitment to formal and continuing communal attachments which may be influenced, in part, by the current stress on individualism.

Frequently asserted perceptions of a society under threat have therefore stimulated increasing criticism of the liberal position. Although it would be overly simplistic to attribute to liberalism all of the failures and problems of contemporary society, which is influenced by the forces of rapid change, secularisation and global economics, nevertheless it is argued that it '... *is inadequate to guide either our political arrangements or educational practices and policies*' (Jonathan, 1997, p.6).

6.2.6   A society in crisis

Since the 1970s, increasing concern has been expressed about what is perceived to be a growing crisis in contemporary society. Critics point to a collision between the principles of freedom and authority (Rosenow, 1993) and complain of a disorientation in values (Jonathan, 1993), of existential confusion (Jonathan, 1995), of an emphasis on pleasure and immediate satisfaction (Smeyers, 1996), and of social fragmentation (Standish, 1995). Society is described as '*amoral, consumer-oriented, acquisitive*' and excessively individualistic (Soltis, 1993, p.151). It is argued that the loss of confidence in the authority of religious faith which was experienced by past societies has been succeeded by a loss of confidence in reason itself (Smeyers, 1995) and consequently that '... *the project of modernity is now deeply problematic* ' (Foster, 1985). There is a widening recognition that its distinctive features have been absorbed into a postmodern world '... *in which a belief in science, rationality and historical progress is no longer credible and in which the Enlightenment meta-narrative of human emancipation no longer makes any sense*' (Carr, W. 1997, p. 314). These concerns are shared by teachers whose emphasis on the importance of the school community may be, in part, a reflection of their fear of fragmentation and division in the wider society, as noted in chapter 4.

6.2.7 The challenge to individualist liberalism

The pervading image of the Rawlsian agent is of an independent self which is capable of standing outside prevailing circumstances and desires in order to make judgments relating to its own good. It is this picture of a *'lonely chooser'* (Smith, 1995, p.159) which is the focus of much of the current criticism directed at liberalism. The ability of such an isolated individual to make judgments is challenged on the basis that the image presents a figure implausibly distant from personal preferences, emotions and commitments and from any formative and sustentive social milieu. At the same time the principle of a state which maintains a neutral position in respect of competing versions of the good is criticised for its lack of civic and moral guidance. Strong criticism has emerged from feminism (e.g. Stone, 1990), which argues that insufficient attention is given to the non-rational dimensions of human emotions and behaviours; and from versions of communitarianism which question the primacy given to the right over the good and provide the major challenge to individualist liberalism. However, all schools of thought contain varying shades of opinion and competing viewpoints, so the assumption of clear polarities in this wider and embryonic debate is problematic. Indeed, there is some evidence (Wain, 1994) that opposing perspectives are drawing closer together, in what Bell (1993) calls a *'"communitarianization" of liberalism'* (p.8). Although, for the purpose of this study, I identify certain arguments with the view which is often classified as communitarian or civic republican, not all of the writers associated with this theoretical position would so identify themselves, and as in any debate critics are eclectic in respect of the issues where they find agreement and also in the implications they draw. Consequently, the preference in this study is to identify arguments rather than to classify writers by situating labels, although MacIntyre, Taylor, Walzer, Sandel and Bell, whilst not describing themselves as such, are identified generally with civic republicanism.

6.3   TIIE COMMUNITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

Although both liberalism and communitarianism incorporate an image of the self, the communitarian perspective argues that the self is constituted by its social relationships. Individuals are never in a position to make wholly independent judgments and must necessarily take into account their situating communities and their attachments. From this ontological position, communitarians ascribe value to the community and argue that it is itself a good which should be pursued and cherished. Although continuing to value and respect individual rights, there is a recognition that '... *collective goals may require restrictions on people's behaviour which violate their rights'* (Taylor, 1992, p.55). They reject atomistic individualism along with the liberal position which argues that '...*the individual is prior to the state'* (Wringe 1995), and that the '*right is prior to the good'* (Sandel, 1992, p.13). Communitarianism, while attaching value to individual liberty and respect for persons, adopts a more active approach to social culture which it regards not as an enabling fiamework for the exercise of private choice but as a constitutive feature of individual identity. Communal life, therefore, is an essential dimension of the good and is valuable in itself (Moody, 1994). It is argued that selfhood is always the product of social interaction and is constructed developmentally through the individual's experience of membership of the varying communities to which each belongs. Amongst an individual's constituting communities, Bell (1993) identifies those of place, of memory and language, and of psychological attachments, especially the family. These incorporate influences from previous generations as well as responsibilities for the future. MacIntyre (1981) posits a '... *narrative concept of selfhood'* which displays coherence over time and is '... *accountable for the actions and experiences which compose a narratable life'* (p.217). He argues for a restatement of the teleological tradition which emphasises the individual's rootedness in existing communal arrangements and procedures '... *in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments'*

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(p.259). Each life story is interwoven with those of other lives and only within such a biography can the self be described. *'All attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrative, intelligibility and accountability are bound to fail'* (p.218). Such a self cannot be detached from its own history or from the circumstances of its community. The problem for MacIntyre of the Rawlsian figure is that only an agent in the 'original position' would make decisions which are dispassionately objective and impartial. Sandel (1992) draws attention to the unnatural division in this *'unencumbered self'* between the values it holds and its identity, arguing that such a vision postulates an untenable image of the human subject as sovereign in its authorship of moral meanings. Rather, individuals are shaped by the communities which they are themselves active in shaping in a mutually reinforcing dialectic. For Raz (1986), a fully autonomous agent is an impossibility: a person can only develop and flourish against a background of biological and social constraints which fix some of its human needs. Joel Feinberg (1980) argues for an image of the self which encompasses a range of beliefs, commitments and principles, as well as an inner core of defining attributes. The separation of individual and society, consequently, is '... *a philosophical abstraction that nowhere exists'* (Carr, W., 1995, p.84).

Various political and normative implications flow from the communitarian perspective. Amongst these is the advocacy of a measure of decentralisation from national government, especially with reference to social and cultural affairs, in order to encourage greater local participation in groups such as churches, unions and civic associations. This, it is hoped, will move society in a direction which no longer gives primacy to individual choice (Bell, 1993) but which, instead, emphasises the collective good. Taylor (1985) argues that the individual is necessarily involved in the wider society from which his constituting communities are drawn and that, consequently, their well-being and maintenance are a matter of importance to him:

Since the free individual can only maintain his identity within a society/culture of a certain kind, he has to be concerned about the shape of this society/culture as a whole. He cannot ... be concerned purely with his individual choices and the associations formed from such choices to the neglect of the matrix in which such choices can be open or closed, rich or meagre. It is important to him that certain activities and institutions flourish in society. It is even of importance to him what the moral tone of the whole society is ... because freedom and individual diversity can only flourish in a society where there is a general recognition of their worth. (p.207)

In order to support the preferred activities and institutions, however, it is sometimes necessary for the state to abdicate its neutral role in respect of the good and to promote policies which favour social and cultural wellbeing. Thus communitarianism stands in opposition to the emphasis which liberalism places on the priority of individual rights and also to the neutral position the liberal state seeks to maintain in respect of competing versions of the good. Since these are the principles on which the liberal opposition to collective worship is based, it may be appropriate to ask whether communitarianism can offer any justification for compulsory religious worship in schools.

At this point I intend to select, from amongst the many developing applications of communitarian theory, three examples of proposals whose arguments have some relevance to the provision of compulsory collective worship: (i) the concept of the community of memory which links past and future generations, (ii) the suggestion that the imposition of certain forms of activity on the young may be a necessary and justifiable demand, and (iii) the argument that the community's need to sustain its own structures requires the state to be active in creating cultural membership.

6.3.1 the concept of the community of memory which links past and future generations

Bell (1993) argues that personal identity is irrevocably constituted by and connected with the basal communities into which the individual is born. A relationship with identifiable communities meets a deep psychological need for stability and rootedness. This reaches out to the past in the concept of a community of memory and language which carries the moral tradition and serves to maintain a narrative thread linking the past, present and future:

If individuals fail to nurture their communities of memory, they lose a source of meaning and hope in their lives, and very serious harm is done to their self-esteem and sense of personal competence, not to mention the consequences for future generations when a moral tradition is lost. (p.126)

This is not to signify a blind return to tradition, however: the intention is to identify moral lessons and virtues from the narrative of the past for interpretation and application within the communities of the present and the future. This should include stories of failure and of shared suffering which can create a deeper sense of identity and may instigate a revision of unjust practices:

The communities of memory that tie us to the past also turn us toward the future as communities of hope. They carry a context of meaning that can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and see our own efforts as being, in part, contributions to a common good.

(Bellah, 1985, p.153)

Religious communities form one of the lasting communities of memory and, in Britain, the heritage of the Christian tradition continues to have a distinctive influence on moral, social and spiritual values. It can be argued, therefore, that the act of collective worship has a particular contribution to make towards the development of cultural identity and towards an important sense of rootedness, as well as to the maintenance of the religious community of memory for future generations. Against this argument, however, it can be asserted that there is no singular version of the past, and concepts of tradition should not be reified. Attachment can be explored more effectively through civil traditions and rituals, and a critical and imaginative study of history, than through the practice of worship. Only if individuals share the beliefs of the past and feel themselves to be part of a continuing tradition will participation hold any sense of attachment for them. Nevertheless, the church continues to provide, through its teaching and its rituals, a source of meaning and hope to which people turn to mark the significant events of life, and Davie (1994) argues that common and conventional religion cannot be separated either on an individual or a corporate level.

This continuing ability to meet people's needs is built upon the community of memory and can only be maintained by collective action if it is to survive into the future. It might be argued therefore that only if the young are introduced to the practice of the religious tradition can it be preserved, but this simply poses more questions about who has the responsibility to transmit the tradition. Whilst the notion of a community of memory may have validity for the preservation and sustenance of civil society in general terms, it offers no grounds for intervention by the state in the matter of religious attachment, which is the responsibility of the family and faith community, who alone are capable of the maintenance of the tradition.

6.3.2 the imposition of certain forms of activity on the young as a necessary and justifiable demand

Amongst the communitarian criticisms of liberalism is the claim that individuals are motivated chiefly to act for the common good by self-interest and preference (Sandel, 1984; Moody, 1994). One of the problems faced by communitarians therefore is how to move to a position where individuals are more committed to serving the community, and chapter 1 makes reference to the desire of legislators to develop a sense of community attachment and responsibility in the young through collective worship. Bell (1993) argues that by touching people's deepest commitments and aspirations, certain compulsory activities, such as community service, can be imposed on the young. Initially, reluctance to participate can be expected: in the modern world when confronted by a range of choices offering immediate satisfaction, many young people '... *lose sight of what's important, an insight that many arrive at late in their life when it suddenly transpires to them that they've been pursuing goods of no intrinsic value'* (Bell, 1993, p.142). After a period of adjustment, however, involvement could prove to be enjoyable even though its benefit might not be immediately apparent. Such an experience:

> ... *promotes co-operation and commitment, contributes to the health*
>
> *of the nation and derivatively of its constituent members ... by*
>
> *maximising contributions to the nation's purposes early on, more*
>
> *would come to acknowledge the nation's purposes as their own and*
>
> *subsequently participate in the political life of the nation as virtuous*
>
> *citizens committed to the nation's well-being.* (Bell, 1993, p.143)

Can such an argument be used to justify the compulsory provision of collective worship in schools? Some of the arguments which were used to support the religious clauses of the Education Reform Act, 1988, as discussed in chapter 1, bear a striking

similarity to these social goals. In addition, the claim that the value of religious worship is something which may only be recognised by the individual later in life was one which was sometimes expressed in the interview data noted in chapter 4.2. One of the difficulties with proposals of this type, however, is the hidden agenda: while community service might be a worthy form of activity in itself, producing a range of laudable outcomes, its goal of promoting virtuous citizens is a mode of conditioning which itself may verge on the indoctrinatory. Furthermore, it assumes an insider knowledge of the good which repels challenge. Such approaches to creative citizenship were prevalent in the youth movements found in totalitarian states such as Germany and China during the 20th. century, where the goal was also the development of obedient and docile citizens. The concept of the virtuous citizen, which is not the subject of agreed definition, is open to debate: whether it is appropriate to enforce virtue (except in circumstances where not to do so might endanger persons), in a manner which restricts individual freedom is at least questionable, and from a liberal perspective is untenable. Kymlicka (1992), however, argues in favour of short-term state intervention in order to introduce valuable ways of life, even if the wrong reasons are invoked:

> *One way to get people to pursue something for the right reasons is to get them to pursue it for the wrong reasons and hope they will then see its true value. This is not inherently unacceptable, and it occurs often enough in the cultural market-place.* (p.181-2)

However, the argument that compulsory practical activities may be imposed on the young in order to develop in them a sense of responsibility and attachment to the nation cannot be used to justify the compulsory provision of collective worship which is a different and affective category of activity. Although virtue may be an outcome of religious commitment, as argued in chapter 1 worship is '... *one of the few human activities which is not and cannot be functional'* (Thatcher, 1997). To use collective

worship to promote virtue identifies a causal link between religious faith and certain kinds of behaviours which is untenable.

6.3.3 the community's need to sustain its own structures by creating cultural membership

Perhaps the most pertinent issue for consideration in respect of the compulsory provision of collective worship may lie in the proposal that the state might validly abdicate its position of neutrality in order to preserve or to promote a particular culture. Walzer (1992) identifies two forms of liberalism. In the first (Liberalism 1), primacy is given to individual rights and the state is strictly neutral, pursuing no collective projects beyond its own security and the safety, welfare and personal freedom of its members. In the second (Liberalism 2), the state is:

> ... *committed to the survival and flourishing of a particular nation,*
> *culture, or religion, or of a (limited) set of nations, cultures, and*
> *religions - so long as the basic rights of citizens who have different*
> *commitments or no such commitments at all are protected.* (p.99)

Citizens can choose either to adopt Liberalism 1 with its emphasis on individual rights or, from within the position of Liberalism 2, to pursue the goal of cultural survival if there is a general preference for a model of a liberal society which is organised around a particular concept of the good life. '*Where the nature of the good requires that it be sought in common, this is the reason for its being a matter of public policy*' (Taylor, 1992, p.59). The provincial government of Quebec provides an example of the adoption of such a position in its enactment of legislation, known as Bill 101, which recognises French-Canadian claims to a distinctive identity and seeks to protect and promote the French language and culture through a range of provisions which privileges their maintenance. In a radical departure from the neutral

position which prevails in the rest of Canada, regulations are incorporated which restrict English-language schools to the children of Anglophones who were themselves educated in English-speaking schools in the province. Francophones and immigrants must send their children to French-speaking schools where, inevitably, they are immersed in the French culture. By 1990, and within a decade of the implementation of this legislation, 90% of young people were being educated in French schools and the percentage of pupils from traditions whose first language was neither English nor French in these institutions almost doubled, from 39% to 73% (Lamey, 1999). Such policies not only maintain the availability of the French language for those who might choose to use it, but are designed to *'create members of the community, for instance, in their assuring that future generations continue to identify as French-speakers'* (Taylor, 1992, p.58-59).

This policy is open to challenge on several counts, however, raising as it does the conflicting objectives of the state to protect features of its own culture, of parents to exercise their primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children in schools of their reasonable choice, and of citizens to freely maintain a plurality of cultures. Callan (1997b) argues that, from an educational perspective, the legislation of Bill 101 poses no problems: instruction through any language does not limit the proper function of schooling which is the development of a *'sympathetic and critical engagement with beliefs and ways of life which are at odds with the culture of the family or religious or ethnic group into which the child is born'* (p.133). This is to restrict the effect of the legislation to the provision of a specific language as the medium of teaching however, and to overlook the fact that the educational process has social as well as academic features which enable the transmission of culture to future generations. It is this circumstance which is recognised in the Quebecois legislation that seeks to privilege the French cultural distinctiveness of the province: were this not the case, the government could have required the teaching of French (the language of the province) as well as the teaching of English (the language of the

country) in all schools. This would have the advantage of continuing to make reasonable choice available to parents and would allow more diversity amongst the pupil populations in all types of institution. Further implications flow from the enforcement of the bill. By legislating against existing parental choice in respect of school selection, the state closed an extant opportunity for the exercise of autonomy in which it nevertheless hopes children will engage as part of the educational process. Secondly, it limits the diversity from which choices can be made, moving instead towards homogeneity in the maintenance of the dominant culture. Thirdly, the desire expressed by Liberalism 2 to maintain a particular culture, nation or religion seems not to recognise the mobility and fluidity of groups and organisations, seeking instead to conserve a traditional model which may be incapable of adaptation to societal changes. The intentional creation of members of a culture by means of a particular mode of education implies that the state knows what is the most appropriate course to adopt, and might be regarded as a form of perfectionism, an issue which will be discussed further below.

Has this example any relevance to the position of collective worship in the schools of England and Wales? The situation in Quebec makes no reference to religion, addressing issues of cultural survival through education and language only, in order to ensure its continuance for future generations who may want to avail themselves of what can only be maintained collectively. Although Walzer, above, claims that a state may be similarly committed to the perpetuation of religion or a limited number of religions, whether such an argument can be used to justify the participatory induction of the young into the religious domain, in a state which wants to protect and promote an aspect of its culture thereby is unclear.

From the perspective of Liberalism 1, with its stress on individual rights and the neutrality of the state in respect of the private sphere, intervention in the practice of religion would appear to be untenable. However, Walzer (1992) argues that state

neutrality is often hypocritical and always incomplete, and that most liberal nation states are more like Quebec than Canada.

> *Their governments take an interest in the cultural survival of the majority nation; they don't claim to be neutral with reference to the language, history, literature, calendar or even the minor mores of the majority. To all these they accord public recognition and support, with no visible anxiety. At the same time, they vindicate their liberalism by tolerating and respecting ethnic and religious differences and allowing all minorities an equal freedom to organise their members, express their cultural values, and reproduce their way of life in civil society and the family.* (p. 100)

Although conflict may accompany this approach, it does not constitute a reason for the rejection of Liberalism 2 where it meets the needs of a state with a historic majority populace (p.101). However, against this, it can be argued that the goals of liberalism extend beyond the political management of the affairs of state to a *'more universal human aspiration for individual freedom and self-expression'* which is underpinned by a recognition of the primacy of the fundamental human rights of freedom in respect of speech, conscience, religion and association (Rockefeller, 1992, p.90). Although liberal nation-states may sometimes seem to function from within the vantage point of Liberalism 2, as Britain appears to do with respect to collective worship in its expression of preference for religious practice in schools while making allowance for the exercise of individual dissent by the right by withdrawal, this is not to suggest that they should do so. As Callan (1997b) points out: *'The matter would be quite different if cultural developments in Quebec during recent decades had increasingly accentuated religious differences with the rest of Canada, with the consequence that legislation now required Catholic schooling without regard to parental choice'* (p. 135). Such an education, he argues, would not be compatible

with the width of religious and ethnic traditions found elsewhere in the broader community.

It is unclear whether Callan's chief objection here is to compulsion in the matter of education in religion *per se*, or to the presence of a singular religious tradition, to the accentuation of religious differences with the federal state, to the limits placed on parental choice, or to the potential for non-alignment with wider religious and ethnic traditions which such a form of schooling might incur. Amongst the responses to some of these positions it might be argued that a compulsory form of either religious or secular education is equally unacceptable to some parents, and to satisfy the greatest number, a state might choose to provide a range of reasonable, although necessarily limited, alternative institutions. By this means, pluralism would be enhanced, although some might argue that social unity and coherence might be disadvantaged thereby. If, however, the federal state was Catholic, would the compulsory provision of Catholic schooling in Quebec be acceptable, in order to minimise differences and to maintain cultural identity? Taylor (1992) argues that a 'difference-blind' neutralism, which requires a strict distinction to be made between the public and the private and between politics and religion, such as is found within Liberalism 1, relegates areas of controversy to the private sphere and ignores the indivisible relationship which politics and religion present in some societies, such as in Islamic states. Arguing for a form of selective intervention, he claims that it is possible for liberalism to exercise neutrality with respect to the public and political arenas in the protection of each individual's basic rights, without also exercising complete neutrality in the cultural sphere. By adopting a division between the political and cultural domains therefore, the state may also take the actions it believes necessary to protect its own identity and culture. The neutrality it pursues in the political sphere is balanced by active intervention in the cultural arena, in respect of which '*...liberalism is also a fighting creed*' (p. 62). From this position, a politically

neutral state might validly choose to require Catholic schooling in order to protect its Catholic culture if that were a general preference.

Logically, the argument is contradictory however: the active promotion of one distinctive culture places minority traditions at a disadvantage. If the principle of cultural preservation is valid for one group, then on grounds of justice it must be an equally valid goal for all other cultural groups who wish to preserve their identities, yet the decline and assimilation of less powerful minorities is an inevitable consequence of the promotion of one specific culture. Almost simultaneously, Taylor (1992) argues for the protection and promotion of the cultural identity of the dominant group and for a respectful commingling of individual societies (p.72). What the future requires is *'not peremptory and inauthentic judgments of equal value, but a willingness to be open to comparative cultural study of the kind that must displace our horizons in the resulting fusions'* (p.73). Inevitably, the ascendance of the majority culture will lead to the erosion of those very groups with which Taylor seeks to mingle.

This identifies one of the dilemmas faced by liberal states: in order for individuals to exercise choice, the continuance of a pluralist society is fundamental. In the competitive cultural market place, however, some groups and organisations will disappear without state protection, and if the social culture becomes increasingly homogenous, the conditions of pluralism under which choice thrives will no longer prevail. A wholly neutral state may not, therefore, be able to ensure the survival of the pluralism which is the foundation for the range of alternative goods from which selection can be made. Some cultural practices and traditions cannot be maintained without collective support:

> *Perfectionist ideals require public action for their viability. Anti-perfectionism in practice would lead not merely to a political stand-off*

from support for valuable conceptions of the good. It would undermine chances of survival of many cherished aspects of our culture. (Raz, 1986, p.162)

This raises important questions, however, about the actors in the decision-making forums which are required in order for the state to make the interventional choices it believes necessary.

Kymlicka (1992) argues that a liberal society which protects the rights of freedom of speech, association and assembly may itself provide a viable civil and public arena for deliberation and judgment between cultural goods. If necessary, the state might take steps to encourage support for cultural organisations, perhaps by incentives for individual engagement, and this would transfer responsibility to civil society, constituting a form of social perfectionism. From such a perspective, the powerful authority of the state is regarded as an unacceptable court for deliberations about the nature of the good which could marginalise minority groups in favour of the dominant majority, whose historic culture has itself been defined over time by a single (usually white, upperclass male) section of society, thus excluding the experiences and preferences of sectors of its own community. The decision-making process may privilege the articulate, who are better able to defend their own conceptions of the good, and may also result in distorted presentations of minority arguments as groups attempt to adapt to mainstream modes of thinking, especially in the face of adverse state reaction. Even where a decision-making group chooses, on behalf of the state, to optimise the position of minority groups in order to balance the bias of the competitive market place, the motive should not be state-perfectionism, but the principle of justice. Furthermore, as noted above, conservatism might lead to an ossification of tradition which would ultimately fail to meet the changing needs either of individuals or of the state itself. Taylor (1992) however argues that, provided the basic and inviolable fundamental rights accorded to each citizen are

guaranteed, a state may choose to pursue collective goals and to depart from the procedural form of liberalism in support of its own cultural survival: '... *to weigh the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes in favour of the latter'* (p.61).

If, therefore, a state chooses to pursue the goal of cultural survival, on the basis of a general preference for a collective good, and if such a culture incorporates a religious dimension which it believes to be integral to its character, might its transmission become a matter of public policy and open to promotion in schools? As chapter 1 notes, the legislators who were responsible for the Education Acts of 1944 and 1988 were concerned to identify nationhood with the country's Christian heritage, and believed that the provision of religious education and collective worship in schools would contribute to the flourishing of its identity and culture. Such provision has a long history and has been the subject of legislation for over a century in a country with an established church and without, apparently, strong opposition from parents. We have seen that Walzer (1992) identifies a form of liberalism in which a state may be *'committed to the survival and flourishing of a particular nation, culture or religion'*, (p. 99) while Taylor argues that, in certain circumstances, such as pertains in Quebec, it is appropriate that the state makes an exception of the general application of liberal neutrality in favour of measures to promote the survival of its own cultural identity. From this perspective, therefore, it might be argued that the tradition of religious experience is regarded as a cherished good in the heritage of the country. It should therefore be provided for the young as part of their development towards adulthood in order that this measure will safeguard the tradition for future generations. Contra these claims, it can be argued that, although there may have been an integral relationship between the state and the Christian religion in the past, this is no longer the case in today's pluralist society. There is no evidence of a general preference for the protection and promotion of this dimension in contemporary society, or of any strong active affiliation to the faith. If a tradition is

no longer central to the lives of citizens, its continuing survival in response to external decree is unlikely. Although education about religion can be presented in the classroom, participation in worship may be meaningless in the lives of young people whose experiences beyond the school are largely alienated from religious practice.

6.4   A CONTINUING DEBATE

It is against this impasse, between competing versions of the self in which rival fears relate to excessive individualism and excessive state perfectionism, that the debate surrounding the government's legislation in respect of the act of collective worship takes place. A neutralist liberalism argues that the individual's right to autonomy and self-government has primacy and that, where the concept of the good life is a matter of significant controversy, the state has no right to privilege any form of culture over others or to intervene in the private domain. In challenging this, communitarianism argues that, in addition to showing respect to individuals and recognising their fundamental rights, the state may choose to protect and promote its own cultural community, thereby giving preference to its particular version of the good. Arguments are strongly maintained on both sides. The principle of state neutrality offers a secure framework for the pursuit of individual goals (Wringe,1995) but is inadequate to guide political arrangements and results in an abdication of responsibility in favour of the forces of the cultural market place (Jonathan, 1997). While Taylor (1992) fears that the exercise of individual rights may lead to social destruction, Ackerman (1980) points to the rich variety of communities which nevertheless flourish at the present time.

This might be to draw a more clear distinction between these two forms of liberalism than actually exists, however. Both are difficult to implement in actual cultures and societies. On the one hand there is a strong desire for the exercise of

individual rights in respect of the good life; on the other there is a recognition that without state support some of the cultural goods which constitute a nation's distinctive identity may be overwhelmed. Kymlicka (1992) asserts that few liberals pursue individualism to the exclusion of concern for the social framework within which they exist, and that dependence on a cultural structure is undeniable. State support for some valued aspects of the culture may therefore be necessary in order to provide choices. Distinguishing between social and political perfectionism, Kymlicka asks whether the good is better able to establish its value in a publicly competitive arena or when it is the focus of state favour:

A culture of freedom requires a mix of both exposure and connection to existing practices, and also distance and dissent from them. Liberal neutrality may provide that mix, but that is not obviously true, it may be true only in some times and places. ... While both sides have something to learn from the other, that is not to say that the truth is somewhere in between the two. (p.178)

What is at issue is how to safeguard individual rights whilst also encouraging the sustaining commitment to societal organisations which is necessary in order to protect worthwhile elements of the state's cultural tradition, not only for the benefit of future generations but also to ensure the survival of those freedoms on which liberal democracy is founded. The dilemma for politicians, legislators and educators is how to balance an engaged induction to existing practices with a critical examination of their worth in the upbringing of the young as they move towards autonomy in pursuit of the right and the good. This is necessarily a gradualist programme, and where the education of children who are themselves in a state of developmental transition is concerned the way ahead is not clear. Callan (1997b) argues that the educator must take the differing views of the self into account. By giving more attention to the formation of the learner's present or putative commitments, an alternative ideal of

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autonomy might be developed which gives priority to depth of understanding, if necessary at the expense of cognitive breadth. Similarly Jonathan (1997) claims that too little attention is given to the development of persons and of their preferences. For Callan (1994) whose concern is for the individual who is devoid of any attachments and responsibilities, the formation of the learner's commitments is central to education. In the absence of any clear recognition of the importance of the social self and its attachments, he fears that '... *the likely result of all our efforts may often be lives in which impressive intellectual sophistication coincides with commitments that remain primitive and puerile'* (p.48). Carr (D, 1993) argues that attachments and values are formed and grounded in the actual features and experiences of human life, rather than in distanced intellectual cognition, and are best developed with the guidance and support of wise practitioners:

> *Understanding and acquiring moral and other values is not at all a matter of neutral intellectual reflection in the context of disengaged enquiry or debate but a matter precisely of engaged practical initiation and experience under the sound and responsible guidance of those who have the wisdom of experience themselves.* (p.203)

In the absence of active engagement in social organisations by citizens and without a commitment which values loyalty and attachment, Callan (1997b) argues that the liberal democracy which sustains the community will itself wither.

I conclude this chapter, therefore, by considering briefly the relationship between commitment and collective worship in schools, identifying two lines of enquiry. The first asks whether collective worship can make a contribution to a wider sense of commitment to society, while the second examines the issue of religious commitment. As the data indicate, most schools work hard to encourage a sense of mutual responsibility and communal identity, and collective worship is one of the

places where this is best explored. It might be argued, therefore, that the actual experience of being part of the school community and of sharing in its relationships serves as an example of social attachment that may be mirrored subsequently in the society beyond the school. However, such an approach can be presented through a secular assembly, and chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate that although schools often pursue some of the themes of social development, this is often limited in extent. This is an issue which will be considered again in the concluding chapter.

The question of religious commitment is, as chapter 5 indicates, an issue of a different order, its nature and characteristics a matter of controversy and its focus the subject of wide debate in society. An account of religious commitment might, as we have seen earlier, incorporate reference to belief, practice or action, although different groups and traditions might place differing emphases on these features, as noted in chapters 1 and 5. As with any secular form, attachment may exist along a continuum of intensity or observance, and can fluctuate over time and according to changing circumstance. It is widely taken to be a mature activity which usually, though not always, occurs in association with a faith community. The position of religion is a particularly contentious issue, not only because freedom of belief is a fundamental right but because religion itself is a subject of wide diversity and strong controversy in contemporary society. Consequently, as has been shown, many liberal societies choose to operate a strict division between the state and the church, acting to protect individual religious freedom while maintaining an institutional distance from identification with any particular tradition (an approach which was observed in multi-faith secondary schools and discussed in chapter 5). From this stance, adopted in the public schools of France and the United States of America for example, responsibility for the transmission to the young of a foundation of religious knowledge and experience in the practice of the faith has no place in the public education system and is delegated to parents and the faith community. This, however, may leave the young with no religious background or with a restricted and possibly illiberal acquaintance

with a single tradition, a circumstance which could be avoided by the inclusion of religious studies in the curriculum. To intervene in the promotion of religious commitment, however, may be to leave the state open to charges of manipulation and indoctrination, although from the perspective of a believer, a presentation to the young of the claims of the religious worldview is a valid course of action. If the formation of an individual's commitments is central to education, then it might be argued that religion is one of society's enduring communities and that the possibility of attachment should be presented as a possible alternative to the young. Carr (D., 1994) argues that current approaches to religious education have been influenced by a liberal and neutralist perspective that promotes the freedom of the individual and refrains from initiation into faith. By surrendering the question of commitment to personal preference, it fails to offer to children a coherent understanding of the nature of faith and experience. If religious commitment is to have any meaning for the young it may be necessary to consider the *ultimate rehabilitation of the idea of religious truth as a significant goal of religious education'* (p.223). One of the difficulties with this argument is that there is no agreement on what constitutes religious truth, and the approach which is advocated, even if possible, may have little impact on students' responses to the issue of religious commitment in the secular society of today.

In the next chapter, I draw together the threads of these arguments and examine the implications for the future of collective worship.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In this concluding chapter, which is in two main parts, I first draw together the threads of the arguments which surround the issue of whether the compulsory provision of collective worship can be justified in the public schools of a liberal society, and consider ways in which any changes might be implemented. I suggest that a widening of understanding of the nature of worship might allow an emphasis on the spiritual to replace the current expectation which relies on the traditional elements of Christian practice. This might achieve a greater consensus amongst educators and others concerned for the place of religion in schools, and may meet the needs of young people more appropriately. In the second section, I review the main findings of this study, identify some of its limitations and suggest areas for further research. I conclude with a final reflection on this thesis.

7.1 CONFLICTING PERCEPTIONS

In the first chapter, I examined the public controversy surrounding the compulsory provision of collective worship in all maintained schools, noting the presence of incommensurable arguments which reflect personal beliefs and opinions and are often distanced from actual practice. In drawing this discussion to its close, I identify three schools of thought in the debate: (i) that held by believers, who share a broadly similar perspective on the nature and value of worship but who differ on the question of its provision in schools; (ii) that held by those who adopt a position which is broadly liberal and draw a boundary between the public and private domains; and

(iii) that adopted by supporters of the communitarian argument who place more emphasis on the communal and collective good.

For believers, *'Worship is a fitting expression of the most fundamental attitude of love for God, thanksgiving for God's goodness, awareness of dependence on God, and of God's sustaining love for creation'* (Wadham, 1997, p.24). From this view, it is not possible to cloister God's engagement in the world which is regarded as universal in its outreach, and it is seen as necessary therefore that children should be introduced to the personal dimension of faith through both teaching and worship which, for some, may lead ultimately to a deeper form of commitment and communion with the divine. Although participation in worship, which is regarded as an integral element of religious education, might not be valued by the young, *'... it provides them with an opportunity to become familiar with some of the deepest expressions of the human spirit and for these to enter into their minds and hearts to be available as a resource in times of need later in life'* (Cox, HL, 493:1455). This is a view that emphasises the role of the pupil as learner and recipient: that is, it gives priority to what pupils may receive during and from worship, which may include an encounter with the divine. Where, instead, the stress is placed on the student as active contributor and participant (that is, on what the worshipper offers to God) some believers argue that, in the absence of faith, worship is a ritual devoid of meaning. As we have seen, this is a view held by many young people as well as by their teachers.

Conflicting perceptions, then, amongst believers who are themselves not a single and coherent group, lead to a range of differing positions: whereas some argue that the experience of religion is a matter of supreme worth which should be offered to the young throughout the years of schooling, others recognise that the school's influence is of little effect in the absence of family and personal commitment. In the face of non-believing students (a perception which, as the data indicate, may be misleading in some instances, resulting from a confusion of doubt with disbelief),

other believers argue that worship is inappropriate and cannot be maintained in the common schools of a society which is identified as no longer Christian but secular and pluralist.

From a liberal position, which ascribes individual rights to citizens based on justice and equal liberties, it is argued that religion is a matter of significant controversy and its practice is, therefore, a good which represents but one alternative amongst many. Freedom of belief is a fundamental right, and a major goal of education is the development of autonomy which will enable the young to make rational choices between competing goods as they move into adulthood. The state has no mandate to protect or to promote any tradition which is situated in the private realm, and the common school therefore adopts a neutral stance in respect of religious education and practice: *'Because of its very character, the common school in a pluralistic democratic society cannot constitute a 'faith-supporting environment' in any sense requiring the religious beliefs and commitment of the family to be given normative status'* (McLaughlin, 1992, p.105). The legislation incorporated in the Education Act of 1988 which requires the provision of a daily act of collective worship, an activity which is distinctive from normal school practices, is regarded by liberals as an unwarranted intrusion into matters which, being the subject of wide controversy in society, are more properly the responsibility of the individual, the family and the faith community. The legal requirements in respect of collective worship should therefore be repealed, a move which some believers argue would, rightly in their opinion, require the churches to be more active in the cultural market place (chapter 4.2).

Contra this liberal position it can be argued that the presentation of a neutralist perspective in religious education together with the abolition of collective worship would leave the young in a position where they receive a limited and inadequate introduction to the nature of religious commitment and experience, and this would

offer an insufficient foundation for the exercise of autonomy in respect of this version of the good. Furthermore, in a nation with an established church and where, although unattached to a faith community a majority of citizens claim to hold religious beliefs, it is argued that the state has a responsibility to respond to perceived parental preference for the maintenance of a practice which has been part of school provision for over a century. However, the existence of a tradition is no reason for its continuance, unless good reasons can be shown for doing so. There is no clear evidence of citizens' wishes in this matter, and these would not necessarily provide a sufficient argument for the compulsory provision of a socially disputed practice.

More generally, the liberal position is criticised for the impartial route it pursues between controversial claims which, by its emphasis on individual rights, tolerance and freedom, makes a contribution to '... *individual anomie and nihilism as well as ... general social dislocation and disintegration'* (Carr, D., 1993, p.201). Perceiving the danger of a rupture in society, various courses are proposed: amongst these are calls for a return to earlier traditional modes of community, of which religion is a surviving form:

> *Many non-religious intellectuals look to religion as offering the necessary transcendence which they believe will resolve broadly experienced dislocation and alienation. They argue that religion acts as a 'sacred canopy' which provides the foundation for both personal and corporate life, binding and legitimising the social order; consequently, it is essential for the cohesion, and indeed for the survival of any society.* (Bounds, 1997, p.5)

Amongst the arguments proposed by some communitarians therefore are suggestions that the state may take steps to preserve and protect its distinctive culture, nation or religion if a general preference for this can be established. Provided fundamental

rights are guaranteed, it might be argued that the provision of collective worship in maintained schools is an attempt to contribute to the wider good of society by forging links with cultural identity, by encouraging cohesion and by offering a foundation for personal life.

In the cultural arena, however, social traditions must themselves establish their continuing worth if they are to survive. Any action by a state which uses its authority to follow a perfectionist route selected either by a particular sector of its populace or on the basis of general preference may result in a restriction of individual rights and diversity, and society might pursue policies which are ultimately illiberal and self-serving. As we have seen, religion is widely perceived to be a personal matter requiring mental assent to a faith premise. It cannot be controlled by the state, therefore, and intervention is ineffectual where sufficient people choose to follow other goods: the steadily declining numbers of active members of the Christian tradition, discussed in chapters 1 and 5, offer no evidence of general support for active religious commitment or of any sense of individual religio-cultural identity.

7.2   THE WAY AHEAD

As noted above, however, this is no abstract debate and the situation in schools demonstrates that practice has largely moved away from theoretical arguments as teachers have established patterns of provision with which they are broadly comfortable. Against the background of debate and controversy, it must first be recognised that, in actual society, no amendment to an activity which has been the subject of continuing argument throughout its history will meet with unanimous support, as a consultation exercise held in 1997 to review collective worship showed when it was unable to reach a consensus after considering a range of proposals (Culham College Institute, 1998). The evidence of this study, however, indicates that

the case for change to the legal requirements is strong, and I conclude this section with a consideration of changes which might be made in respect of the provision of collective worship. Various alternatives present themselves, of which (i) a retention of the present requirements is a decision that might continue to have the support of some believers, teachers and parents. Other possibilities include (ii) the abolition of collective worship in the common school, although its provision might be retained in the voluntary sector where it has the support of parents. Repeal is likely to meet with opposition from religious organisations, however, and may not concur with the wishes of parents. (iii) A reduction in frequency might meet with approval, particularly from those practitioners and educators who argue that this would lead to an improvement in the quality of provision. However, if the compulsory element were retained, the liberal argument in support of religious freedom and personal privacy would stand. Furthermore, the claims put forward by schools that worship is inappropriate in a secular society amongst non-believing pupils would apply whether the activity was weekly, monthly or termly. (iv) A retention of collective worship only in the primary school, where it meets little opposition, is open to criticism on the grounds that children are too young to engage in meaningful participation and may be led to misunderstand the nature of worship in a faith community. In addition, it may be claimed that there is a danger that such provision may border on the indoctrinatory by virtue of the children's immaturity of experience. Moreover its restriction to the primary school could lead to a perception that worship is an activity for juveniles, to be discarded on transfer to the secondary sector. If collective worship can be shown to be an important dimension of life for the very young, then its provision is valid throughout the education system. (v) The data indicate that, at the present time, provision in schools varies widely and is influenced largely by the attitudes of headteachers and senior members of staff. It might be possible, therefore, to amend legislation to give schools and their governors the right to make a decision about the provision of collective worship in their schools. This could, however, lead to arguments between individuals and groups, and to variability of practice over the years

as key players change: furthermore, it would not meet the challenge of the liberal argument against intervention in the private domain. (vi) Some schools might consider offering parallel forms of provision, making voluntary collective worship and a non-voluntary assembly available in different spaces at the same time. This would avoid the criticism of compulsion, but would produce practical difficulties and may be regarded as divisive by students who, as we have seen, prefer to meet together with their friends whenever possible. The question of whether parent or pupil should make the choice between the two alternatives would need to be resolved: it might be possible to consider extending the decision to all, or to students above a certain age. Especially in multi-faith schools, the question of the focus and leadership of worship would continue to be a problem. (vii) Alternatively, schools might provide a compulsory but secular assembly for all pupils which is supplemented by voluntary acts of worship, held where numbers are few before or after the school day, or during the lunch break. We have seen that some groups of Muslim pupils take responsibility for midday worship, and some schools have organisations, such as the Christian Union, which also operate in this way. Attendance at voluntary worship might be determined by parental choice in primary schools and by student decision in the secondary sector. Such an approach would meet with approval from some groups, but would be opposed by those who argue that schools have a responsibility to offer an experience of worship to all young people whose families have no religious affiliations. Without an introduction to collective worship in the school, few pupils will have the preliminary experience or understanding which is the necessary foundation on which to base a decision. Finally, (viii) a re-assessment of the term 'worship' might open a way forward. This study has, following common usage and the definitions offered in *Religious Education and Collective Worship* (Circular 1/94, DfE, 1994) adopted an account of worship as an act of reverence to a divine being or power which is articulated in prayer and praise. A repeal of this non-statutory guidance would be welcomed by educators, and a wider and less directive account which emphasises meditation, reflection and quiet thought might present an opportunity for

children to consider their deepest hopes, feelings and commitments without a framework of participatory worship. This approach could incorporate material which is religious as well as secular and could offer opportunities for silent engagement in worship for those who choose to participate in privacy. It would transfer the emphasis from the active contribution of the worshipper to the more receptive position of the enquirer and learner. It would be more open to the range of religious and non-religious belief positions found in schools, and could allow an exploration of questions of doubt and uncertainty. Finally, it would provide an opportunity for a consideration of the 'meaning of life' questions in which a majority of young people claim to be interested (MORI poll findings, SCAA, 1996).

This final alternative would be my preferred option, on the grounds that it offers an open invitation to young people to consider issues of central importance to personhood, that it neither precludes nor assumes participation in religious worship and is likely to be more acceptable to the majority of teachers and pupils. Nevertheless, if it is to provide an opportunity for quiet contemplative thought, the extent and quality of current provision will need further consideration. We have seen in chapters 3-5 that there is some evidence to indicate that the customary assembling of large groups of pupils makes a contribution to the development of social and moral values. All of the headteachers and their representatives who were interviewed revealed an intention to maintain their current provision, even if the legislation for religious worship were to be repealed. It may be, therefore, that the most widely acceptable way forward will be to build on the strengths of existing practice and to place a greater recognition of the importance of the spiritual and cultural dimensions which, as has been demonstrated in the data, currently receive little attention.

Although much has been written about the spiritual dimension during the last two decades, it continues to defy simple definition. Regarded as the intangible essence of what it is to be human, accounts of its inward-looking features commonly

include references to a search for significance and meaning, for beliefs, values and identity, and for worth and selfhood, as well as aspects of emotional and psychological development. Any approach which is wholly self-engrossed, however, would not satisfy a fuller account of spirituality in which a responsive and outward-looking dimension is an inherent component. This seeks to place the self within a wider vision of the good, which may be religious or secular but which always sets the individual in a broader canvas and within a more extensive time-scale: all accounts of the spiritual dimension look to a framework of meaning which is associated with that which is other or more significant than oneself, and which cannot be wholly explained in rational terms. There is, however, no consensus regarding the nature of the spiritual dimension. Over the past decade the debate has identified various and sometimes conflicting emphases, in particular between its interior and relational components (Thatcher, 1991; Hay and Hammond, 1992; Hull, 1995), between its religious and secular forms (Carr, D., 1996; Blake, 1996), and between masculine and feminine approaches (Isherwood, 1999; Grey, 1999). Nevertheless, some teachers feel a need to explore, with their students, issues of personal development and matters of deep human significance which they associate with the spiritual dimension, and collective worship may be the only place where these can be consciously addressed in an appropriate setting. *'It allows quiet reflection and stimulating input of a type not necessarily encountered elsewhere in the school day'* (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1996, p.14). However, although the evidence of this study suggests that teachers are concerned to explore the spiritual dimension, it also supports the claim of OFSTED (1999) that teachers *'... often lack understanding of the nature of spiritual development or of ways by which it may be promoted'* (p. 43). It is possible, however, that the inspectors of schools themselves also lack this understanding.

An emphasis on this dimension will not, therefore, be easy to accomplish: the data illustrate the difficulty of achieving an appropriate atmosphere for quiet

reflection with large numbers of pupils in physical environments which are often uncomfortable and inappropriate for this purpose, in the short period of time allocated to collective worship. Spiritual development can no more be compelled than can religious commitment, and leadership will continue to be a problem: as Groome (1988) argues, *'... our attempts to be spiritual guides must surely be grounded in our own spiritual journeys'* (p.9). Whether teachers will feel sufficiently able and confident to explore the spiritual dimension with and amongst their pupils remains to be seen. However, to place the onus of responsibility on teachers overlooks the individually realised nature of the spiritual dimension, which may occur as a personal response to an experience which is felt but not expressed, and may be wordless.

By contrast, the notion of cultural development has received little attention amongst educators, and as the evidence of the data indicates, in collective worship its explicit examination is limited to occasional presentations of 'minority' religious festivals. Cultural values and anglocentric emphases are present but are implicit in material which serves primarily as a vehicle for socio-moral teaching. The concept of culture, which can be understood in a variety of forms, is not examined, and the relationship between personal identity, communal values, citizenship and commitment are not explored. This is an area which requires further attention, as noted below.

Lastly, to serve its purpose of providing a regular opportunity for an exploration of the issues and experiences which are of most significance in the life of the individual and the wider community, it will be necessary for the aims and objectives of the assembly to be re-appraised, and for customary provision to be reviewed. In order to build on already existing strengths of social and moral relationships, which are identified in the data, requires, first, a careful evaluation of what those strengths might be and, secondly, a recognition that aims may sometimes be in conflict with each other. The current emphasis on attainment and achievement,

for example, serves one of the school's educational aims but may need to be set apart, perhaps by separate provision, from the more reflective and thought-provoking exploration of personhood which it is suggested here that schools should promote in assemblies.

7.3   SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, I draw together some of the findings of this investigation, identify its limitations, and consider ways in which future research might develop. The study began with an examination of the debate surrounding the compulsory provision of collective worship in schools, and the initial analysis of literature revealed incommensurable arguments which frequently reflected individual beliefs and opinions and were often distanced from the situation in schools. Subsequent analysis of provision and the attitudes of teachers and pupils reveals much variety but also shows a clear division between the practice of religious worship in most primary and voluntary institutions and the presentation of largely non-religious assemblies in the secondary sector. Although the activity is enjoyed by young pupils, the teaching they encounter in both religious education and collective worship begins to be questioned by the later stages of the primary school. Amongst the conceptual difficulties which pupils identify are problems with unanswered prayer and with Biblical accounts of the creation and stories of miraculous events, which conflict with their perceptions of the natural world and their developing but limited understanding of empirical evidence. During the years of adolescence, many students continue to experience increasing doubt and scepticism, and some describe themselves as agnostic or atheistic. Consequently, as discussed in chapter 5, the perception held by young people of an interdependent relationship between belief and worship contributes to their rejection of any form of engagement in an activity which holds little meaning for them. Often teachers share their pupils' doubts and argue that

religious worship is not the responsibility of the common school but of parents and the faith community. Young people in the voluntary sector accept the status of their schools and some recognise its contribution to their religious identity, but many claim that the content of collective worship is without value or relevance. Interest in, and respect for, religion was displayed mostly amongst students in multi-faith schools where many pupils belong to families with there is an active commitment to the worshipping tradition, but where the legal requirements for collective worship are regarded as inoperable. In these circumstances provision focuses on a collective assembly which has the aim of developing a cohesive community within the school.

The data also indicate that the influence of the teachers and particularly of the headteacher is a major determinant of provision. Although the extent of personal religious commitment appears to be a significant factor in the approach adopted by primary school teachers, at the secondary level perceptions of students' independence in religious matters, and of the local community as Christian, secular or pluralist are set alongside an understanding of education as a rational and critical process. In the common school, religious commitment is regarded as a private matter. It is unclear why attitudes vary between teachers in the primary and secondary schools: I have suggested, in chapter 5, that differing approaches to teaching in the two sectors attract broadly differing personality types and that gender may also be a dominant factor. A further influence may be rooted in teachers' perceptions of pupils' developmental status and in their assessment of the acceptance of provision by their pupils.

The gathering for assembly, however, continues to be regarded as valuable in all schools, particularly in its contribution to social and moral development, to the transmission of the school's ethos, and to the establishment of a sense of community, although it was noted that this is largely an inward-looking programme which focuses on relationships within the school and the achievement of educational goals. That students are not more critical of provision in their schools can perhaps be ascribed to

the quality of relationships which often exist between teachers and students, and to teachers' attempts to present material which they hope will be of value to the young people, avoiding engagement in prayer or hymns. Nevertheless, many young people also complain of boredom and disinterest, and argue that teachers are often unable to identify their needs, despite having worthy intentions.

The generally positive picture which is revealed by the data raises questions, however, about the representative nature of the respondents and interviewees, and about the limitations of this study. The questionnaire provided a useful picture of provision across the country, although flaws in the design of some questions occasionally produced results which were difficult to quantify. The teachers from whom I gathered the data were nearly always senior members of staff, often with some responsibility for collective worship who admitted to having been more critical of provision when they were less experienced. Pupils were mostly selected by their teachers and are likely to have been amongst the most articulate and least critical of their groups. Although they considered themselves to be representative of their generation, a different and more critical picture might have been obtained had I been able to talk with a wider range of pupils. In addition, a second visit to interviewees to pursue particular queries or to correct misunderstandings might have been useful, although time and distance often made this impossible. Nevertheless, common themes can be identified, and many of the findings of the questionnaire correspond to the evidence gathered by observation, although some teachers' responses appear to have been impressionistic rather than informed assessments of provision, particularly in respect of the breadth of content in schools. Although it became at times almost unmanageable, thus hampering progress, a large amount of material was gathered, providing evidence of provision, attitudes and responses to collective worship across a wide range of schools, and identifying some of the key issues of autonomy, rights, indoctrination, and the extent of the state's authority in the public and private domains which reflect wider contemporary debate.

Amongst the issues for future research which this study identifies is the question of the attitude of parents and citizens to the maintenance of collective worship in schools, in order to clarify rival claims of general support and wide indifference. I suggest that any examination of this issue would need to include a consideration of the possibility that attitudes to provision may vary according to the age of pupils, and might also analyse the reasons given for responses. The religious background and extent of current association with a faith community would also be factors to be considered. Whether popular opinion should be used to justify the continuation or abolition of collective worship would require further analysis, however.

I have discussed above a revision of current provision to place more emphasis on the spiritual dimension, but noted the difficulties experienced by many teachers in presenting opportunities for an exploration of this aspect of life to their pupils. In addition therefore to a continuing need to explore differing perceptions of the term, and for research into teachers' understanding and schools' provision, there is a need to provide training opportunities for teachers and intending teachers to explore ways whereby this aspect of personhood can be explored more effectively with pupil groups, bearing in mind the claim by OFSTED (1999) that the nature of spiritual development and its promotion are not well understood by teachers.

Further research into the question of collective worship might examine the role of nurture in voluntary schools and its influence on pupils: this might require a longitudinal study to follow young people into adulthood and parenthood. A different but related survey of provision in schools with determinations, and those which provide nurture through acts of faith worship could also be undertaken, and would be useful to such schools. In addition, an analysis of OFSTED inspectors' personal expectations of collective worship and the values on which their assessments are based would be valuable. Finally, an examination of the relationship between religion

and cultural identity, and the contribution which collective worship makes towards cultural development appear to be areas which, as noted above, require further study and analysis. No education can take place in a cultural vacuum and if we wish to identify a cultural context within which to provide education, it will be necessary to establish a sense of what cultural matrix is most justifiable, particularly in a pluralist society which is open to change. Discussion might examine the worthwhile traditions and values of the past as well as those of the present, and may need also to consider the wider influences on culture in a society which is increasingly open to global and economic forces. The relationship between education and culture is dialectical and reinforcing: to ignore this is not a decision in favour of a continuing neutrality, but an expression of preference for allowing society to move in its own way. Nevertheless, the preservation of the democratic values on which a liberal society is founded has implications for the education of children: '*Society's concern with their education lies in their role as future citizens, and ... in such essential things as their acquiring the capacity to understand the public culture and to participate in its institutions...*' (Rawls, 1993, p. 200)

7.4   FINAL REFLECTIONS ON THIS RESEARCH

During the course of this research, I have:

- examined the arguments in favour of, and in opposition to, the provision of collective worship in maintained schools, identifying the prevalence of a range of incommensurable arguments in the public domain;

- observed a wide variety of approaches adopted in primary and secondary schools in rural and urban areas of the country, noting the particular difficulties afforded by the presence of pupils from a range of different religious traditions or from

none, and the manner in which teachers seek to balance acquiescence to the legal requirements with local circumstances;

• investigated the attitudes of teachers and pupils to their experience of collective worship, identifying a spectrum of opinions amongst teachers, and a gradual withdrawal from participation in worship by pupils as they move into the secondary sector;

• analysed the more fundamental issues associated with the requirement by the state of religious practice as a compulsory element of a liberal education, examining questions of autonomy, rights, indoctrination, and the neutrality of the state.

Finally, I argue that although collective worship might be regarded as justifiable from a religious perspective, its compulsory provision cannot be sustained from a liberal position in a democratic society where religion is a matter of significant controversy. I conclude, therefore, that its continuation is inappropriate in its present form. The data indicate, nevertheless, that the regular assembling of school communities contributes to the social and moral development of pupils. I suggest that this provision is maintained and extended by a more focused exploration of questions of spiritual and cultural development, in order to provide an opportunity for a reflective consideration of those aspects of human experience which are central to personhood and which may also foster a deeper awareness, understanding and sense of responsibility to the shared life of the wider community.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Additional material relating to the legal requirements in respect of the act of collective worship

Collective worship must normally take place on school premises. In special circumstances, and with the agreement of the headteacher, the governing body of a school which is voluntary, special agreement or foundation, may make arrangements to hold worship elsewhere although this should be the exception rather than the norm (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Schedule 20 (5) and (6). This supersedes the previous directive that maintained schools which wished to hold collective worship elsewhere could make the necessary arrangements but must nevertheless hold worship on the school premises at some time during the day (DfE 1994, para.56). The responsibility for implementing the legal provisions in a community or foundation school which does not have a religious character lies with the head teacher after consultation with the governing body, and in voluntary schools or foundation schools with a religious character, with the governing body after consultation with the headteacher (1998, schedule 20 (4)). Although teachers may be required to attend school assembly as part of their contract, they have the freedom to withdraw from collective worship on grounds of religious opinion or practice (DfE, 1994, para.143). Similarly, headteachers may decide not to participate in school worship, although they continue to be responsible for ensuring its provision. (DfE, 1994, para.144). These rights do not extend to teachers in voluntary aided schools or to reserved teachers in controlled or special agreement schools.

APPENDIX 2

Table to show church membership

(from: Social Trends 29 (1999) London, HMSO, p.220)

Thousands

	1970	1980	1990	1995
Trinitarian	9122	7554	6693	6361
Non-trinitarian	285	353	459	522
Total	9407	7907	7152	6883

APPENDIX 3

Table to show active adult membership of non-Christian religions

(from: Social Trends 29, 1999)

Thousands

	1970	1980	1990	1995
Islam	130	306	495	580
Sikhism	100	150	250	350
Hinduism	80	120	140	155
Judaism	120	111	101	94
Others	21	53	87	116
Total	451	740	1073	1295

APPENDIX 4

Timetable of the main stages in the development of this thesis

This study, which began in the summer of 1993, was undertaken alongside my teaching commitments with the University of Plymouth. Consequently, the necessary reading and collection of data sometimes occurred spasmodically and opportunistically, especially during the early years. In the first two years, I read widely but non-sequentially in the areas of worship and spirituality in order to build a foundation for this study and to identify appropriate issues. At the same time I began to gather data from schools (sometimes in the course of the supervision of teaching practice) by means of observation and interview with teachers and designed a preliminary questionnaire which was completed by students on the post-graduate certificate in education course, and by history teachers who attended a conference at the university. From 1995, I attempted to develop a more structured approach to my work, concentrating on reading in the field of collective worship and making arrangements to gather data from a balanced sample of schools and pupil age groups. The draft of the first chapter, which serves as a literature review and examines the controversy surrounding collective worship, was completed in 1996. By the end of that year, I had also completed the preparation of the questionnaire which was distributed in June and October, and I made my last visit to a school for observation and interview with a group of students, in December. The following details outline the way in which this study developed: during some of the visits, only observation occurred but at other times, interviews were held with senior teachers and pupils.

July 1993: a series of 6 visits to a local primary school provided an introduction to the collection of data by observation. The headteacher was also interviewed during this time.

October - November, 1993: a series of visits to a middle school and two visits to an independent secondary school were made where an interview was held with the principal and the chaplain.

May, 1994: three schools were visited in the Midlands, in order to develop a multi-faith perspective.

June and July 1994: visits were made to a city technology college in the north-east, to a special school in Devon, and to primary and middle schools in the area.

September and November 1994: further visits to local primary schools, including voluntary institutions.

January and February 1995: series of visits made to local primary schools, and interviews were carried out with infant children.

February - April 1995: observation and interviews carried out in a Midlands city, followed by a series of visits to secondary schools in the south-west.

June, 1996: visited primary and secondary schools in the Midlands, including a voluntary-aided secondary school, and a girls' secondary school.

September 1996: made final visits to the Midlands, to complete sample of observations and interviews in secondary and primary schools.

October - December 1996: final visits to local schools, including one to a voluntary-aided secondary school and one to a grammar school, where I was able to interview a group of year 13 students.

Timetable of writing

As indicated above, the preliminary draft of chapter 1 was completed in April, 1996. The second chapter, describing the research methodology was completed in March, 1997. The report on the questionnaire (chapter 3) was completed with the aid of a data base established for an analysis of its statistical material that was set up with the support of a university technician: all non-statistical data was categorised manually, however, and this chapter was not finished until the end of 1997. It was followed by the report on the data gathered by observation and interview in 1998. During the autumn of 1998 and the spring of 1999, the first version of Chapter 5, which draws together the findings of the data, was completed. To conclude the study I then undertook further extensive reading from April 1999 in order to acquire a philosophical foundation for the analysis of chapter 6, the writing of which was completed in January, 2000. Thereafter, all of the material was re-drafted. Chapters 2 and 5 were wholly re-written, and chapter 7 was added to draw the final conclusions of the thesis together.

APPENDIX 5

ETHICS PROTOCOL

Informed consent

Whenever possible, I shall inform participants about the purpose and objectives of my research, and will answer any queries which may be raised.

Openness and honesty

In dealing with children and young people, I shall similarly explain my purpose in terms appropriate to their age and stage of development. Schools will be regarded as acting 'in loco parentis' in giving consent and enabling discussion to take place. Pupils may, however, choose to remain silent and no pressure will be placed upon them to respond against their will.

Confidentiality

Information collected will be treated confidentially and neither schools nor individual participants will be identified, all names being changed in the report. Whenever possible, during periods of public observation, individual privacy will be respected and where appropriate, consideration will be given to local cultural values.

APPENDIX 6

COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

University of Plymouth

Faculty of Arts & Education
Douglas Avenue,
Exmouth
Devon
EX8 2AT

SCHOOL ASSEMBLY AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP TODAY

This survey looks at what actually occurs in school worship/assembly at the present time, and aims to identify the methods, content and practices which are incorporated. The information gathered from this survey will be treated confidentially: no school will be identified by name. The questionnaire has been designed for quick and easy completion, and although the grids may look daunting, many of them only require one tick. However, most questions are provided with an additional space for comments should you wish to include any further remarks. The terms "assembly" and "worship" are used interchangeably in order to recognise their general use in schools. Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Jeannette Gill

1   Please give the name of your school...

2   Number on Roll...

3   Is your school   mixed   ☐   boys   ☐   girls   ☐

4   Type of school: please tick the appropriate box.

	County	Voluntary Controlled	Voluntary Aided	G.M.	Independent
Infant					
First					
Junior					
Primary 5 - 11					
Combined 5 - 12					
Middle-deemed primary					
Middle-deemed secondary					
Secondary Modern					
Comprehensive 11 - 16					
Comprehensive 11 - 18					
Grammar					
Technical					
Upper					
Special					
Other					

5   Where is the school situated? Please tick:

small village (less than 500 people)	
large village	
small town (less than 50,000 people)	
large town (50,000 - 200,000) or small city	
major city centre	
major city suburb	

6   This diagram has been designed to show time of Assembly, pupil grouping and venue. Please indicate in writing on the diagram below when Worship/Assembly takes place in your school. An example is provided for you first, showing some of the range of possibilities encountered in schools.

EXAMPLE

9.00	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
9.30	whole School	hall	tutor groups	class-room	years 7 - 8	dining room	infant dept	home base	house group	studio

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
8.30										
9.00										
9.30										
10.00										
10.30										
11.00										
11.30										
12.00										
12.30										
1.00										
1.30										
2.00										
2.30										
3.00										
3.30										
4.00										

Comment (optional)..

7   Some schools have a tutor-led period often called, for example, "Thought for the Day" or "Pause for Thought". Is any form of this arrangement part of your school's practice? Please tick:

never	
daily	
weekly	
monthly	

8   Is there a common source of any material used?

No [ ]

Yes (please specify)...

Comment (optional)..

9   Which of the following lead school assembly/worship? Please tick.

	daily	at least 1 per week	at least 1 per month	at least 1 per term	some times
headteacher/principal					
deputy headteacher					
year leader/co-ordinator					
department leader/co-ordinator					
head of house					
assistant head of house					
class teacher					
member of local clergy					
school governor					
parent					
visiting guest					
local religious group					
senior pupils					
class					
other.................................... (please specify)					

10   Are the following elements included?

	always	usually	some times	occas-ionally	never
prayer (general)					
Lord's prayer					
silent meditation/reflection					
hymns					
non-religious songs					
readings from the Bible					
from other sacred texts					
from non-religious sources					

Optional comment...

11   Do the following elements feature at the beginning and end of worship/assembly? Please tick as many as are appropriate:

classical music

non-classical music

silence

ordinary conversation

other

12   If hymns are included, which of the following are used?

hymn book   please specify

OHP

flip chart

memory

Optional comment ....

13   In whole school assembly (or in the most common form of large gathering if your school does not hold whole school assembly) do the pupils:

sit on the floor

sit on chairs

stand

senior pupils only sit on chairs

14   Are the pupils grouped by age   (Y/N)

15   Where do staff sit or stand?

at the side

at the back

at the front

within the pupil group

seated on the floor

16   Do any of the following usually provide a visual focus of attention?

flowers

candles

cross or crucifix

other religious symbol

17   Does the content of the Assembly/Worship include material from any of the following traditions?

	always	usually	some times	occas- ionally	never
Buddhism					
Christianity					
Hinduism					
Islam					
Judaism					
Sikhism					
Other					
(please specify)					

Optional comment...

18   What were the main themes of the Assembly/Worship held over the last 5 days? If your school has multiple assemblies, please indicate those attended by any one group e.g. year, house, class or department. Please consult with colleagues if necessary.

(i)...

(ii)...

(iii)...

(iv)...

(v)...

Optional comment...

19   Is a record of school worship maintained?

yes

no

don't know

Optional comment...

20   How are themes planned?

        no advance planning

        by leader responsible

        by delegated group of teachers

        by delegated group of teachers and pupils

Optional comment...

21   In what ways do pupils participate in the act of worship/assembly (in addition to potential participation in hymns and prayer/s)?

	always	usually	sometimes	occas-ionally	never
lead/perform individually					
lead/perform as part of a group					
answer questions					
provide musical accompaniment					
operate support aids (eg OHP)					
give reports (eg sports' results)					

Optional comment...

22   In addition to pupils, who attends assembly/worship?

	daily	weekly	monthly	termly	never
headteacher					
all teachers					
most teachers					
some teachers					
ancillary staff					
governors					
parents					
others					

23   To which of the following elements, identified by other teachers, does
      worship/assembly in your school contribute most frequently? Please tick (or number)
      as many items as you feel appropriate.

√	optional comment
sense of unity/community	
celebration of achievement	
spiritual awareness	
sense of identity and self worth	
opportunity for reflection	
introduction to worship	
moral development	
sense of wonder	
respect for religious and cultural diversity	
sense of a power greater than selves	
practice of self-discipline	
awareness of school's values	
development of social skills	
knowledge of cultural traditions	
development of religious understanding	
personal and social education	
health and education	
general notices	
general issues relating to pupil behaviour	
reprimands for infringement of rules, etc.	
other	

Optional further comment...

24   In your opinion, what do the pupils at your school gain from worship/assembly?

25   What are the major influences in your school on the provision of school worship?

26   What are the main cultural traditions of your pupils? Please tick as appropriate

	less than 25%	25 - 50%	50 - 75%	more than 75%
Buddhism				
Christianity				
Hinduism				
Islam				
Judaism				
Sikhism				
Other				

Optional comment...

27   Some teachers have suggested that a hidden element can be detected in their school's worship/assemblies, e.g. gender, hierarchy. Please comment if you have any insights on this feature in respect of your own school.

Have you any further comments you would like to add in response to the issues identified in this questionnaire?

Please make sure you have answered all the questions.

Thank you very much for your help.

APPENDIX 7

COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE USED AT SCHOOL 303

SCHOOL ASSEMBLY: THE ACT OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

There is no need to put your name on this questionnaire, but I would be grateful if you would write your year group and whether you are male or female.

Year group _____ female/male _____

1. Why do you think schools have Assemblies?.....................................

   _____

   _____

2. What are the most memorable themes you can recall?

   _____

   _____

3. What do you like best about assembly?

   _____

   _____

4. What do you dislike about assembly?

   _____

   _____

5. What, if any, are your favourite hymns?

   _____

   _____

6. What do you learn from assembly?

   _____

   _____

7. On the whole, do pupils benefit from having assemblies? If so, in what ways?

_____

_____

8. If you could change assemblies, what alterations would you make?

_____

_____

9. Sometimes, assembly is known as school worship. Do you think there is a difference between assembly and worship?

_____

_____

10. Do you think assembly should be part of the school day? Please give a reason for your answer.

_____

_____

11. What do you think are the most important aims or ideas or advice which your school tries to put across to the pupils?

_____

_____

12. Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make about collective worship/school assembly.

_____

_____

Thank you very much indeed for your help in completing this questionnaire: your ideas will be a great help to me in my research.

APPENDIX 8

Key to school reference code

Each school has an individual three figure number, followed by a combination of the following:

CI	County Infant
CF	County First
CJ	County Junior
CP	County Primary
C. Comb.	County Combined (5-12 years of age)
Midd. P.	Middle School deemed Primary
Midd. Sec.	Middle School deemed Secondary
SM	Secondary Modern
C11-16C	County 11-16 Comprehensive
C11-18C	County 11-18 Comprehensive
GM	Grant Maintained
GS	Grammar School
C. Spec.	County Special
Ind. Spec.	Independent Special
Ind.	Independent
CE	Church of England (Voluntary Aided)
CE/VC	Church of England Voluntary Controlled
RC	Roman Catholic (Voluntary Aided)

Examples: 038 CE/Comb = Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Combined

168 GM 11-16C = Grant Maintained 11-16 Comprehensive

APPENDIX 9

Table 22   School status: all schools as percentage of entire sample

n = 278	primary	secondary	special	cross-phase	total
county	115 = 41.4%	42 = 15.1%	11 = 4.0%	0	168 = 60.4%
V.C.	22 = 8.0%	1 = 0.4%	0	0	23 = 8.3%
V.A.	37 = 13.3%	11 = 4.0%	0	0	48 = 17.3%
G.M.	5 = 1.8%	13 = 4.7%	0	0	18 = 6.5%
independent	6 = 2.2%	8 = 2.9%	2 = 0.7%	5 = 1.8%	21 = 7.6%
total	185 = 66.5%	75 = 26.8%	13 = 4.7%	5 = 1.8%	278 = 100.0%

APPENDIX 10

Table 23   School location

	nos. of schools n = 278	nos. of pupils
small village (less than 500 people)	28 = 10.1%	2,322
large village	56 = 20.1%	16,364
small town (less than 50,000 people)	72 = 25.9%	29,043
large town or small city (50,000-200,000 people)	64 = 23.0%	30,583
major city centre	20 = 7.2%	9,294
major city suburb	38 = 13.7%	17,321

APPENDIX 11

Responses to question 26: What are the main cultural traditions of your pupils?

The design of this question was flawed: in particular the column which contained the descriptor *'less than 25%'* could be understood to include a zero percentage. Consequently, responses in this column could indicate either that these traditions are not represented in the school or that up to 25% of pupils belong to the named traditions. A further difficulty met in responses to this, and similar questions, was that teachers tended to mark only those features which were applicable to their schools: although most questions were answered by nearly all respondents, some elements of any single question might be omitted. Although the implication must be that the absence of a mark indicates an absence of that specific element, there is no certainty that this is the case. Responses to question 26 are presented below, omitting the results of the flawed first column. The table may be read according to the following examples:

(i)   68% of schools contain between 75-100% of pupils whose cultural tradition is Christian,   or   (ii) Between   25–50% of the pupils in 2.2% of schools are members of the Sikh cultural tradition.

Table 24   Schools containing pupils from major religious traditions.

n ‾ 278	25 - 50% pupils	50 - 75% pupils	75 - 100% pupils
Buddhism			
Christianity	28 = 10.1%	39 = 14.0%	188 = 68.0%
Hinduism	2 = 0.7%		
Islam	12 = 4.3%	4 = 1.4%	5 = 1.8%
Judaism	1 = 0.4%		
Sikhism	6 = 2.2%		

Question 13   In whole school assembly (or in the most common form of large gathering if your school does not hold whole school assembly) do the pupils:

sit on the floor

sit on chairs

stand

senior pupils only sit on chairs?

Table 25   Seating arrangements: pupils

	primary n = 185	secondary n = 75	cross-phase n = 18	total n = 278
all on floor	137 = 74.0%	18 = 24.0%	3 = 16.7%	158 = 56.8%
all on chairs	4 = 2.2%	45 = 60.0%	11 = 61.1%	60 = 21.6%
all standing	3 = 1.6%	3 = 4.0%	0	6 = 2.2%
on floor, chairs & standing	40 = 21.6%	9 = 12.0%	4 = 22.2%	53 = 19.1%
not answered	1 = 0.5%	0	0	1 = 0.4%

APPENDIX 13

Question 14: Are pupils grouped by age?

Table 26   Grouping of pupils by age

	primary n = 185	secondary n= 75	cross-phase n =18	total n = 278
grouped by age	146 = 79.0%	67 = 89.3%	8 = 44.4%	221 = 79.5%
not age grouped	19 = 10.3%	5 = 6.6%	7 = 38.9%	31 = 11.2%
ambiguous response	9 = 4.9%	2 = 2.7%	2 = 11.1%	13 = 4.7%
not answered	11 = 5.9%	1 = 1.3%	1 = 5.6%	13 = 4.7%

Question 15   Where do staff sit or stand?

Table 27   Seating arrangements: teachers

	primary n = 185	secondary n = 75	cross-phase n = 18	total n = 278
at side	114 = 61.6%	29 = 39%	1 = 5.5%	144 = 51.8%
at back	4 = 2.2%	3 = 4%	1 = 5.5%	8 = 2.9%
at front	5 = 2.7%	1 = 1.3%	1 = 5.5%	7 = 2.5%
in pupil group	5 = 2.7%	6 = 8.0%	11 = 61.1%	22 = 7.9%
on floor	0	0	0	0
combination of above	46 = 24.9%	36 = 48.0%	4 = 22.2%	86 = 31.0%
not attending	10 = 5.4%	0	0	10 = 3.6%
not answered	1 = 0.5%	0	0	1 = 0.4%

APPENDIX 15

Question 16   Do any of the following usually provide a visual focus of attention?

flowers

candles

cross or crucifix

other religious symbol

Table 28   **The provision of a visual focus**

	primary n = 185	secondary n = 75	cross-phase n = 18	total n = 278
flowers	4	2	0	6
candles	11	1	1	13
cross /crucifix	3	2	0	5
other religious symbol/s	2	3	0	5
combination of above	72	15	7	94
other display	4	0	0	4
none	15	25	5	45
ambiguous response	1	1	0	2
not answered	73	26	5	104

Question 11   Do the following elements feature at the beginning and end of worship/assembly?

classical music

non-classical music

silence

ordinary conversation

other

Table 29   Arrangements for entrance and exit

	primary n – 185	secondary n = 75	cross-phase n=18	total n = 278
classical music	14 = 7.6%	2 = 2.7%	1 = 5.6%	17 = 6.1%
non-classical	0	1 = 1.3%	0	1 = 0.4%
silence	7 = 3.8%	19 = 25.3%	0	26 = 9.4%
ordinary conversation	5 = 2.7%	8 = 10.6%	1 = 5.6%	14 = 5.0%
other	1 = 0.5%	1 = 1.3%	0	2 = 0.7%
all of above on different occasions	156 = 84.0%	42 = 56.0%	16 = 88.9%	214 = 77.0%
not answered	2 = 1.1%	2 = 2.7%	0	4 = 1.4%

APPENDIX 17

Question 9   **Which of the following lead school assembly/worship?**

headteacher/principal; deputy headteacher; year leader/co-ordinator; department leader/co-ordinator;

head of house; assistant head of house; class teacher; member of local clergy; school governor; parent;

visiting guest; local religious group; senior pupils; class; other.

Table 30   **leadership of collective worship on every day of the week**

	Headteacher	deputy	year leader	head of department	class teacher
primary: n=185	34 = 18.3%	3 =1.6%	1 = 0.5%	1 = 0.5%	3 = 1.6%
Secondary: n 75	4 = 5.3%	0	0	0	1 = 1.3%
cross-phase: n⁻18	1 = 5.5%	0	1 = 5.5%	0	0

APPENDIX 18

Table 31   **persons who lead collective worship at least once each week**

	primary n = 185	secondary n = 75	cross-phase n=18
head teacher	56 = 30.3%	34 = 45.3%	11 = 61%
deputy headteacher	104 = 56.2%	24 = 32.0%	8 = 44.4%
year leader	42 = 22.7%	36 = 48.0%	2 = 11.1%
dep't. co-ordinator	20 = 10.8%	6 = 8.0%	2 = 11.1%
head of house	11 = 5.9%	3 = 4.0%	0
class teacher	67 = 36.2%	6 = 8.0%	2 = 11.1%
member of clergy	20 = 10.8%	1 = 1.3%	0
school governor	1 = 0.5%	0	0
parent	0	0	0
visiting guest	3 = 1.6%	1 = 1.3%	0
local religious group	3 = 1.6%	2 = 2.7%	0
senior pupils	0	4 = 5.3%	0
class	30 = 16.2%	5 = 6.7%	0
other (e.g. chaplain)	0	7 = 9.3%	2 = 11.1%

APPENDIX 19

Table 32   **Table to show monthly, termly and occasional leadership: all schools**

	at least monthly		at least termly		sometimes	
head teacher	27 =	9.7%	9 =	3.2%	4 =	1.4%
deputy headteacher	58 =	20.9%	17 =	6.1%	9 =	3.2%
year leader	31 =	11.2%	12 =	4.3%	6 =	2.2%
department. co-ordinator	10 =	3.6%	9 =	3.2%	9 =	3.2%
head of house	2 =	0.7%	6 =	2.2%	2 =	0.7%
assistant head of house	1 =	0.4%	3 =	1.1%	0	
class teacher	43 =	15.5%	46 =	16.5%	33 =	11.9%
member of clergy	32 =	11.5%	37 =	13.3%	65 =	23.4%
school governor	2 =	0.7%	6 =	2.2%	18 =	6.5%
parent	2 =	0.7%	2 =	0.7%	3 =	1.1%
visiting guest	18 =	6.5%	40 =	14.4%	88 =	31.7%
religious group	9 =	3.2%	21 =	7.6%	38 =	13.7%
senior pupils	4 =	1.4%	13 =	4.7%	29 =	10.4%
class	22 =	7.9%	48 =	17.3%	51 =	18.3%
other (e.g. chaplain)	3 =	1.1%	1 =	0.4%	1 =	0.4%

- This is a multiple response question, so figures may not correspond with the total number of schools in the sample.

Question 22   In addition to pupils, who attends assembly/worship?

Table 33   Adult attendance: all schools

n − 278	daily		weekly		monthly		termly		never	
headteacher	137 =	49.3%	98 =	35.3%	7 =	2.5%	10 =	3.6%	1 =	0.4%
all teachers	82 =	29.5%	118 =	42.4%	4 =	1.4%	10 =	3.6%	3 =	1.1%
most teachers	34 =	12.2%	38 =	13.7%	2 =	0.7%	3 =	1.1%	2 =	0.7%
some teachers	27	9.7%	19 −	6.8%	4 =	1.4%	2 =	0.7%	3 =	1.1%
ancillary	38 =	13.7%	46 =	16.5%	8 =	2.9%	46 =	16.5%	38 =	13.7%
governors	2	0.7%	14 =	5.0%	18 =	6.5%	73 =	26.3%	37 =	13.3%
parents	4 =	1.4%	38 =	13.7%	19 =	6.8%	85 =	30.6%	31 =	11.2%
others	2	0.7%	4 =	1.4%	10 =	3.6%	29 =	10.4%	11 =	3.9%
not answered	8	2.9%								

- This is a multiple response question, so figures do not correspond with the total number of schools in the sample.

- Poorly phrased categories in the first column, e.g. 'all teachers'/ 'most teachers'/ 'some teachers' produce odd readings which may be difficult to follow. The figures can, for example, be read as follows: Whereas in 29.5% schools, all teachers attend collective worship every day, in 42.4% schools all teachers attend once a week. In 12.2% schools most teachers attend daily but in 9.7% schools, only some teachers attend daily.

APPENDIX 21

Question 21 In what ways do pupils participate in the act of worship/assembly (in addition to potential participation in hymns and prayer/s)?

Table 34   Pupil participation: all schools

n –278	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response
lead perform individually	3 – 1.1%	19 = 6.8%	151 = 54.3%	42 = 15.1%	13 = 4.7%	50 = 18.0%
as part of a group	4 = 1.4%	33 11.9%	161 = 57.9%	46 = 16.5%	5 = 1.8%	29 = 10.4%
answer questions	34 = 12.2%	98 =35.3%	70 – 25.2%	26 = 9.4%	7 = 2.5%	43 = 15.5%
provide musical accompaniment	9 – 3.2%	29 –10.4%	129 = 46.4%	50 = 18.0%	9 = 3.2%	52 = 18.7%
operate support aids e g.OHP	43 – 15.5%	30 =10.8%	48 = 17.3%	32 = 11.5%	37 = 13.3%	88 = 31.7%
give reports	9 3.2%	34 =12.2%	92 = 33.1%	40 = 14.4%	28 = 10.1%	75 = 27.0%

question not answered: 1 = 0.4%

APPENDIX 22

Table 35   **Pupil participation in primary schools**

n = 185	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response
lead/perform individually	2 = 1.1%	13 = 7.0%	114 = 61.6%	22 = 11.9%	4 = 2.2%	30 = 16.2%
as part of a group	2 = 1.1%	22 = 11.9%	125 = 67.6%	23 = 12.4%	0	13 = 7.0%
answer questions	32 = 17.3%	88 = 47.6%	45 = 24.3%	7 = 3.8%	0	6 = 3.2%
provide musical accompaniment	8 = 4.3%	20 = 10.8%	99 = 53.5%	24 = 13.0%	4 = 2.2%	30 = 16.2%
operate support aids e.g.OHP	43 = 23.2%	26 = 14.1%	34 = 18.4%	17 = 9.2%	6 = 8.6%	49 = 26.5%
give reports	7 = 3.8%	30 = 16.2%	70 = 37.8%	28 = 15.1%	%11 = 5.9	29 = 15.7%
no reply						0

Table 36   Pupil participation in secondary schools

n = 75	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response
lead/perform individually	0	5 = 6.7%	28 = 37.3%	18 = 24.0%	8 = 10.7%	13 = 17.3%
as part of a group	0	7 = 9.3%	31 = 41.3%	20 = 26.7%	5 = 6.7%	9 = 12.0%
answer questions	0	8 = 10.7%	17 = 22.7%	16 = 21.3%	7 = 9.3%	24 = 32.0%
provide musical accompaniment	1 = 1.3%	9 = 12.0%	20 = 26.7%	21 = 28.0%	5 = 6.7%	16 = 21.3%
operate support aids e.g.OHP	0	2 = 2.7%	10 = 13.3%	12 = 16.0%	17 = 22.7%	31 = 41.3%
give reports	1 = 1.3%	4 = 5.3%	14 = 18.7%	9 = 12.0%	16 = 21.3%	28 = 37.3%
no reply						3 = 4.0%

APPENDIX 24

Table 37   **Pupil participation in cross-phase schools**

n = 18	always	usually	sometimes	occasionally	never	no response
lead/perform individually	1 = 5.6%	1 – 5.6%	9 = 50.0%	2 = 11.1%	1 = 5.6%	4 = 22.2%
as part of a group	2 = 11.1%	4 = 22.2%	5 = 27.8%	3 = 16.7%	0	4 = 22.2%
answer questions	2 = 11.1%	2 = 11.1%	8 = 44.4%	3 = 16.7%	0	3 = 16.7%
Provide musical accompaniment	0	0	10 = 55.6%	5 = 27.8%	0	3 = 16.7%
operate support aids e.g.OHP	0	2 = 11.1%	4 = 22.2%	3 = 16.7%	4 = 22.2%	5 = 27.8%
give reports	1 = 5.6%	0	8 = 44.4%	3 = 16.7%	1 = 5.6%	5 = 27.8%o
no reply						0

APPENDIX 25

Question 20   How are themes planned?

Table 38   Planning arrangements

	Primary n = 185		secondary n = 75		other n = 18		total n = 278	
no advance planning	13 =	7.0%	11 =	14.7%	2 =	11.1%	26 =	9.4%
by leader responsible	122 =	65.9%	51 =	68.0%	10 =	55.6%	183 =	65.8%
by group of teachers	23 =	12.4%	3 =	4.0%	2 =	11.1%	28 =	10.1%
by group of teachers/ pupils	6 =	3.2%	1 =	1.3%	0		7 =	2.5%
combination	20 =	10.8%	7 =	9.3%	2 =	11.1%	29 =	10.4%
not answered	1 =	0.5%	2 =	2.7%	2 =	11.1%	5 =	1.8%

APPENDIX 26

Question 19   Is a record of school worship maintained?

Table 39   maintenance of records of worship

	Primary n = 185		secondary n = 75		cross-phase n = 18		total n = 278	
yes	135 =	73.0%	33 =	44.0%	10 =	55.6%	178 =	64.0%
no	44 =	23.8%	34 =	45.3%	7 =	38.9%	85 =	30.6%
don't know	2 =	1.1%	7 =	9.3%	0		9 =	3.2%
not understood	0		0		1 =	5.6%	1 =	0.4%
not answered	4 =	2.2%	1 =	1.3%	0		5 =	1.8%

Question 12   If hymns are included, which of the following are used?

Table 40   Arrangements made to support inclusion of hymns

	primary n − 185	secondary n = 75	cross-phase n = 18	Total n = 278
hymn book	31 = 16.8%	21 = 28.0%	8 = 44.4%	60 = 21.6%
OHP	52 = 28.1%	10 = 13.3%	4 = 22.2%	66 = 23.7%
flip chart	1 = 0.5%	1 = 1.3%	0	2 = 0.7%
memory	24 = 13.0%	0	3 = 16.7%	27 = 9.7%
OHP & memory	35 = 18.9%	0	2 = 11.1%	37 = 13.3%
combination above	38 = 20.5%	10 = 13.3%	1 = 5.6%	49 = 17.6%
hymns not used	1 = 0.5%	26 = 34.7%	0	27 = 9.7%
not answered	3 = 1.6°o	7 = 9.3%	0	10 = 3.6%

APPENDIX 28

Published hymn books listed by schools in response to question 12

A Time to Sing

Celebration Hymnal

Come and Praise

Come and Worship

English Hymnal

Hymns Ancient and Modern

Hymns for Today's Church

Hymns Old and New

Junior Praise

Mission Praise

Morning Has Broken

Someone's Singing

Songs of Praise

Spirit of Praise

With Cheerful Voice

APPENDIX 29

Published sources of material used in collective worship as identified in responses to question 8:

Assemblies for Primary Schools

Assemblies for Today

BBC broadcasts: Together/Something to Think About

Folens

Follow that Story!

Here I Am

Ideas for Assemblies

Join With Us

Moments for Reflection   *Heinemann*

101 Stories for School Assemblies

Primary Assembly File

Redemptorist bulletin sheets

Scripture Union material

Something to Think About

Stories for Assembly

Tapestry of Tales

Thought for the Day   (Secondary Heads Association)

Wisdom for Worship

APPENDIX 30

SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE (i) SECONDARY

301 Independent secondary school with a Methodist foundation

302 11-16 inner-city comprehensive school: majority of students Hindu

303 11-18 comprehensive city technology college with a Christian foundation

304 11-16 inner-city comprehensive school: majority of students Muslim

305 11-18 comprehensive school

306 11-18 comprehensive school

307 11-16 comprehensive school

308 11-16 Church of England Voluntary-Aided comprehensive school

309 11-18 Roman Catholic Voluntary-Aided comprehensive school

310 11-16 inner-city and multi-faith girls' comprehensive school

311 11-16 inner-city and multi-faith boys' comprehensive school

312 11-16 inner-city comprehensive school, mainly Sikh, Muslim and Hindu students

313 11-18 foundation (previously grant-maintained) grammar school

314 11-16 comprehensive school

SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE (ii) PRIMARY

315 community primary school

316 community 8-12 middle school

317 inner-city community primary school : mainly Hindu, Sikh and Muslim pupils

318 inner-city community primary school : mainly Hindu and Muslim pupils

319 foundation (Church of England voluntary controlled) 8-12 middle school

320 foundation (Church of England voluntary-aided) 5-12 combined school

321 community junior school

322 foundation (Roman Catholic voluntary-aided) primary school

323   community primary school

324   foundation (Church of England voluntary controlled) primary school

325   community primary school

326   community primary school

327   community infants' school

328   foundation (Church of England voluntary-aided) primary school

329   community infants' school: inner-city

330   community infants' school: inner-city

331   community primary school: inner-city, pupils mainly Hindu

332   community primary school: inner-city, pupils mainly Hindu

333   community primary school: inner-city, pupils mainly Hindu and Muslim, and
       Afro-Caribbean Christian

334   community 8-12 combined school

335   special school 5-16: MLD, SLD.

Table 41 The inclusion of traditional elements of worship by number of schools

	Primary			Secondary					
	Comm-unity	VC	VA	Comm-unity	VA	Grammar	Independ-ent	Other	Special
nos. schools	15	2	3	9	2	1	1	1	1
prayer	10	2	3	2	2		1	1	1
Lord's prayer	1		1		2		1	1	
meditation	2								
hymns	12	2	3		1		1	1	1
songs	2								
Bible					2				
other sacred text				1					

APPENDIX 32

TEACHING THEMES: PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Themes containing a religious element

<u>The Bible:</u>

....   shows the right way to live; serves as compass, map, food and light (visiting speaker, 326 CP)

....   the story of Mary Jones: the Bible is a special book and Jesus is a special friend (327 C.Inf)

....   provides meaning in life (315 CP)

....   a letter from God: contains the good news that Jesus is a friend forever (327 C.Inf)

<u>Redemption:</u>

...   *'God can make 'black hearts whiter than white''*   (visiting speaker, 316 Midd.P)

<u>Friendship:</u>

...   the qualities to look for in a friend; *'Jesus is still looking for friends today'* (316 Midd.P)

...   Simon Peter, the 'rock'; supporting and helping friends (316 Midd.P)

...   the value of special friends; kindness and goodness are more important than appearance (327 C.Inf)

...   the Good Samaritan; supporting fellow pupils who are being teased. (326 CP)

...   Jesus and the children; welcoming and caring for new arrivals in school (327 C.Inf)

Harvest:

...   Bible describes the harvest of life: love, kindness, friendship and peace. Produce what is good and reject the false (316 Midd.P)

Saints

...   St. Wilfred: gratitude for lives of service and prayer (visiting clergyman, 316 Midd.P)

...   St. Margaret: generosity and search for 'pearl' of true worth (visiting clergyman, 316 Midd.P)

Miscellaneous

...   the ability to learn is a special gift from God (class-led, 327 C.Inf)

...   story about the sun, the wind, the Indian and the sparrow; *'different kinds of weather are needed to make God's world grow'* (327 C.Inf)

...   the importance of a smile; *'Jesus does not mind what you wear but minds if you don't smile'* (321 CJ)

...   *'people are uniquely valuable because they are made by God with love and care and must be treated with the same love and care'* (322 RC/VA P)

...   *'our fingers remind us of all the different people we need to pray about'* (327 C.Inf)

...   *'we can never escape from the eyes of God'* (Hindu faith assembly: 317 CP)

...   the months of the year and some of their festivals (334 C. Comb)

...   Ancient Egypt; Moses (class-led, 325 CP)

Non-religious themes

Sports' Day: glory is not in winning but in taking part; running the race and keeping the faith; doing one's best and showing generosity; good winners and good losers (class-led assembly, 315 CP)

<u>Bonfire night:</u> shame and embarrassment, and the value of loving families (323 CP)

<u>Leavers' assembly:</u>

...   celebration of achievements, making a fresh start with courage; using God-given talents (315 CP)

...   celebration of year's work and leavers' assembly (330 C.Inf)

...   facing the new with support from friends (320 CE/VA Comb)

<u>Choices:</u>

...   life consists of choices and changes and being changed; Shakespeare's *The seven ages of man* (316 Midd.P)

...   cheating: truth in speech and honesty in action (319 CE/VC Midd.P)

...   superstition and making your own luck (331 CP)

<u>Curriculum:</u>

...   celebration of year's work (class-led, 315 CP)

...   appreciation of parents' unpaid work in looking after their children (class-led, 324 CE/VC P)

...   explorers; Christopher Columbus and Neil Armstrong (class-led, 326 CP).

...   Neil Armstrong; taking new steps and discovery never ends (333 CP)

...   VE Day; 50th. anniversary celebration (328 CE/VA P)

...   need for all to consider shared responsibilities and to fulfil role in life (315 CP)

...   celebration of term's work on the 50's and 60's, and drama about aliens (335 C.Spec)

...   a shared responsibility for the environment: cleaning a polluted rock pool (327 C.Inf)

...   a shared responsibility: clearing the environment of rubbish and litter (327 C.Inf)

...   summer holiday programme of events and presentation of cheque for sponsored cricket (332 CJ)

...   the importance of patience and perseverance (329 C.Inf)

APPENDIX 33

TEACHING THEMES: SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Themes containing a religious element

... building the school chapel; the need of an oasis for stillness and quiet as a source of refreshment (308 CE/VA 11-16C)

... Remembrance Day; remembrance, thanksgiving and commitment to fight injustice and return to spiritual values. (301 Ind.11-18)

... Permanent and impermanent dwellings; the Feast of Tabernacles; gratitude and consideration for stranger in the midst (314 C11-16C)

... Zacchaeus: '*without Jesus we are lost*' (303 CT 11-16C)

... Zacchaeus: '*one day, Jesus will stop and call your name, probably when you are dead. What does this story mean to you?*' (309 RC/VA11-18C)

... Ramadan; fasting as a self-discipline which develops inner character (304 C11-16C)

... Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday; Ramadan: self-discipline and developing the inner spirit (306 C11-18C)

... Jesus' temptations in the wilderness; his resurrection on Easter day: good defeats evil (305 C11-18C)

... rescue of a diabetic man by his daughter; the Ten Lepers: coincidence or providence in own lives (307 C11-16C)

Non-religious themes

... Christmas reading: excerpt from *Cider with Rosie*, by Laurie Lee (pupil-group, 313 GM/GS)

...	gossip and stereotype in the community (pupil-group, 302 C11-16C)
...	distribution of commendation certificates (305 C11-18C)
...	National Non-smoking Day (305 C11-18C)
...	International Women's Day and National Non-smoking Day (305 C11-18C)
...	pupils' responsibility to take action against vandalism in school (305 C11-18C)
...	different ways of using hands, for good or ill (305 C11-18C)
...	raising money for Comic Relief; pupils' raffle and slave auction (305 C11-18C)
...	distribution of commendation certificates (305 C11-18C)
...	class-led assembly; performance of a 'film' but with no identifiable theme (305 C11-18C)
...	appreciation of pupil talents and abilities (305 C11-18C)
...	planning to make good use of holiday weeks (310 C11-16C)
...	keeping promises (311 C11-16C) (repeated on three occasions) planning and preparation are essential for success; failing to plan means planning to fail (311 C11-16C)
...	*Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* (Richard Bach) '*those who have dreams, those who really try, those will succeed*' (pupil-group, 311: C11-16C)
...	Crimewatch; the consequences of crime (class-led, 312 : C11-16C)

The following descriptions relate in detail three acts of collective worship, from a secondary, a middle and a primary school, to demonstrate some of the variety which occurs. They are taken from field notes, and keep as close as possible to the leader's words where appropriate.

(i)   <u>School 305</u> (secondary school serving a small town and surrounding villages). Spring term: Year 7 pupils. 9 a.m. in a square drama studio, with tiered seating and black curtains. Leader: head of year.

The pupils entered in random clusters, with the earliest arrivals racing to the tiered seats on the right-hand side of the hall, furthest from the point of entry. They were quietly reprimanded by the head of year, who moved across to speak to them. Noisy chatter grew as more pupils arrived; this stopped quickly when a signal was given that the assembly was about to begin.

The head of year apologised for the absence of the Principal who was expected to lead the assembly on that day but was attending a conference, and indicated that he would therefore be substituting for him. He then greeted the pupils, but no response was customarily made.

The theme was introduced by a reminder that the previous day had been a 'National Day' and an inter-class poster competition had been held in the school which was judged by one of the deputy headteachers. The results were read out, in reverse order. This provoked a bubble of noise and comments from the pupils. Reference was also made to a pancake competition, and pupils were reminded that all scores would contribute to the end of year award cups.

The leader then moved on to introduce the main teaching theme by telling the pupils that, although he had a wide experience of different kinds of teaching, most of his work was as a biology teacher with a particular interest in animal behaviour. He wanted to tell the listeners about an unusual customer found in the park onto which the school opened. The following is the story he told, reported in words as close as possible to the original:

'I want to tell you about an unusual creature found in the park which can also be found in streets everywhere, often behind trees. The female is more common, especially in the early evening. They are quite shy, particularly of human beings, and most especially of two categories of big human beings: those who carry books around and those who are conspicuous by standing outside during wet breaktimes in their overcoats. The creature is not solitary, but huddles in groups of three or four. They have a remarkable ability to withstand pain, especially heat to their front paws, and a remarkably short memory. They also breathe fire. (Pupil: "Could be dragons!" - followed by laughter from others). Smoke comes from their mouths and noses. They are intelligent tiny creatures, but at certain periods of the day they lose their memories and acquire an ability to withstand pain. When a human being approaches, the fire-breathing stops, and when questioned, the creature's memory lapses: "Don't know! Not fire-breathing, not me!" The evidence is there: they have their paws in their pockets, holding the fire-stick, but when questioned, standing huddled in the rain, burning their paws, they have forgotten! They think they are very cool, but biologically, they're very strange.

'Let me tell you a story about an old fire-breather. Tom is hospitalised, in a wheelchair which is difficult to manoeuvre. He is proud of his old but black teeth. He boasts that he began firebreathing at 11, and by 14 was smoking 40 a day. He has the loudest cough in the hospital, but he cannot move far: every 30 minutes he uses an

oxygen mask. Then his fingers stretch out for a cigarette, saying "Why stop something you've always enjoyed."

'Yesterday was National Non-smoking Day. I hope, after the information provided earlier this week, that you have some awareness of the seriously harmful effects of smoking.'

The leader then reminded the pupils of a forthcoming auction of promises for Red Nose Day Comic Relief, when seventy or more slaves would be operating in the school, who would be auctioned for 10p. per ticket, with all proceeds going to the Red Nose Fund. Pupils were then asked to remain seated until they were dismissed.

(ii) **School 316** (Middle school in small city: small minority of Muslim pupils)
Autumn term: Years 3-7. 9 a.m. in a rectangular hall, used also for P.E., with a raised platform. Leader: local vicar, Father Syms, introduced by deputy headteacher (male). No entrance or exit music on this occasion.

Introduction: The leader asked the pupils to identify the names of saints: Patrick, James, George, Alban, Joseph, Amy, Anne, and Catherine were suggested. Another, the vicar remarked, is St. Margaret. *'Her day is the 16th. November. She was born in 1046, the grand-daughter of a Saxon king but the country had been invaded by the Vikings so she was born and reared in Scotland. She married Malcolm III of Scotland and was a powerful influence on her husband, sons and daughters. Society then was coarse and brutal, but her court was civilised, even in 1066. Margaret was a good Christian: she prayed and pushed her husband to influence and reform the church. She realised that although she was the queen* (a transparency showing a coloured drawing from a window in Edinburgh Cathedral was shown on the overhead projector at this point), *she gave much money away and worked really hard to bring God's joy and happiness to the people of Scotland.*

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'Margaret means 'pearl' (pupils were shown a string of pearls. A pearl is made of grit and nacre. They were more important in Jesus' days. He told a story about a pearl of great value, and about a man who sold all he had to buy it.

'What is so important in our lives? You [i.e. children] are probably warned by parents and teachers that possessions - bigger car, or house, or game, competition or money - are not the source of happiness. Some people think that power, not money, is the answer, but many people are ill through stress caused by their work. Your possessions, your house or yacht, are of no worth: one day you will be dead and God will ask "What did you do with all your money?" Think of St. Margaret and remember to give, and try to find out what is of true worth.'

(This story taken from *Church Times*)

Hymn (from *Come and Praise*, no. 55) 'Colours of day'

Prayer: *'... gave Margaret an earthly throne: may we share with her an heavenly throne.'*

Subsequent discussion led by teacher with her class of year 5 pupils. She asked what the message of assembly was. The replies were: (i) *'Don't squander your money now; you'll need it later'* (ii) *'pearls'* (iii) *'cost doesn't mean value'*. The teacher responded by saying that things (objects, possessions) are as nothing if you're not a good person: this is most important. *'Think about Christmas and asking for expensive presents, and pushing Mum to spend more than she has. This might make Mum unhappy. The most important thing is to keep Mum happy by not moaning for expensive toys which won't really make you happy. Soon it will be time to go home. Mum will be in the kitchen getting your tea. You have lovely homes, clothes, food. Toys and presents are not really important.'*

(The timetabled lesson then followed.)

(iii)   <u>School 315</u>   Primary school in small town. Summer term, 10 a.m.

Classes 3 - 6. Leader: headteacher

Hall was in use for P.E. until it was almost time for assembly. Walls lined with PE equipment. Displays on walls concerned with making life in school happier, e.g. 'smile and be happy'; 'stop fighting; be nice to friends', etc. On another board, 'The story of two monsters or the problems we can have if we don't listen'. One board of collaged faces. One display at the front of the hall, hand-written in green felt-tip pen:

'And today, today,

The children are singing

Praise to the sun, the sky, the earth.

We're going to raise a big green umbrella

Care for the world now we know what it's worth

And the children are singing today'.

Recorded music played on entrance and exit.

Arrival of pupils: entered quietly, by class but not in lines, and sat where they chose, space being the only constraint. First arrivals sat on three benches arranged in semi-circular fashion towards the rear of the hall: others sat on the floor.

Jehovah's Witness children not in attendance.

No teachers present - given the option of attendance.

Hymn *'Give me oil in my lamp'*   (*Come and Praise*, no. 29: pupils had hymn books, (approximately one copy between two or three children) and were accompanied by three girls on recorders).

Theme: A tray of varied candles displayed at the front of the hall, with one large pink one lit before the children entered.

The 'story' described the attitudes of different groups of candles to life. *The lighted candle thought he was the chief - wise, knowing, clever, stable and solid. One group represented the tough guys; another those concerned with appearance. The third group was the fashion-conscious ones, and the fourth was the intelligentsia, who ended up arguing over the correct way to peel a banana, to tie shoes, etc. The last group was those who agreed with everybody and enjoyed a gossip. Then along came an outsider who suggested that they should instead consider their shared functions, and he lit all the unlit candles so that they could all fulfil their role in life - but he could not stay.* (Headteacher said later that some pupils had identified Jesus at this point, but he had never mentioned the name).

The children were then given a few minutes to think quietly while music played. Prayer and hymn (which children did not know well). Children dispersed as class groups.

Pupils' response - identified with most powerful characteristics, e.g. the lighted 'leader' candle ('James!' was suggested) and various names were called out for the 'hard guys'. General slight air of restlessness; some of the boys were kicking others behind them during the first hymn. Headteachers' liking for the children and sense of ease in his position seemed to come across; appears very relaxed in his role.

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