

Religious Education  
in Great Britain,  
Sweden and Russia.

Presentations,  
Problem Inventories and  
Commentaries

**Texts from the PETER Project**

**edited by Edgar Almén and Hans Christian Øster**

**LINKÖPING STUDIES IN  
RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
NO 1**

**LINKÖPING UNIVERSITY ELECTRONIC PRESS  
2000**

The publishers will keep this document on-line on the Internet (or its possible replacement network in the future) for a period of 25 years from the date of publication barring exceptional circumstances as described separately.

The on-line availability of the document implies a permanent permission for anyone to read, to print out single copies and to use it unchanged for any non-commercial research and educational purpose. Subsequent transfers of copyright cannot revoke this permission. All other uses of the document are conditional on the consent of the copyright owner. The publication also includes production of a number of copies on paper archived in Swedish university libraries and by the copyright holder/s. The publisher has taken technical and administrative measures to assure that the on-line version will be permanently accessible and unchanged at least until the expiration of the publication period.

For additional information about the Linköping University Electronic Press and its procedures for publication and for assurance of document integrity, please refer to its WWW home page: <http://www.ep.liu.se>

Linköping Studies in Religion and Religious Education, No 1  
*Series editor: Edgar Almén*  
Linköping University Electronic Press  
Linköping, Sweden, 2000

ISBN 91-7219-641-6 (print)  
ISSN 1404-3971 (print)  
[www.ep.liu.se/ea/rel/2000/001](http://www.ep.liu.se/ea/rel/2000/001) (WWW)  
ISSN 1404-4269 (online)  
Printed by: UniTryck, Linköping

© 2000, the authors

This is a somewhat edited version.  
Earlier, preliminary editions were copied 1996 and 1997.

<b>Introduction</b>	
Hans Christian Øster, Linköpings universitet, Sweden	5
 <b><i>Presentations and Problem Inventories:</i></b>	
<b>Religious Education in Britain</b>	
William K Kay, Trinity College Carmarthen, Wales	12
<b>Religious Education in Sweden</b>	
Edgar Almén, Linköpings universitet, Sweden	60
<b>Religious Education in Russia</b>	
Vladislav Arzhanoukhin, Alexander I Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St Petersburg	92
 <b><i>External Comments:</i></b>	
<b>Reflections on Religious Education in Russia, Sweden and England</b>	
Ninian Smart, University of California Santa Barbara	102
<b>Religious Education at the Crossroad - Some Personal Reflections on Recent Development and Current Trends in Great Britain, Russia and Sweden as Reported in the PPIs of the PETER-Project</b>	
Berit Askling, Linköpings universitet, Sweden	107
 <b><i>Internal Comments:</i></b>	
<b>British Comment on the Swedish PPI</b>	
William K Kay, Trinity College Carmarthen, Wales	116
<b>British Comment on the Russian PPI</b>	
William K Kay, Trinity College Carmarthen, Wales	121
<b>Some Second Thoughts on Religious Education in Great Britain, Russia, and Sweden</b>	
Edgar Almén and Carl Axel Aurelius, Linköpings universitet	125
<b>Russian Comments on the British and Swedish PPIs</b>	
Vladislav Arzhanoukhin, Alexander I Herzen University, and Elena Kitaeva, St Petersburg University	139



# INTRODUCTION

by Dr Hans Christian Øster  
Linköpings universitet, Sweden

## How It All Began and What Happened Afterwards

In November 1994 I visited St. Petersburg with a group of teachers of Religion from Sweden. Our main aim with the trip was to study the situation of our subject: Religion or Religious Education in the post-Soviet society. We had a very interesting study tour and came home with many new and challenging impressions. One of the experiences we learnt was that following the collapse of the Soviet Union with the compulsory education of scientific atheism in the educational system, nothing had really been introduced to replace this subject in the schools. (For a detailed description of the situation please see the Russian PPI). Voluntary religious education in the hands of different voluntary groups of parents aided by the church or simply run by the church was to be found at various places but never to the extent that you could speak of any religious education covering different religious opinions in the sense as we were used to. The content of this religious education did not look as anything we were used to in Scandinavia - the non-confessional religious education which has developed over the decades in our countries. (See the Swedish PPI for further information of this development.)

However we experienced from the persons we met during our visit to Russia a genuine interest for our way of teaching religion in Scandinavia. Among those were some officials attached to the Alexander I. Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St. Petersburg which previously during the Soviet area was the prominent leading Pedagogical Institute of the nation and today still leading out in all aspects of educational research and innovation and the consulting institution to the

Ministry of Education in Moscow. They were particularly interested in the way we handled the question of teaching religion to our students.

Upon the return to Linköpings universitet I raised the question of the possible help we could give the above mentioned institution in finding their own way to establishing a non-confessional religious education programme in Russia and soon after we were approached officially with such a request from the Herzen University. My colleagues, Dr. Edgar Almén, at that time Director of the Faculty Board of Teacher Education and Educational Research, and Dr. Carl Axel Aurelius, then Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, found the possibility of such an enterprise interesting and we worked on the idea and presented it to several other officers at the university.

After a short visit to Herzen University in February by the Director of the International Secretariat of the university, Margareta Sandewall, Edgar Almén and myself where we discussed the possibility of such a project and together with these representatives of the Herzen University, The vice-rector Professor Vladimir Kozyrev and Dr. Vladislav Arzhanoukhin, we had come to the decision to look for funding for such an enterprise.

One interesting sponsor for a project helping the Russian Educational institutions in developing a non-confessional religious education in accordance with their own society, history and tradition proved to be the TEMPUS foundation with the aid programme of the EU.

This programme Tempus (Trans European cooperation for higher education) was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on May 7 1990. The Tempus Tacis is a European Union programme designed to stimulate cooperation with the New Independent States and Mongolia in the restructuring of their higher education systems. It forms part of the Tacis Programme, the overall EU initiative which fosters the development of harmonious and prosperous economic and political links between the European Union and these partner States. In 1995 a total of 11 Partner States took part in the Tempus Tacis.

Tempus Tacis is a “bottom-up” programme responsive to the specific needs of individual institutions and Partner States. Projects are formu-

lated by universities in the New Independent States and Mongolia in cooperation with their partners from the European Union, where the EU universities supply their know-how and experience. We found the Tempus Tacis programme very attractive and decided to apply for funding for a project as the one we had been negotiation with the Herzen representatives about. However the deadline was in April 1995 for such an application and rapidly approaching. Two major decisions had to be taken. Who would author such an application and who would we consider as our third partner in such an important enterprise?

Our Department took on the job of in the very short time available to produce an acceptable application for the Tempus Tacis Programme, and our long time partner The Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales Lampeter, with its head, Professor Paul Badham agreed on acting as the third partner. As local coordinator in Lampeter Dr. Oliver Davis, senior lecturer in Theology and former student at Herzen University and consequently fluent Russian speaking was naturally appointed and as the local coordinator in St. Petersburg Dr. Vladislav Arzhanoukhin was appointed by his institution. Finally we submitted the application for Tempus Tacis funds for the project called **PETER** - Promoting and Establishing a Teacher Education programme on non-confessional Religious studies.

Both partner institutions were happy with the application and the Ministry of Education in Moscow through the First Deputy Minister, Mr. V.A.Bolotov gave the project its full support writing: " We sincerely hope that the implementation of such a course will help to improve the state of education in the field of morals and ethics studies". A very concerned EU parliamentarian remarked that the importance of such a project for the progress of change and the formation of stability in the Russian society cannot be overestimated.

The PETER project which now has been in effect more than one year has as its main objectives the above mentioned aim, is however not only to be considered as a help rendered to the beneficiary institution, The Alexander I Herzen State Pedagogical University, but should certainly be viewed as a project which gives back to all the participant institutions valuable material and results. Thus the objective of the Pre-Jep project was mainly to prepare for the development of a model for a

teacher education programme on Non-confessional Religious Studies at the Herzen University and preparing for a possible Joint European Project (Jep) helping with the development and establishment of a course for Russian schools. In order to secure this and to be sure that we did not merely hand over a finished module of educational programme based on a western cultural context we chose a special approach for obtaining the overall objective. This should be done by defining presentations and problem inventories (PPI:s) from the three participating countries and developing together a teacher-training programme in Non-confessional Religious Education at Herzen. We never got round to the last item. Time did not permit this and on the way the Russian partners expressed their view that this should be done by themselves without interference from the partners abroad. In this respect the Pre-Jap. did not succeed, however the work is on its way and it seems that the Department of History of Religion is working on this at present.

Regarding the PPI:s, in November and December 1995 a group of students, which in comparison with the international level of university education would be classified as post graduate students, went to St. Petersburg for fact-finding through partaking in lectures at Herzen University and interviewing teachers and students on their views on religion and fundamental questions of life and on the subject of non-confessional religious education. These students wrote a report on their findings, "Cabbage and Caviar, Views on Life, Mankind and Religion among Young People in St. Petersburg - a City of Contradictions". The authors Helen Elofson, Karin Eriksson, Pernilla Gustafsson, Karolina Johansson and Karin Öster did a good commendable work rendering an important contribution to the work of the PPI:s.

In December 1995 a course on "Modern theological interpretations in the west and the east on the relations between liturgy and Christian faith and between liturgy and social responsibility" was given by Dr. Arzhanoukhin and Docent Almén jointly. The course attracted considerably attention and was considered to be important and very successful.

Then in January - March 1996 a group of 4 persons headed by Dr. Arzhanoukhin visited University of Wales Lampeter and Trinity College Carmarthen for studies in Religious Education and Theology.

Each partner in the project has produced a document on the situation of the Religious Education in their respective country, which has been read discussed and commented upon by all the other parties involved. A conference in May 1996 in St. Petersburg was for a great part set aside for such discussions. Considering the produced material we found that it would be desirable that a wider circle of readers should take part of and benefit from this material than the persons involved directly in the project. Consequently we have decided to publish the results of the first year of the PETER project in this book.

The Russian contribution is written by Docent Vladislav Arzhanoukhin, doctor of Philosophy and now Head of the Department of History of Religion at the Alexander I Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St Petersburg. Dr. Arzhanoukhin has been the contact person in the PETER project for Russia from the early start and has a deep knowledge and experience of Religious subjects in the Russian society at present and in the past. Furthermore he has lectured outside Russia at a number of occasions in different countries among others, Sweden and United Kingdom.

The Welsh (UK) PBI is a joint product of several scholars at The University of Wales Lampeter and Trinity College Carmarthen, the main contributor being Dr William K. Kay, a well known researcher in field of religious education and lecturer at Trinity College.

Finally the Swedish PBI is mainly a product of Dr. Edgar Almén, now Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies and formerly Director of the Faculty Board Secretariat of Teacher Training and Educational Research.

Following the three PPI:s are the comments on these texts reflecting the discussions carried out together at the conference in May 1996 and the discussions and reflections at each local institution. These are mainly the work of the following authors mentioned above. From Russia Dr. Vladislav Arzhanoukhin together with Dr Elena Kitaeva, from United Kingdom Dr. William K. Kay, and from Sweden Dr. Edgar Almén and Dr. Carl Axel Aurelius jointly.

Furthermore two prominent contributors from outside the consortium have kindly agreed to give their comments on all the PPI:s. First Professor Berit Askling, then Vice Rector at Linköpings universitet, has made her contribution, "Religious Education at the Crossroad", followed by "Reflections of Religious Education in Russia, Sweden and England" by Professor Ninian Smart, University of California Santa Barbara. These two contributors who accepted to take part in the Pre-Jep conference in St. Petersburg mentioned above where they both paid an extraordinary valuable contribution are in their own right unique international well known experts in their fields with a long experience of education at different levels of society.

Professor Askling is professor of education, then at Linköpings universitet, now at Göteborgs universitet. She is interested in curriculum theory in general and in teacher education. She is also internationally well known as an expert in quality management in Higher education.

To have Professor Smart as contributor to the project is a very great favour. After many years of active participation in the forming of the Religious Education in United Kingdom Professor Smart holds the J F Rowny Chair of Comparative Religion at University of California.

### **What will happen after this?**

During the Pre-Jep Conference in St. Petersburg in May 1996 it was clear to the partners that we wanted to continue with the project though in a somewhat different perspective. It was also clear to all of us that in such a continuation cooperation much of the exchange of students and training of staff in the future would be the task of the British partner in the consortium due to the English language. We have noted that there are not yet so many students and teachers at Herzen in St. Petersburg who masters the Swedish language. This meant that the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at The University of Lampeter would be the main coordinating institution in a coming Tempus JEP (Joint European Project) covering the following 3 years. This was accepted by all and especially the institution involved. An application for a Jep with extensively detailed activities of exchange and mutual cooperation has been produced and sent to the TEMPUS organisation. This means that in the case of obtaining this funding the next 3 years will be filled with

activities aiming at supporting the Russian partner in developing the Religious Education of non-confessional orientation at their University. This looks very promising and besides the positive effects we only can imagine this will have for the above mentioned institution it will certainly also have a great impact on the institutions represented in this cooperation.

The Pre-Jep Peter which once started as a project focusing on the educational change in both university and schools has gradually turned into a project focusing mainly on the situation at the university level, the development of courses and curricula in the field of Religious Studies. From all sides in the consortium there are serious endeavours for pursuing this goal. By assisting the Russian partner in this the western partners benefit greatly. The exchange of ideas, staff and students, the impact of mutual sharing of courses, the discussions taking place at all levels render the institutions valuable possibilities of creativity and growth. This will continue even in the situation when the consortium will have to find the funding for the future cooperation themselves, though perhaps not at the same pace, and not even in the same frame as proposed in the Jep application.

Especially in the latter part of the Pre-Jep period things began to happen very fast and presently the prospects for the courses of Religious Studies at the Herzen University seems to be extraordinary good. The originally planned course in the P-Jep for a 60 hours course to be taught in 1996/97 which at the time of the project planning was the maximum the Russian partners could imagine would be possible to plan for has been exceeded by the reality of a sum of totally 750 hours to be taught this year and a prospect of a 2 year Bachelor Course in Religion to start in 1997.

The PETER project from its humble start as an imaginary concept among the partners of the consortium has proved to be a valuable and prospective reality in the development of the structural changes in the partner University in Russia, The Alexander I Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia St. Petersburg and nobody knows the influence this may have on the education in the nation or how many off-springs will emerge out of this humble start.

# PRESENTATION AND PROBLEM INVENTORY: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN GREAT BRITAIN

**Main contributor:**

**Dr William K Kay**

**Trinity College, Carmarthen, Wales**

1	<u>The history of religious education in the schools of England and Wales...</u>	13
1.1	Introduction.....	13
1.2.1	Church and state in education.....	13
1.2.2	Agreed syllabuses.....	15
1.2.3	Church of England and Roman Catholic theologies of education.....	15
1.3.1	The 1944 Education Act and the pattern of schooling.....	16
1.3.2	The 1944 Education Act and religious education.....	16
	Essential changes introduced by the Act.....	16
	Dual system strengthened.....	16
	Categories of church school.....	18
	Components of religious education.....	19
	The role of the agreed syllabus.....	20
1.4.1	Factors leading to change in religious education: 1944-1988.....	21
1.4.2	Theological factors.....	21
1.4.3	Social factors.....	23
1.4.4	Educational factors.....	25
1.4.5	Regional factors.....	27
1.4.6	Psychological factors.....	28
1.4.7	Philosophical factors.....	30
1.4.8	Methodological factors.....	33
1.4.9	Individual project factors.....	36
1.5	Summary.....	39
2	<u>The 1988 Education Reform Act and religious education.....</u>	40
	Essential changes introduced by the Act.....	40
	The choice facing schools: local or national government.....	40
	The National Curriculum.....	41
	Strengthening the place of Christianity.....	42
2.1	Changes in procedures for agreed syllabuses.....	43
2.2	Long-term effects of the 1988 Education Reform Act.....	46
	Classroom methods.....	50
	References.....	53

# **1 The history of religious education in the schools of England and Wales**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 briefly consider the historical background to the current state of religious education in England. Sections 1.4.1 to 1.5 give attention to changes after the 1944 Education Act. Reference to the situation before 1944 is, however, necessary to explain the role of the churches and the existence of agreed syllabuses which are key features within the educational system in England and Wales. Section 2 gives attention to changes after new legislation in 1988.

### **1.2.1 Church and state in education**

The state-maintained system education in England and Wales has its beginnings in the charitable work of the churches in the 19th century. The churches began to educate the nation's children at the beginning of the 19th century but it was not until 1833 that a small sum of public money was voted to assist them. This money was given only as a contribution towards building costs and was divided between the two main church groupings active in the field of education. Over the next forty years government spending in this area increased, but the main bulk of educational costs continued to be carried by the churches. Because the churches had taken the original initiative to build schools, it was taken for granted from the very outset that schools would provide religious education and conduct acts of worship.

Through legislation in 1870 the government took a more active role in educational provision. Industrialised large cities with growing populations needed schools which the churches did not have the resources to provide. As a result the government decided to 'fill the gaps' by initiating a new kind of school which was to be under the jurisdiction of local boards (or committees) and funded by public money. However, in order to allow the educational work of the churches to continue and so that church schools should not be disadvantaged by the new arrangements, both types of school were, in theory, to receive similar sums of public

money: the difference was that board schools received money from local taxation (or rates) and the churches continued to receive money from central government. Relatively small fees for education in both kinds of school were charged to parents.

The 1870 Education Act set up what came to be known as the 'dual system' of education. Although there were two kinds of school in receipt of public money (hence the notion of duality), these two kinds of school (church and board schools) were part of a single overall system subject to government inspection.

According to the 1870 Education Act, board schools could decide whether or not to include religious teaching. However, by this time religious teaching had been so established as part of general expectation that few board schools tried to exclude the subject, and those which did try produced great opposition.

Moreover, the 1870 Education Act established two important principles. First, the act forbade the teaching of any religious formula distinctive of any particular denomination in schools which had not been set up by the churches. Second, the 'conscience clause' allowed parents to withdraw their children from religious teaching and worship simply on the grounds of conscience, that is, parents were not obliged to give any public reason for the withdrawal of their children. There were also rules to make sure that children who were withdrawn were not discriminated against by school or church authorities.

The principle of the 'conscience clause', however, was wider than this because it embraced teachers as well. Teachers who objected to worship or religious instruction were not obliged to participate.

In the years which followed, government expenditure on education increased and church contributions diminished. However, because political sensitivities decreased, public money for education from the beginning of the 20th century could be given to both types of school from local as well as from national taxation. School boards, which at their smallest might only have responsibility for a single school, were replaced in 1902 by *local education authorities* (LEAs) which had a responsibility for

many more schools and formed part of a larger administrative unit within the structure of local government.

Throughout the period after 1870, when churches began to find schools too expensive to maintain, they considered passing their responsibilities over to the state. However, the kind of religious education to be given in state schools was a matter of concern to them. The device which helped to solve this problem was the 'agreed syllabus'.

### **1.2.2 Agreed syllabuses**

From 1924 Cambridgeshire's local education authority worked out an agreed syllabus of religious instruction in consultation with the religious denominations. This syllabus was quickly adopted by another seven counties. Where an agreed syllabus was in use, Anglicans were much more willing to transfer their schools to local authority control. The agreed syllabus was, as the name implies, one which was agreed by those involved in education and it had a particularly *local* appeal. The balance of religious opinion and the strength of denominational allegiance varied locally; agreed syllabuses were able to reflect this.

### **1.2.3 Church of England and Roman Catholic theologies of education**

For reasons dating back to the Reformation and beyond the Church of England is legally established. The monarch is the temporal head of the Church of England and some of its bishops sit in the House of Lords. As a result the Church of England has seen itself as having a pastoral responsibility for the whole nation and its schools are an extension of this responsibility. Anglican schools are therefore provided both for those who attend Anglican churches and for those who do not do so (Francis, 1993). By contrast the Roman Catholic church is not established and has seen itself as providing education particularly for its own members. Its aim was to ensure that every Catholic child received a Catholic schooling from a Catholic teacher (see Canon Law, number 1372).

These differences were between the two main church groups with a stake in education were expressed more clearly after the 1944 Education Act.

### **1.3.1 The 1944 Education Act and the pattern of schooling**

The legislative scope of the 1944 Education Act was considerable. It brought into being free secondary education for all children, but it did so on the basis of the child's 'age, ability and aptitude'. In practice a process of selection was soon adopted by local education authorities and the most intellectually able 20 per cent of children in any year group were selected to attend Grammar or Technical schools while the remaining 80 per cent attended Secondary Modern Schools. The Grammar schools pursued an academic curriculum; the Technical schools pursued a technical curriculum related to industrial processes; the Secondary Modern schools were more slanted towards practical subjects.

### **1.3.2 The 1944 Education Act and religious education**

#### **Essential changes introduced by the Act**

This section presents the legal structures and administrative changes which were inaugurated by the 1944 Education Act. It is important to grasp the general shape of the changes brought in by this major piece of legislation. In essence:

- \* the dual system was strengthened;
- \* church schools within the dual system could choose either controlled or aided status (explained later);
- \* religious education was made up of two components, collective worship and classroom instruction;
- \* schools provided by the churches became known as voluntary schools
- \* schools not provided by the churches became known as county schools

- \* in all schools (except the aided category), classroom instruction was given according to an agreed syllabus.

Moreover, in the period approximately 1944-1965, religious education was strongly Christian in character. What, then, were the reasons for the legal and public support of confessional religious education during this period?

During the 1939-45 war there was considerable public support for religion in schools. A Gallup poll carried out in 1944 in Britain demonstrated that 56% of the population agreed that 'religious education should be given a *more* defined place in the life and work of schools' (italics added) and this was despite the fact that scarcely any schools had availed themselves of the right they had gained in 1870 to dispense with religious instruction (Murphy, 1971: 115). A government policy document, *Educational Reconstruction* (1943), had accurately reported 'there has been a very general wish, not confined to representatives of the churches, that religious education should be given a more defined place in the life and work of schools'. The reasons for this stemmed in part from the feeling that democracy was strengthened by Christianity. All four European dictators in the 1940s - Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and Franco - persecuted and suppressed the churches to a greater or less extent (Norwood, 1943: 84; Snelling, 1973: 26; Russell, 1976; Tilby, 1979).

In 1944 the churches owned 51% of the schools (Souper and Kay, 1982: 14) and, had the state attempted to buy all the church school buildings, huge public expenditure would have been needed. On the other hand, the churches did not have the financial resources to increase the size of their schools to accommodate the extra number of pupils generated by the 1944 Act's raising of the school leaving age. Consequently it was to the advantage of both church and state to strengthen the partnership expressed in the dual system.

### **Dual system strengthened**

All schools within the dual system, therefore, were treated in a similar way. They were similarly funded, similarly administered through the 146 local education authorities and, at secondary level, taught similar secular subjects in preparation for the same public exams.

For the first time, too, each school, subject to the 'conscience clause', was required by law to begin the school day with collective worship, usually in the school hall. Unless they were withdrawn, all pupils were present for hymn singing, a short talk given by one of the staff (usually the headteacher) and prayers. The whole service lasted about fifteen minutes and was not distinctive of any religious denomination in county schools<sup>1</sup>, though the tone was unmistakably Christian (Souper and Kay, 1982). Both church aided and controlled schools were permitted to provide denominational worship in accordance with their trust deed.

### Categories of church school

Church schools were allowed to choose one of two categories created by the Act. If the school chose *aided* status, then the church's contributions to the building costs were higher, but the degree of freedom allowed with school worship and religious education was greater. If the school chose *controlled* status, then there were no contributions to building costs, but the degree of freedom allowed and religious education (but not school worship) was reduced. The teachers' salaries of both kinds of church school were met by the state.

The Roman Catholic church selected the option of aided status; the Church of England selected both kinds of status. The reasons for these differences are expressed in section 1.2.3. The result of these choices was that the balance of provision between county, aided and controlled schools varied greatly from one part of the country to another. For example, Francis (1987) demonstrated that in the mid 1980s primary school provision still varied considerably. In Lancashire primary schools were 41% county, 7% Church of England controlled, 27% Church of England aided, 22% Catholic aided and 3% owned by other groups. In Derbyshire primary schools were 69% county, 18% Church of England controlled, 7% Church of England aided, 5% Catholic aided and 1% owned by other groups.

---

<sup>1</sup> The denominational worship which might be offered by controlled schools depended on their trust deeds ; Section 26 of the act stipulated that in county schools collective worship should not be distinctive on any particular religious denomination.

Aided schools could offer denominational school worship and denominational religious education. The collective worship offered in aided schools was in the hands of the school's governing body. Some Anglican aided schools had regular but infrequent celebrations of Holy Communion to which parents were invited and some might 'worship as a school' in the local parish church (*The Durham Report*, 1970: 255). Many, though, were very similar to county schools.

Moreover, though aided schools were free to adopt their own denominational religious education syllabuses, a study of Church of England aided school syllabuses shows them to have developed, in the period from 1944 onwards, in a rough parallel with ordinary agreed syllabuses. They were subject to the same cultural forces as a described in sections 1.4.1 following.

The different strength of church involvement in the life of the two kinds of church school (aided and controlled) was mirrored in the composition of the school's governing body. The church retained a majority on the governing body of aided schools, but a minority on the governing body of controlled schools. In both kinds of school, however, parental and teacher rights of withdrawal were safeguarded.

### **Components of religious education**

When the structure of the 1944 Education Act is examined and when the debate in Parliament is analysed, it is clear that religious education within the dual system was seen as having two components: religious instruction and collective worship. Section 25 of the 1944 Act is headed 'Religious Education in County and Voluntary Schools' and paragraph 1 of this section stipulates that 'the school day in every county school and in every voluntary school shall begin with collective worship' and paragraph 2 continues 'religious instruction shall be given in every county school and in every voluntary school'. Remaining paragraphs within this section deal with matters relating to withdrawal of children on grounds of conscience or the provision of another kind of religious instruction during the period of withdrawal. Section 26 stipulates that in country schools religious instruction shall be given in accordance with

the agreed syllabus 'which shall not include any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination'.

The terminology used in these sections is revealing. Religious *education* includes religious *instruction*. Education is conceived of as having a didactic element. It is also conceived of as having an experiential element conveyed in worship. A later analysis in *The Durham Report* (1970: para 298) explained the rationale for this conceptualisation: 'just as artistic capacities cannot be developed without being exercised, by painting pictures or making music, so religious understanding cannot be developed without an experience of worship'.

### **The role of the agreed syllabus**

Within any particular local education authority the controlled and county schools were similar to each other in the religious instruction they offered. This was because both made use of the same syllabus. The 1944 Education Act extended and gave legal force to the concept of the 'agreed syllabus'. These syllabuses were drawn up in accordance with a set of procedures defined by the 1944 Act. Each syllabus was the work of four committees and each committee had one vote. Syllabuses were only adopted after receiving all four votes. The four committees represented interested parties: one included representatives of any 'religious denominations' which the local authority considered should be present in the local area; a second included representatives of the Church of England (except in Wales); a third included representatives of teachers; the fourth included representatives of the local authority itself.

In the period from about 1945-1960, agreed syllabuses were strongly Christian in content and confessional in aim. For example, the introduction to the 1949 Cambridge agreed syllabus stated, 'Parliament has decided that instruction in the Christian religion shall be a recognised and indispensable part of our public system of education' and the 1962 Birmingham agreed syllabus states, 'we speak of religious education, but we mean Christian education... the aim of Christian education in its full and proper sense is quite simply to confront our children with Jesus Christ' (Francis, 1987: 29).

In this discussion, though we have spoken of aided schools as being operated exclusively by the church, this is not strictly true. There were also a small number of Jewish aided schools and a small number operated by independent foundations.

#### **1.4.1 Factors leading to change in religious education: 1944-1988**

The legislation of 1944 remained in force without significant variation until 1988. Such minor legal alterations as were made affected only the financing of school buildings and, though these were important particularly for the Catholic community, they do not touch the fundamental nature of religious education.

Yet, within the 1944 legislative framework, changes to religious education did take place: the *content* of agreed syllabuses and the *teaching methods* by which they were delivered were gradually altered. But, because the religious education curriculum was not centrally controlled, the factors which brought these changes reflected general intellectual and cultural changes within Britain in the post-war period.

The factors identified here are:

- \* theological
- \* social
- \* educational
- \* regional
- \* psychological
- \* philosophical
- \* methodological
- \* individual

#### **1.4.2 Theological factors**

Robinson (1963), in a widely discussed book, popularised the ideas of Tillich, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer, the radical Protestant theologians at the beginning of the 20th century. These ideas led to a 'Copernican revolution' in theology - a new conceptualisation of God as the 'ground

of Being', a conceptualisation which is at pains to reject traditional pictures of God and the more dramatic forms of the supernatural. Shortly afterwards Matthews (1966) worked out some of the implications for education of this theological revolution. Because the new theology deliberately left some questions unanswered, religious instruction could become an open-ended quest. *The Durham Report* (1970), in a lucid summary of modern Christian theology, stated of the period between 1935 and 1960 that the 'prevailing concern with biblical studies is reflected in the content of many agreed syllabuses during this period' (para 80) but went on to assert that a new religious education would emphasise the exploratory aspects of a discipline whose task of interpretation is never rounded off in a neat system...(and) seeks to make pupils familiar with the framework of Christian concepts and beliefs, and will best do this by exploring the relationship between the distinctive vocabularies of faith and those of many modern disciplines which relate man to his environment...as an act of exploration it closely resembles the exploratory nature of much educational activity (paras 113 and 114).

This view of theology, which Matthews and *The Durham Report* advanced, had fairly straightforward consequence for the religious educator: the activity of the classroom no longer needed to centre upon the acquisition of information; skills in assessing arguments and the historicity of events became important.

The aims of the teacher, therefore, were modifiable in the light of theological change. But what of the *content* of the syllabus by which these aims are realised? Two key areas in agreed syllabuses were the bible and the person of Jesus.

Here the position was not so clearcut. Opinions on the truth of the bible have fluctuated as investigations by textual critics and archaeologists have thrown doubt on some parts and substantiated others. But treatment of the bible within the classroom kept in step with shifts in theological thought, though, as we shall see in 1.4.6, psychological factors were more important than theological ones in determining which parts of the bible were addressed within the religious education curriculum.

Associated with a view of the bible is a view of Jesus. The new theology tended to diminish the uniqueness of Christ without doubting the basic historical information about his life and teachings. Thus it was still possible for pupils to study the life and teachings of Christ and, particularly where Jesus was presented as a critic of society who spoke importantly about personal relationships, it was possible for older pupils to appreciate his relevance to themselves.

### 1.4.3 Social factors

Rummery (1975a), like many writers, considered Britain to be a 'plural' or 'pluralist' society. This term is not usually clearly defined, but it appears to mean that in contrast with, say, Britain in Victorian times, there is less agreement over fundamental beliefs and values; that a single monolithic culture has split into many subcultures that social mobility and the flow of ideas in the mass media have produced a society where dissent is more common than consensus. Part of the evidence for the plural nature of British society was to be found in the large number of ethnic, often new commonwealth, minorities which, since the end of the Second World War, grew in England's urban areas. The figures for immigrant communities are fairly clear: after 1964, if not before, the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* (HMSO, 1971 no 108 table 19) showed the number of immigrants entering Britain exceeded those leaving. The same was true of the commonwealth countries of Pakistan, India and Ceylon and the West Indies. Between 1964 and 1969 entries from these four areas exceeded departures by 226,200, and, because of the large families common in immigrant communities, these communities grew faster than the indigenous population (*Social Trends* HMSO, 1977 no 8 chart 3.17).

If the ethnic population were evenly distributed over the whole country, then about 1 child in every class of 30 would be in this category. But, the immigrant population of Britain is concentrated in some areas more than others (Townsend, 1971: 20), which means that schools in such areas, and especially schools which have agreed religious education syllabuses which are pre-eminently Christian - even it is an exploratory, tentative type of Christianity - would have been faced with impossible logistical problems if all their parents had taken advantage of the

'conscience clause' and opted out of religious education. Schools could not afford to, and did not wish to, offend pupils from Hindu or Islamic homes by challenging their time-honoured beliefs, and so there was a pressure to re-think agreed syllabuses and to re-define religious teaching.

Coupled with this potential conflict between the beliefs of the home and those propagated by the schools was another matter which soon came to be of importance. Until the early 1960s very few teachers of religious education had met a follower of Islam or a Hindu. When these religions were mentioned, as often was the case in religious education lessons for older pupils, discussion based on ignorance could hardly be avoided. But, after their arrival in Britain, the new immigrant communities provided first-rate opportunities for realistic discussion of varied religious beliefs. Moreover it was hoped that by treating the religion of immigrants with respect, and by disseminating information about them in schools, that a tolerant, multi-racial, multi-faith society could be built.

A further consequence of the pluralistic nature of British society was the publication in 1985 of the Swann Report which argued that the curriculum should take into account the cultural and historical perspectives of immigrant communities. The committee also considered the establishment of Muslim aided schools (similar to those established for other religious groups under the 1944 Education Act), but concluded that separate educational provision had implications and consequences likely to be damaging to society as a whole. Consequently the majority of members of the Swann committee expressed misgivings about the continued existence of church schools and thus called into question the whole dual system. The minority of Swann committee members, however, took the opposite view: they argued that the dual system should be continued and expanded to include ethnic and religious groups which had not been present in Britain in 1944.

The Conservative government of the day did not act upon either the recommendations of the majority or of the minority of the Swann committee. The aided schools stemming from 1944 continue, and no new ones have been founded.

#### 1.4.4 Educational factors

As 1.3.1 points out the system of education that was devised after the 1944 Education Act was selective. During the period of Conservative government in the 1950s, this was accepted, but when the Labour party took power in 1964, education was placed on the political agenda.

The dawning of Comprehensive schooling in Britain is usually formally dated from circular 10/65 (i.e. the 10th circular in 1965 of the Department of Education and Science). After many years of a system which selected and divided children on the basis of ability, the Labour government of the day began to introduce a new type of school, a neighbourhood school or Comprehensive school, which would cater for all normal pupils within its catchment area and try to provide courses suited to each one individually.

Pedley (1969) gave a good account of the arguments for and against the new thinking. Two consequences, however, of the upheaval must be stressed in the present context. First, by 1974 the majority of children in Britain (57.4%) were in Comprehensive schools, a figure which had risen rapidly by 1980 when 85% of pupils were in Comprehensive schools. Second, Comprehensive schools tended to group pupils more flexibly than Grammar schools and Secondary Moderns. When the 1944 Act was passed and the agreed syllabuses of the 1950s were in operation in religious lessons, pupils were, by and large, streamed strictly according to measured ability and religious instruction could, and did, require rote learning and little by way of inducement to motivate children. The onset of Comprehensive education through the 1960s and with increasing rapidity in the 1970s, produced a school ethos and a classroom atmosphere which many teachers found quite new. Grammar schools staff were unaccustomed to illiterate pupils and Secondary Modern staff had rarely taught the articulate middle class pupils who had filled the Grammar schools. Additionally, the early Comprehensive schools often contained mixed ability classes throughout the 11-16 age range. It was quite impossible for teachers to teach in the same old way in such circumstances. They had to adapt, to 'teach to the middle of the class', to introduce project work which allowed pupils to work at their own pace on chosen topics and to throw old syllabuses away.

Coinciding with the advent of Comprehensive schools, and in some ways connected with it, was the emphasis on 'discovery methods' and the teacher's role in making a curriculum. Discovery methods, against which Bantock (*Black Paper Two* c 1970) inveighed, seemed to fit Piaget's stress on physical activity in the learning process as well as being a reaction against what was seen as the 'narrow academic curriculum' of the Grammar schools. Activity methods lent themselves to inter-disciplinary enquiry. The old barriers between subjects could be broken down; cross-fertilisation between previously unconnected fields could take place; and religious education, which had geographical and historical dimensions, could readily be integrated within a humanities course. Within the overall context of this discussion, therefore, one of the unforeseen results of Comprehensive re-organisation was the production of new general syllabuses to deal with the new range of pupils brought together under one roof and the new interconnections between classroom subjects which had previously been kept rigidly apart. Religious education syllabuses could hardly escape the shock waves which initiated the new curricula.

There was one further consequence of the move to Comprehensive schools. Very often such schools were formed by combining a Grammar school with a nearby Secondary Modern school with the result that the new unified school was very large. Comprehensive schools regularly had more than 1000 pupils, and some of them more than 2000 pupils. The largest halls in such schools were only designed for about 500 pupils and so it was impossible to hold a collective act of worship where all the pupils were present at once. Schools began to hold several assemblies in the morning and the nature of these assemblies became less than religious. There were often not enough staff with religious convictions who wished to say prayers or to give a moral or religious talk. In addition, it was impossible to sing hymns if assemblies were held, for example, in the gymnasium where there were no musical instruments. Morning worship during the period 1965-1988 was often not properly observed. Children continued to be assembled, but in some schools they were given sports results and other notices which had no religious relevance.

### 1.4.5 Regional factors

The machinery of the 1944 Act for writing or adopting agreed syllabuses required local representatives. It was not surprising, then, that regional strength of religious feeling was reflected in the syllabuses that were then drawn up. Alves (1968) found very extensive regional variation in children's attainments and attitudes. Attainments in different regions were reasonably similar and 'probably only significant when the two extremes are being compared' (p 67). Attitudes, by contrast, were much more noticeably affected: the south west, the north and the midlands were high, northern conurbations lower and the London conurbation least favourable in its outlook on religion. Furthermore, religious education had a different impact on different regions. By comparing school religion with a general response to Christianity, Alves was able to show that 'almost half of schools in the south west and midlands' had RE lessons which contributed towards the building of favourable attitudes to Christianity. 'By contrast, in 81% of the schools in the London conurbation the fourth formers look upon the RE they receive with even less favour than their general attitude to Christianity might lead one to expect' (p 70).

Alves's results were derived from data collected in the mid 1960s but the Bible Society's (1980) *Prospects for the Eighties* also showed a distinctly regional variation in Church attendance and membership. Northumberland, Durham, Lancashire, West Yorkshire and Humberside were particularly sparse in church activity involving people under 15 years of age. Catholics were strong in Durham, Cleveland, Tyne and Wear, Lancashire and Cheshire, while Episcopal Churches were strong in much of East Anglia; Methodists were strong in Cornwall, South Yorkshire, Humberside and Derbyshire.

Birnie (1971) surveyed Local Education Authorities to discover how far they had revised their agreed syllabuses in the light of the research findings of the 1960s (see under 1.4.6 below). In 1967 he found that 12 authorities had revised or were revising their syllabuses and that a further 10 were considering doing so. Since altogether 60 authorities replied to his enquiry, one could estimate that, at most, 37% of authorities had seen the need for change. In 1971 Birnie wrote again to the authorities to discover what had been done in the intervening four years.

Of 109 authorities which replied, 31 authorities were revising their syllabuses on this occasion, though it is not clear whether these 31 authorities include those which had revised in 1967. Despite changes, then, it is clear that even in the early 1970s a considerable number of authorities were using pre-1966 syllabuses and a few had syllabuses dating back to the 1940s.

#### **1.4.6 Psychological factors**

A major piece of educational research was carried out by Ronald Goldman in the early 1960s. His findings were widely and rapidly published in educational circles (e.g. Goldman, 1964a, 1964b, 1964c, 1965a, 1965b) and he answered his critics in Goldman (1965c and 1967). Both his books were reprinted at least four times in as many years and the curriculum material he produced on 'life themes' was also popular. Previous research projects on religious topics had come and gone without altering the face of religious education, but Goldman's contribution, both because of its quality and because of the ripeness of the time of its arrival, made a major impact on syllabus construction and educational thinking about the bible.

Goldman's basic assumption was that religious thinking was no different from ordinary thinking: its objects were religious objects, but its logic and tendencies were the same as those noticed in other areas of cognition. This assumption enabled Goldman to transfer both the methods and the schema of Piaget's descriptions of child development into his investigations of religious thinking. Piaget had used the 'semi-clinical' interview and had classified children's responses according to distinct stages which increased in complexity and abstraction. Goldman did likewise. Children were presented with three bible stories (in paraphrase) and questioned on them. They also were shown three pictures containing children their own age and asked about their content (church going, prayer and the bible). Exactly 200 pupils were questioned, 10 boys and 10 girls in each year between 6 and 17 (the year groups 15-17 being treated as one year). Their average measured IQ was slightly above average. The sample excluded Roman Catholics, Jews, or pupils of foreign extraction and any who were withdrawn from school assembly or religious instruction.

The responses of children to the bible stories and to the pictures were classified according to theological and Piagetian criteria. 'Forty independent experts theologically trained' (Goldman 1964: 48) evaluated the verbatim replies of children and on a 'scale of theological concepts'. Five replies were also assessed 'by independent experts conversant with Piaget's levels of operational thinking.'

Goldman's conclusions and findings were that 'the bible is not a children's book' that agreed syllabuses had included biblical texts which were quite inappropriate for the children for whom they were intended, that in some cases agreed syllabuses had done harm by introducing children to biblical ideas too soon and that the child's later rejection of religion was, in fact, the rejection of an infantile and therefore caricatured religion, that insufficient attention had been given to children's needs and capabilities in the past and that what was required was a complete re-organisation of syllabuses of religion which took the above into account. His own recommendation for religious education at secondary level (1965: ch9) were not radical; he did not forbid any use of the bible or of Christian concepts. He proposed bible-themes dealing simply with the life of Christ and ideas relevant to the pupils' lives which are also found in the bible (e.g. the theme of different kinds of loving). He also accepted life-themes relating to adolescent questions, religious perspective on personal relationships, sex education and world religions.

Goldman's work was criticised for his research methods (too small a sample), his unsuitable choice of biblical materials, his (mis)leading questions during interviews with children, his treatment of parables, his failure to use the longitudinal method whereby children are studied over a number of years, his too ready inference of stages and types of thinking and a failure to consider other aspects of religious development than cognitive ones. To these criticisms Goldman replied vigorously (1965b, 1967) and, though serious re-valuations of his work is now necessary (Murphy, 1979), at the time he swept all opposition before him. His results were appealed to (e.g. Matthews, 1966; Cox, 1966; Birnie, 1971) as settled facts. Empirical research appeared to provide solid ground in an argument about curriculum.

Hyde (1963a, 1963b, 1965) also published at a time when agreed syllabuses were being examined and his findings, based on empirical work with 1977 pupils, were taken to support the changes which Goldman's views inspired. He showed, for example that if pupils did not persist in Church attendance during their teens, they might regress in tests of religious concepts and attitudes. 'The development of religious thinking is dependent on positive religious attitudes and behaviour' (Hyde, 1965: 92) was a statement which supported alteration in agreed syllabuses because it implied that the majority of pupils, who did not attend Church, or show positive religious behaviour, were unlikely to continue learning in the same way as they did in other subjects. The re-writing of syllabuses could facilitate the religious learning of non-Church attenders.

#### **1.4.7 Philosophical factors**

Philosophical factors were intimately related to educational ones because the philosophy of education that came to prominence in the 1960s made use of philosophical methods and concepts. It was not simply a digest of the educational ideas of distinguished philosophers, but it became the application of philosophical techniques to the concept of education. Thus some of the comments in this section could also almost equally have been put in the next section on religious education.

Hirst (1972) developed a critique of Christian education by showing, or attempting to show, the impossibility of the notion of specifically Christian fields of discourse, when these fields had been established by principles which had nothing to do with Christianity. A Christian form of mathematics was non-existent because mathematics is an autonomous body of knowledge. Since education involved the induction of pupils into autonomous bodies of knowledge, each with its own procedures, rules, history and concepts, it was quite ludicrous to speak of a Christian education in any meaningful sense. Christianity was irrelevant to these bodies of knowledge: it had nothing to say which affected their development. A truly autonomous field of knowledge is devoid of religious reference and is not tested by religious criteria.

Hirst and Peters (1970) introduced and expanded upon the notion of education as initiation into the worthwhile by rational methods. The con-

cept of education, it was argued, pre-supposed the development of an open, critical, adaptable state of mind. Any type of teaching which attempted to plant unalterable doctrines or belief within pupils was, it was held, uneducational and therefore impermissible - in fact it was indoctrinatory; indoctrination being partly defined as the attempt to form opinions in pupils which, even in later life, they would be unable to alter. The purpose of education was to induct non-autonomous (immature) pupils into autonomous bodies of knowledge so that they might become autonomous adults - informed, reflective, critical and balanced. Such a view of education ran counter to the unspoken premises of the constructors of early agreed syllabuses. If education was henceforth to be concerned with rational methods of induction into public and changeable traditions, then far greater notice had to be taken by religious educators of the freedom of the child.

Alongside this kind of thought was a growing demand by secularists for a re-focusing of religious education. The 'conscience clause' of the 1944 Act was, to their minds (see *The Durham Report*, p 345) unsatisfactory because it forced parents who disapproved of religious education to seek temporary and perhaps embarrassing segregation for their children. Blackman (1964) and the *Plowden Report* (1967:489f) both held that the pre-eminence of Christianity was undesirable and that an open educational approach was necessary and would be acceptable to the majority of parents.

These types of argument were linked with a consideration of society. The concept of education which emphasised the initiation of children into public bodies of knowledge and the concept of religious education which, partly because of apparent lack of interest in religious values (i.e. the observed materialism of British society) emphasised openness and non-supernaturalistic alternatives to religious stances, soon led to a scrutiny of society. In some way society and the curriculum must be connected. Elliott (1971) argued that, as Christianity no longer had the monopoly in British society, it must be indefensible to teach Christian truths in a state system since this was simple the promotion of sectional interests. Indeed, he went further, saying that schools 'ought' to teach pupils 'to make judgments about Christianity based on a critical awareness of alternative conceptions of the human situation'. Smith (1970) had put the matter in another way, but reached comparable conclusions.

Since true Christian education could only take place within an exclusively Christian *milieu*, the only way forward for Christians in education would be to try to build bridges between the origins of Christianity in the New Testament and the existential questions of today: such bridges could only be built, he asserted, by open and uncommitted teaching.

Some of these arguments were met by pointing out that British society was not as plural as it was assumed to be. May and Johnston (1968) showed how common belief in God and demonstrated that the philosophical techniques used to analyse education or to derive 'ought' from 'is' (i.e. the way religious education 'ought to' be carried out after seeing what society 'is' like) were themselves suspect and unjustifiable by reason alone. Yet, as with Goldman's research, the moment was right for change, so change was what the arguments brought. It came to be recognised that religious education syllabuses should not try to produce faith; that was the job of the home or of the churches. Instead, they were either to study religion as a social phenomenon or to explore the consciousness of believers.

Smart's (1968), who became an important figure in debates about religious education, presented arguments based on the *logic of a faith* which, he argued, contains both historical and 'parahistorical' (i.e. interpretive, non-factual) elements. This distinction between one facet of religion and another led him later to put forward a dimensional view of religion which was applicable to all religions. The dimensions were (1) social, (2) mythological, (3) doctrinal, (4) historical, (5) experiential and (6) ethical and each religion could be examined in terms of each dimension. The advantage of this approach was that it neatly compartmentalised the controversial issues about the truth of religion into one dimension, the doctrinal. All the other dimensions could be studied, and probably taught, by a teacher of any or no faith. Smart's thinking was later taken up in the influential Schools' Council *Working Paper 36* (1971) and *Groundplan for the Study of Religion* (1977) discussed in the next section.

### 1.4.8 Methodological factors

Hull (1975:113) noted that ‘non-Christian religions were included, if at all, in the older syllabuses only in the sixth form [pupils aged between 16 and 18 years of age] and only in an apologetic or missionary context. The London 1968 agreed syllabus created an important precedent when it included representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities.’ The inclusion of world religions in agreed syllabuses seems to stem, on the one hand from the kinds of philosophical, theological and social factors so far discussed and, on the other hand, from a need religious educators felt to justify their subject to parents and educationalists. By widening the scope of the religious content, it was felt some objectors would be quelled; this may also help explain the inclusion of non-religious stances for living in subsequent syllabuses. Moreover, Smart’s six dimensional model of religion provided a ready framework for dealing with unfamiliar religious traditions and materials.

Hull (1975: 117) went on to suggest that agreed syllabuses had been eclipsed by ‘other sources of authority and guidance’. He did not mean that the agreed syllabuses had been legally overturned, but simply that the influence of agreed syllabuses on classroom practice was remarkably low considering their legal status.

One of the sources Hull pointed to was that of Schools’ Council. This was a national body which was funded by the local education authorities and supported by the teaching unions. It issued classroom materials for teachers and undertook research. Another source was found in the advisory services provided by local education authorities. Schools’ Council materials, supported by advisory teachers, were often used as the basis for in-service training. What should be noted, however, was that the Schools’ Council did not have any *legal* right to enforce its views on teachers.

Schools’ Council *Working Paper 36* (1971) and the Schools’ Council *Journeys into Religion* (1977) both not only assumed, but also advocated, the coverage of world religions in any reputable school curriculum. The *Journeys into Religion* handbook (p 14) asked rhetorically, ‘Can we teach children in the junior school, at nine, ten and eleven years of age, about boys and girls in other lands and leave out their religion?’ The

answer is clearly meant to be a resounding 'no'. *Working Paper 36* argued that 'most immigrant communities in Britain are liberal minded and anxious to cooperate with Christians. If this cooperation is not welcomed attitudes may change and a great opportunity be lost' (p 65). In other words, social harmony and religious harmony might be risked if religious education ignored the religious faiths of ethnic communities.

The Working Paper's most preferred approach to the study of religion is the phenomenological or undogmatic one which, in contrast to the confessional or dogmatic approach, uses scholarship to enter into an empathetic experience of faiths by making a cardinal virtue of man's capacity for 'self-transcending awareness'. An individual's imagination and commitment to a religious position can, it is argued, become the basis for a projection into the experience of another individual committed to an alternative viewpoint. Despite criticisms (e.g. Hardy, 1975) the phenomenological approach was accepted as a sensitive, humane and promising approach to religion which could broaden the whole textual basis of the study of religion by making poems, role play and committed fiction (e.g. novels) legitimate classroom material.

For the purposes of this report, it should be noted that changes within the content or religious education and the methods by which it was taught coincided. New content led to new methods and new aims. Confessional Christian religious education was replaced by non-confessional multi-faith religious education. These changes were not immediate or dramatic, but they began as ideas which were discussed by policy-makers and opinion-formers and were gradually adopted.

Cole (1977) assumed world religions were part of the religious education syllabus. A brief article by Rodhe (1977: 9) simply asserted that religion in schools 'should deal mainly with living world religions' largely because pupils cannot understand the world without a knowledge of its religions.

In addition to these influential forces on the religious education curriculum, there are two others not mentioned by Hull (1975). They both supplement agreed syllabuses in different ways. The first was a *Handbook of Suggestions* which was produced by the Hampshire Education Committee. The point at issue here is a practical one: teachers could

not introduce new syllabuses without classroom ideas and materials. But the production of new classroom materials was likely to be a waste of time unless teachers had first been persuaded of the value of new approaches.

A Handbook for use in Hampshire schools was published (undated) in the early 1970s and was heavily Christian in content. The revised Handbook, *Paths to Understanding* (1980) accompanied the 1978 Hampshire agreed syllabus. Samples of work in racially mixed and unmixed Comprehensives was given. The racially mixed Comprehensive introduced religion with an eye to the future development of the subject on comparative lines; the unmixed Comprehensive were more thoroughly Christian. Both these Handbooks were used outside Hampshire.

The second force came from public examination boards. Although it is true that most public examination courses do not start till the 3rd year of secondary school (age 14 years) and that only about 3% of pupils took an examination in religion, religious education teachers who hoped to build up their examination groups in the 4th year of secondary education often taught in such a way that the transition from non-examination work to examination work was easy.

Elliott (1971) analysed CSE<sup>2</sup> syllabuses and complained that 'the content of CSE syllabuses studied seems to have been selected with the needs of future confessional members of the Church in mind.' CSE Boards took this kind of criticism to heart because later in the 1970s their syllabuses changed complexion. The 1979 Southern Regional Examination Board specifically states among its aims that of encouraging 'an understanding of the religious dimension of human experience' and 'to create an atmosphere of enquiry which will encourage religious and moral discussion.' The content was largely Christian, but there were options which allowed the study of non-Christian religions. This kind of pattern is also found in other Examination Board syllabuses. However, the CSE Boards also encouraged the drawing up of mode 3 syllabuses, that is

---

<sup>2</sup> CSE stands for 'Certificate in Secondary Education'. This examination, for pupils aged 16, was designed originally for pupils at Secondary Modern Schools, though it later became very useful in Comprehensive schools. It made use of project work in addition to, or instead of, examinations.

syllabuses which were written by teachers and marked by them, though moderated by the Boards to ensure a uniformity of standards.

#### 1.4.9 Individual project factors

The factors so far considered have worked, directly or indirectly, on the agreed syllabuses. And they have been factors which originated (apart from the discussion of education in section 1.4.4) a long way from the classroom. This section deals with changes which sprang from the classroom and the interaction between teacher and taught. It particularly centres on the work of three religious educators who, though they may not be secondary school teachers, kept the practicalities of the classroom strictly within their sights. Loukes, Grimmit and Holm represent the views of teacher trainers during this period.

Loukes (1961, 1965) wrote before the greatest changes in religious education took place and he was partly responsible for some of the directions which the subject later took. His *Teenage Religion* (1961) was fresh and novel in its style. He avoided statistical analysis and philosophical or theological speculation. His main thrust was derived from observations and recordings of pupils in the classroom. The book opens with a transcript of a lesson on the subject of 'Sunday'. The varied, forceful and memorable expressions of pupils about their religious instruction lessons and their religious opinions led him to advance an untried approach to religious education. He called it 'The Problem Method' and said,

The syllabus is, to borrow the modern jargon, Anti-syllabus, the method Anti-method. But real life is anti-syllabus...we must discover what bewilders them [pupils], and face it not as authorities who have all the answers, but as friends who stand by them as they grapple with their problems (1961: 145).

In his 1965 publication he elaborated on this. Religious education was to become a dialogue with experience, a quest for meaning, 'a conversation between older and younger on the question, What is life like?' (p 148). The syllabus which this approach invoked was concerned social and moral problems and attempted to help pupils to come to terms with

them without imposing settled views on them. In essence the approach was open-ended and its content formed from topics suggested by pupils.

Grimmitt (1973) in *What Can I do in RE?* anchored his work in wide range of philosophical and theological thinking. His approach was on two levels - the existential and the dimensional. The existential level, which contained 'the "core" of RE' (p 51) was concerned with the experience of the child and with reflection on that experience 'at depth' (p 57). The feelings of the child and of other people he or she knows will lead to insight which may later validate religious concepts. Religious concepts are thus only introduced and only tested against the deepest understandings of the pupil about his or her own condition. Once this has been achieved (by the use of situation themes, depth themes and symbol and language themes), the dimensions of religion proposed by Smart (1969) - doctrinal, ritual, mythological, ethical, social and experiential - can be studied. In fact Grimmitt compressed these dimensions to three, (a) experiential, mythological and ritual (b) social and ethical (c) doctrinal on the grounds that this is the logical order for children since the more implicit side of religion is treated before the more explicit side. Grimmitt concluded his book with details of teaching methods illustrated by examples.

Holm's (1975) book *Teaching Religion in School: a practical approach* was altogether more straightforward than Grimmitt's. She was critical of Loukes's

the problem-centred syllabuses of the RE of the sixties provided a quite inadequate basis for choice (between religious and non-religious systems; the presumption being that religious studies helped pupils to come to an informed choice about religion); there are no problems in society - from abortion to war, from the use of money to crime and punishment - to which all Christians suggest one solution and all humanists another (p4)

and her comments on the use of life-themes (which Grimmitt made some use of at his existential level) to reach 'ultimate meaning...also needed profound understanding of Christian theology' (p5) were not wholly favourable. She briefly discussed the changes of direction in RE in the 1960s and 1970s and went on to propose a set of units which were

closest in outlook to the phenomenological approach outlined earlier. She was more pragmatic than dogmatic about the requirements for each school. 'Each school must work out how the aim of religious education can best be achieved in the light of particular circumstances' (p 13) but she insisted that, when religions are compared the best is compared with the best. Her chart of teaching units arranged teaching topics in an order which permitted the attainment of the later junior stage (ages 9-11 years) to become the foundation of secondary school work. Creation myths precede signs, symbols and festivals and these precede discussion of belief, general information about world religions and lessons about the nature of religious language.

Finally, the Lancaster Project (*Journeys into Religion*, section 17), which was also an expression of academic thinking, contains a syllabus for religious education. The table below compares Grimmitt, Holm and the Lancaster Project. The numbers in the table are the ages in years at which topics are thought suitable for pupils. Loukes is omitted from this comparison since his approach does not easily lead to a set syllabus.

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of the content of three independent religious education syllabuses**

Grimmitt	Holm	Lancaster Project
10	9-11	11-12
symbol and language themes mythological and ritual themes (p 122)	creation myths	Man from Nazareth; Muslim way of life;
11-13	11-13	
Barriers Families of the world People without families Holy Week	Festivals pilgrimages; signs and symbols	Religion in Britain today signs and symbols
13+	13-15	13-14
Family conflicts Family relationships (p 118) symbol and language themes	Asking questions sacred writings what is belief? belief and life Judaism; Islam	Exploring belief; How others see life. The life of man: the family, science and religion
14+	15+	15-16
New families doctrinal material (p 50)	Nature of religious language Sikhism; Hinduism; Buddhism	Hindu way Judaism; Why do men suffer?

(Grimmitt's scheme is not presented in tabular form in his book, so the page numbers refer to examples from his book).

Many qualificatory cautions are lost when syllabus suggestions are set side by side, but it is clear that, though there was some agreement over content, there was little agreement over the age at which topics should be broached. Grimmitt put language at the age of 10, Holm left it to 15 year olds. The centre of gravity of religious education had shifted after 1944 but there were still noticeable divergencies between experts in the field, and empirical work had not yet been performed on the kinds of syllabuses devised by them.

### **1.5 Summary**

Warwick (1975) outlined the influences which might be exerted on a curriculum - national, local and school - and, though the factors discussed in the previous sections can be fitted into this pattern, the pattern adopted here seems more satisfactory since, for example, local influences were often brought about by national ones. In essence religious instruction, the transmission of a fixed corpus of doctrinal and historical knowledge, had been transformed to religious education, the exploration of the religious interpretation of life by non-judgmental processes. World religions had been incorporated into the curriculum, though the best method of dealing with religions without distorting them did not achieve national consensus. The phenomenological approach had been favoured, but this by no means led inexorably to uniform classroom practice and Hulmes (1979) challenged some of its pre-suppositions. In the primary school there was a focus on religious activities (like festivals) or visible objects (like religious buildings) rather than on doctrine, history or ethics.

During the period 1944-1988 over Britain as a whole numerous syllabuses for religious education might have been found. These would have been determined by local considerations and their delivery would have been influenced by the professional judgment of the Head of Religious Education in any particular school. There was during this period, nevertheless, a gradual drift away from confessional Christian religious instruction to non-confessional multi-faith religious education in which Christianity was still included. The legal framework which allowed these changes remained the same because it was flexible enough to al-

low local variation. Furthermore, as some agreed syllabuses were adopted widely by several counties, national trends began to emerge.

Although the next changes to occur were brought about by the 1988 Education Reform Act discussed in section 2 below, it is important to appreciate that the social and theological factors discussed in sections 1.4.2 and 1.4.3 continued to have an effect. British society did not stand still. The size of ethnic groups both absolutely, and as a proportion of the total British population, rose and pluralism consequently increased. Likewise theological discussion remained largely liberal in higher education.

## **2 The 1988 Education Reform Act and religious education**

### **Essential changes introduced by the Act**

This section presents the legal structures and administrative changes which were inaugurated by the 1988 Education Reform Act. These changes had three main purposes:

- \* to allow schools to transfer from the administrative care of local education authorities to the administrative care of national government
- \* to impose a 'national curriculum' on all the schools within the dual system
- \* to strengthen the position of Christianity

### **The choice facing schools: local or national government**

The Conservative government of the day wished to save public money by reducing the power of local education authorities. Consequently schools were given the opportunity to become 'grant maintained', that is, to receive all their money directly from central government rather than local government. Schools which wished to become grant main-

tained could only do so if a favourable vote were taken at a meeting involving parents and governors.

The ethos of the dual system, however, was still retained because grant maintained schools, even if they were church schools, continued to be inspected in the same way as other schools and to deliver the national curriculum.

### **The National Curriculum**

The 1988 Education Reform Act began by speaking in terms of the basic curriculum. The *basic curriculum* comprised two components: the *national curriculum* and *religious education*.

The basic curriculum is to be balanced and to promote the 'spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils'. The national curriculum is made up of nine subjects: mathematics, English, science (which are also called 'core subjects'<sup>3</sup>) and history, geography, technology, music, art and physical education (which are also called 'foundation subjects'), and each of these subjects are assessed at four 'key stages' in the life of the pupil. A School Curriculum Assessment Authority (SCAA) was set up to monitor and develop the curriculum. All the members of SCAA were appointed by the Secretary of State for Education. The result of this change was to centralise control of the curriculum. Where there had been diversity as a consequence of local interests and emphases, there was now uniformity. The Schools' Council had been closed down in 1984.

The position of religious education was carefully considered, but it was placed in the 'basic curriculum' rather than the national curriculum. In theory religious education was to run alongside the nine national curriculum subjects and to have the same status within the eyes of teachers and pupils. The government, though it supported the place of religious education in schools, refused to place religious education within the national curriculum on two grounds: it was argued that it would be illogical to have a compulsory national curriculum subject to which rights of

---

<sup>3</sup> In Wales, the Welsh language is also a core subject.

withdrawal for reasons of conscience were granted; it was also argued that it was not sensible to allow an entirely secular body like the School Curriculum Assessment Authority<sup>4</sup> (SCAA) to determine the content of religious education syllabuses. As we shall see, the agreed syllabus procedures were retained but modified by the 1988 Education Reform Act.

### **Strengthening the place of Christianity**

The Conservative government of Mrs Thatcher took the view that moral values within society would be strengthened by better teaching of Christianity in schools. As a result the 1988 Act, like the 1944 Act, uses the overall heading 'Religious Education' to cover sections dealing with collective worship and religious education. It therefore continues to imply that collective worship is a component of religious education.

During Parliamentary debate in 1988 and with regard to the *content of religious education* Mr Coombs argued that 'religious education should be predominant and Christian-based' (Hansard, 130: 404). Mr Beith pointed out that 'an understanding of religion, especially the Christian religion, is essential to an understanding of the society, history and heritage of these islands' (Hansard, 130: 405). Mr Raison declared that 'it is wholly impossible to understand British culture without a knowledge of the Bible and, I would add, the Book of Common Prayer' (Hansard, 130: 408). Sir Rhodes Boyson contended that 'religious education must not be a parade round a museum of religion. There must be faith... religious education must be a foundation or core subject, and the churches, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the local authorities must ensure that it is taught' (Hansard, 130: 413). Mr Baker, then Secretary of State for Education, agreed that 'a fundamental part of any religious education syllabus should be the Christian faith. That faith was brought to these islands by St Augustine and it has woven its way through our history' (Hansard, 130: 426). Nearly all these speakers also believed that religions other than Christianity should be taught.

---

<sup>4</sup> The School Curriculum Assessment Authority was formed by combining the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Authority, both of which were created by the 1988 Act.

The place of Christianity was therefore strengthened by two means. First, the SCAA working groups were set up to devise 'model syllabuses' for religious education. These syllabuses were intended to give guidance to those who drew up new local agreed syllabuses. The model syllabuses gave clear indications about government thinking. There was considerable discussion about what percentage of time should be allowed in the classroom to each religion being considered (*Times Educational Supplement*, 25 Feb 1994). The government wished to ensure that at least half the time available for religious education should be devoted to Christianity leaving the remainder for any other world faiths which might be included. Eventually the attempt to stipulate a particular amount of time for any one religion was dropped because it would have proved impossible to enforce. However, section 8 (3) of the 1988 Act does insist that agreed syllabuses for religious education must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian while taking into account the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

Second, according to section 7, the place of Christianity within collective worship was to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' which it went on to explain meant that collective worship should reflect 'the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination'. Moreover, it would not necessary for every act of worship to comply with this stipulation but, taking a school term as a whole, this instruction was to be observed (see 2.1 below).

## **2.1 Changes in procedures for agreed syllabuses**

A revised body for each local authority, specially relevant to religious education, was brought into existence by the 1988 Act. This body is the SACRE, or Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (section 7.6; section 11). This body, though, was clearly similar in many respects to the conference of four committees which, after 1944, each local education authority could call into being for devising or adopting agreed syllabuses.

A SACRE must be constituted by every local education authority with the duty of advising ‘upon matters connected with religious worship in county schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus’ (section 11.1.a.). These matters include the methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers. The SACRE consists of four committees. Each committee has one vote for decision-making purposes<sup>5</sup> and all four votes must be in favour of any proposal that is to be carried:

- \* Christian and other religious denominations as in the opinion of the authority reflect the principal traditions of the area<sup>6</sup>
- \* the Church of England (except in Wales)<sup>7</sup>
- \* such associations representing teachers as in the opinion of the authority ought to be represented
- \* the authority itself

Where there is a separate Church of England group, the Church of England may not be represented in the ‘Christian and other religious denominations group’. The SACRE may also include co-opted members, but these may not vote. Among matters to be voted on is the timing of decisions for reviewing the agreed syllabus. The SACRE must report annually.

Section 9 of the Act perpetuates the right of parents to withdraw children either wholly or partly from religious education and collective worship. If parents wish their children to receive religious education of a kind not provided by the school, these pupils may be withdrawn from school during such periods of time as are ‘reasonably necessary’ for this kind of religious education to be given. Various provisos ensure that this permission to withdraw is not used to avoid school attendance.

---

<sup>5</sup> The system allows for disagreements within the committees but not disagreement between the committees.

<sup>6</sup> This is an important change. It allows, as of right, non-Christian groups a voice in the formation of agreed syllabuses. The wording of the 1944 Education Act spoke of other denominations, meaning other *Christian* denominations.

<sup>7</sup> The Anglican church in Wales is disestablished, that is, it is not formally or legally linked with the state. The Anglican church in Wales is on the same footing as Baptist, Methodist and other churches.

With regard to collective worship, the provisions are altogether more complicated. This is because it is assumed that pupils belonging to a non-Christian religion may wish to worship together on the school premises. With regard to the *content of worship*, however, the Act lays down that it must be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' although this wording should not be understood to apply to individual acts of worship but to the pattern of acts of worship in 'any school term as a whole'. Subject to these considerations the collective worship shall be appropriate to the age and aptitudes of pupils and their family backgrounds. However, where the SACRE so determines, either any county school or any class or description of pupils in a county school may participate in collective worship which is *not* distinctive of any particular Christian or other religious denomination but which *is* distinctive of another faith (section 7.6.a and b).

The government's intentions are clear enough and though they have been criticised (e.g. by Hull, 1989) the drafting allows schools considerable leeway with making arrangements for large groups of pupils who wish to pursue non-Christian worship while, at the same time, encouraging Christian worship for spiritual, moral and cultural reasons. These reasons are included within the first paragraphs of the Act (see its sections 1.2.a and b) where the remainder of the Act's provisions for the curriculum are set within the context of a broad governmental intention to promote the 'spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils' and to prepare them 'for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life'. Religious education in the classroom and collective worship in the assembly hall are intended to play their part in the attainment of these general objectives; parental right of withdrawal is respected while giving schools more than optional guidelines in religious matters. Moreover, despite the tendency towards the centralisation of the control of education which the 1988 Act represents, the principle of local direction of religion (through SACREs) is carefully retained.

Since its passing, the SACREs have met with mixed success. Local Education Authorities which are short of financial resources sometimes starve SACREs of what they need to implement new syllabuses and improve the quality of religious education. Moreover diocesan advisers

(who work with church schools) are not always able to work closely with religious education advisers (who work with local education authorities) (Brown, 1995). Friction between local and national government leads to stagnation in schools.

## **2.2 Long-term effects of the 1988 Education Reform Act**

The government's prescriptions for the national curriculum often had the unintentional effect of limiting the classroom time available for religious education. In many primary schools, time for religious education was reduced because teachers were occupied in preparing pupils for the key stage tests that accompanied the package of reforms which applied only to the core and foundation subjects of the national curriculum; religious education was in the 'basic curriculum' and was not subjected to testing in the same way as the other subjects. The pressure of examination and inspection, in other words, was more powerful in many schools than the pressure of written statute. In secondary schools, since religious education was a timetabled subject, the results were slightly different. Orchard (1993) provided evidence from the reports of school inspectors that the Christian content of religious lessons after the Act was very little different from that in the period 1985-88, but that the multi-faith content had diminished. The inspectors' criticisms 'focus on the lack of provision rather more than the nature of the content'. Orchard concludes, 'in spite of reassurances from the government that religious education enjoyed parity with other subjects in the basic curriculum, schools have failed to allocate time and resources for its delivery'. A different, but equally critical point, is made from a Muslim point of view by Mabud (1992) who sees the national curriculum as being used to create a mono-cultural uniformity through secularisation.

Yet, there have been signs of innovation within religious education. For example, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) which, because of the way it is appointed, reflects national government thinking, produced model syllabuses (1994) which were notable in that, for the first time, they made use of theological concepts to structure the material that would be presented to children. In other words, religion was not broken down according to the preferences of educationalists in order to be fitted into syllabuses; on the contrary, syllabuses were con-

structured out of the materials and concepts which religionists felt to be important. Such syllabuses were constructed round theological concepts like 'God', 'law', 'holy books', each pattern being different for each religion. Cooling (1996) argued that it would be sensible to view the 'copyright' of each religion as being held by the religious community which generated it and that this 'copyright' should be respected by secular educationalists. His arguments were directed especially at secular educationalists who planned thematic syllabuses which proposed cross-religious themes and at those who saw religion solely in terms of personal development.

The 1995 Birmingham agreed syllabus followed the SCAA model syllabuses in some respects but not in others. Birmingham accepted the allocation of time for religious education that SCAA had recommended: to the age of seven, 36 hours a year; to the age of eleven, 45 hours a year; to the age of fourteen, 45 hours a year; to the age of sixteen, 40 hours a year. Its structure, however, was centred round the concepts *learning about* religion and *learning from* religion. Up to the age of seven, pupils learn about the natural world as a place that belongs to God and about themselves as being valued and living in communities, some of which follow the guidance contained in special books and use special places for worship. By the age of eleven, pupils have been introduced to the idea of God as being a Father and about the teaching of Jesus on the dangers of wealth. But illustrative material is taken from Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Jewish traditions as well; only the Christian material is compulsory. The theme of community which was introduced earlier now includes a definite reference to the church and to priests and ministers, though, again, illustrative material from the same four other world religions may also be included. The life and ministry of Christ must be studied, though reference to Moses, Buddha, Guru Nanak or Muhammad is also possible. The syllabus continues to follow the age range in this way, with a compulsory Christian content and illustrative material from other religions. The compulsory Christian content stems from the central government's legislation in the 1988 Act, but the actual implementation of the syllabus in any individual school will take account of the beliefs of its parents and children. Thus it is likely that in areas of Birmingham where there is a strong Muslim population, most of the illustrative material would be Muslim, and so on.

The Birmingham agreed syllabus makes the assumption that schools will produce their own 'schemes of work' within the framework it provides. Each school should ensure that there is continuity and progression for its pupils and that the material presented to them is differentiated in terms of its resources and in terms of the responses expected by children. Moreover, in accordance with the 1988 Act, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is recognised as being something to which religious education can contribute and the Birmingham syllabus, in its appendix 1, suggests practical ways in which this may be done.

The 1992 Hampshire Agreed Syllabus designs religious education so that it fits in more closely with the patterns of assessment used in the national curriculum. Statements of the sort of attainments which might be expected of pupils at a particular age are listed. At each age level, however, religion is structured round the concepts, *Exploring meaning*, *Expressing meaning* and *Knowledge and understanding of religious traditions*. So, for example, a child by the age of seven would be expected, under the first of these structural concepts, to be able 'discuss the importance of a person, place or object which is precious to themselves' while, at the age of eleven, the child should be able 'through the creative arts' to express 'their ideas about a quality which is valued in life'. At the age of fourteen, the child should be able to 'show an empathetic understanding of the beliefs and values of someone who has a different world-view from their own'.

The place of Christianity is less obviously emphasised by the Hampshire syllabus. At the age of seven children are expected to have learnt about religion from religious buildings, including those of the Christian traditions and by the age of eleven, though should understand the outline of the life of Jesus and other stories in the bible, they should also have learnt central stories from within one other religion. At the age of fourteen an understanding of fundamental Christian concepts like forgiveness, love, creation, incarnation, redemption and resurrection should have been taught. But in addition one other world faith will have been taught in detail, though not necessarily the same one at each age level.

In summary, the Hampshire syllabus makes use of a reflective, child-centred approach which concentrates on the creative arts, but includes a study of Christianity and one other world religion at each key stage. In this it is considerably different from the Birmingham syllabus which gives more prominence to four religions in addition to Christianity.

The balance of religions included within an agreed syllabus is largely a function of the SACRE which draws it up, and the composition of the SACRE is far more likely to contain many different religions in large urban populations than is the case in SACREs representing predominantly rural areas. Birmingham is urban; Hampshire is rural. Where many religious groups contribute delegates to the SACRE, a syllabus with a heavy multi-faith content is the likely outcome.

However, the danger of confusing children with too many religions too early has long been recognised, though little research on the subject has been undertaken. Nevertheless, Short and Carrington (1995) have produced evidence that learning about several religions may be confusing to young people, especially if they have picked up muddled ideas about religions outside school. In a similar vein a piece of research on the use of the word 'God' by Sikh children (Nesbitt and Jackson, 1995), it was found that, especially for those whose grasp of English was poor, there were verbal oddities in linguistic usage that ought to make developers of curriculum materials cautious. Other research (e.g. McGrady, 1994 and Erricker and Erricker, 1994) also suggests that religious language is a rich field of enquiry and that children's understanding of religious concepts is not straightforward.

Recent research on religious education has covered other more diverse topics. Francis and Lewis (1996) have drawn a socio-psychological profile of adolescents who support religious education in school; Kay (1996) has shown how the content of religious education, in many of the main religions, conveys a world view in which an interventionist God is presumed and that such a God is at variance with a scientific view of the world in the minds of many males but not in the minds of many females - the presumption is that males and females hold different conceptualisations of both science and religion. Such a possibility is supported by Francis and Kay's (1995) finding that females see religion more inclusively and males more exclusively. Gender differences in religion are

also supported by the findings of Tamminen (1996). The issue of science and religion, from another angle, is scrutinised by Fulljames (1996), especially in relation to doctrines of creation and the consequent attitude toward Christianity.

Work by Hay, Nye and Murphy (1996) supports the view that religious experience may importantly determine the concept of spirituality in childhood. And both Slee (1996) and Nipkow, Schweitzer, Faust-Siehl and Krupka (1996) concern themselves with developmental themes, the former in the tradition of James Fowler and the latter more widely. Other studies have examined particular religious traditions and the meaning of these traditions to their adherents. Burton and Francis (1996) examine what it means to be a Catholic adolescent today, while Curran and Francis (1996) explore the notion of 'Catholic identity'. Studies by O'Keeffe (1996) look at the effects of the few new Christian schools which have been founded in Britain since the 1970s and which stand outside the maintained sector. Taken together these studies have implications both for religious education within controlled and aided schools and for schools in the rest of the maintained sector. The implication is that various kinds of schools may learn from each other and that religious education may sometimes be better interpreted within the wider matrix of the community which includes home, school and church than simply as an interaction belonging to the classroom. It also implies that, despite the prevalence of secular interpretations of human life, there is a willingness to accept the reality of religious experience and the concept of spirituality, especially if connected with the idea of development based on cognitive and emotional changes within the life cycle.

### **Classroom methods**

The phenomenological method which is utilised in a simplified and unphilosophically sophisticated way by teachers to deliver non-confessional religious education may be extended by including religious emotion. Astley (1994a; 1994b) has argued strongly that religious emotions should be much more obviously explored in any presentation of the field of religion. Support for such an idea comes indirectly from Grimmitt (1991) who, in a modified version of the phenomenological method, proposes that pupils should learn to empathise with religious phenomena, a

process that necessarily makes emotional demands. Grimmitt's whole approach, however, is slanted towards the development of personal and social values, but he has been criticised both for his view of how human beings work and for the inadequacy of his grasp of the phenomenological method (Connolly, 1988). From another angle Slee (1989) has pointed out that the phenomenological method is limited, not least because it completely ignores the truth claims of religion.

The debate about method is exemplified by the exchange between Thatcher<sup>8</sup> (1991) and Hay and Hammond (1992). Thatcher severely criticised Hay and Hammond's book, *New Methods in RE Teaching*, on the grounds that it made a false distinction between the individual's inner and outer worlds. To Thatcher the distinction dates back to Descartes and has been philosophically rejected on the grounds that the language we use to describe private sensations must be a public language otherwise it would be unintelligible to others. Moreover attempts to expand the horizons of feeling by concentrating on a picture of a starving person, for example, is useless and should instead be replaced by occasional abstention from food. Hay and Hammond reply by referring to the writings of mystics and the inner language of prayer and the bible. They acknowledge that this use of language is metaphorical and argue that has no relationship with Cartesian dualism. Whatever else the 1988 Education Act has done, therefore, it has not made a clear contribution to teaching methods.

In practice, the non-confessional approach to religious education, while it may be appealing to some parents, is not always so. Gay, Kay, Newdick, and Perry (1991) cite six examples where Muslim parents chose Church of England aided schools for their children. Even if the reasons for these choices were educational rather than religious, it may also be valid to conclude that a religious outlook contrasts so strongly with a secular one that some parents prefer a good religious school even if this school is not one which is based precisely on the principles of their own religion. Similarly Marfleet (1996) gives examples of Baptist parents who select Roman Catholic aided schools for their children.

---

<sup>8</sup> Adrian Thatcher works at the College of St Mark and St John and is no relation to Mrs Thatcher.

Yet classroom methods, while they are non-confessional in the majority of the maintained sector, appear to be less sharply defined than was the case in the 1970s. If religion is to be treated as subject which by merit deserves a place on an otherwise secular curriculum, then it must expect to be taught by methods suitable to other subjects. In other words, it is unreasonable to expect teachers to adopt completely different methods for each subject they teach, an expectation which is unrealistic especially in the primary school where there are few, if any, specialist teachers and where the classroom teacher teaches all subjects. For this reason, issues of pedagogics in religious education have been less to the forefront of any consideration of the subject in recent years. It is generally agreed that religious educators should not attempt to indoctrinate children and that professional competence presumes that religions will be treated fairly in the classroom. Beyond this, as the Hampshire agreed syllabus shows, the linkage between religion and the arts, including drama and dance, places it firmly within the expressive part of the curriculum: it is about relationships and identity in the minds of many teachers rather than about doctrine and ritual.

## References

- Alves, C (1968), *Religion and the Secondary School*, London, SCM
- Astley, J (1994a), *The Philosophy of Christian Religious Education*, Birmingham, Alabama, The Religious Education Press
- Astley, J (1994b), The place of understanding in Christian education and understanding about Christianity, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 16, 90-101
- Aubry, M and Dard, J (1968), Catholics in state schools: the French experience, in B Tucker (ed.), *Catholic Education in a Secular Society*, London, Sheed and Ward
- Beck, G A (1968), The Catholic voluntary schools, in P Bander (ed.), *Looking forward to the Seventies*, Gerrards Cross, Smythe
- Berridge, M N (1968), Integration and commitment: the task of Catholic education today, in B Tucker (ed.), *Catholic Education in a Secular Society*, London, Sheed and Ward
- Birnie, I (1971), Carrying on agreeing, *Learning for Living*, 11.1, 15-19
- Blackman, H J (1964), A humanist view of religious education, *Learning for Living* 4.2, 19-20.
- Bramhall, E (1976), Aims in RE: secondary, in N Richards (ed.) *Aims in Religious Education*, Northampton, Hunt
- British Council of Churches (1976), *The Child in the Church*, London, British Council of Churches
- Brown, A (1995), Letter to the editor, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 16, 185
- Burton, L and Francis, L J (1996), Growing up Catholic today: the teenage experience, in L J Francis, W K Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Cole, O (ed.) (1977) *World Religions: a handbook for teachers*, (3rd ed), London, The Commission for Racial Equality
- Connolly, P (1988), Faith in beliefs, *Times Educational Supplement* (16 December, 1988)

- Cooling, T. (1996), Education is the point of RE - not Religion? theological reflections on the SCAA model syllabuses, in J Astley and L J Francis (eds), *Christian Theology and Religious Education: connections and contradictions*, London, SPCK
- Corbett, A (1968), Catholics at school, *New Society*, 28th Nov, 792-4
- Cox, E (1966), *Changing Aims in Religious Education*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Cruickshank, M (1963), *Church and State in English Education*, London, Macmillan
- Curran, M and Francis, L J (1996), Measuring 'Catholic identity' among pupils in Catholic secondary schools, in L J Francis, W K Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Dent, H C (1966), *The Education Act 1944* (2nd impression), London, University of London Press
- Elliott J (1971), Problems of RE syllabus construction in a democracy, *Learning for Living*, 11.1, 20-25
- Erricker, C and Erricker, J (1994), Metaphorical awareness and the methodology of religious education, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 16, 174-184
- Francis, L J (1979), School influence and pupil attitude towards religion, *British Journal Educational Psychology*, 49, 107-123
- Francis, L J (1987), *Religion in the Primary School: partnership between church and state?*, London, Collins
- Francis, L J (1993), Theology of education and the church school, in L J Francis and D W Lankshear (eds), *Christian Perspectives on Church Schools*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Francis, L J and Kay, W K (1955), *Teenage Religion and Values*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Francis, L J and Lewis, J M (1996), Who wants RE? a socio-psychological profile of adolescent support for religious education, in J Astley and L J Francis (eds), *Christian Theology and Religious Education: connections and contradictions*, London, SPCK

- Fulljames, P (1996), Science, creation and Christianity: a further look, in L J Francis, W K Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Gay, J, Kay, B, Newdick, H and Perry, G (1991), *A Role for the Future: Anglican primary schools in the London Diocese*, Abingdon, Culham College Institute
- Goldman, R J (1964a), *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Goldman, R J (1964b), Religious honesty with children, *Learning for Living*, 3.5, 7-9
- Goldman, R J (1964c), Researches in religious thinking, *Educational Research*, 6, 139-55
- Goldman, R J (1965a), *Readiness for Religion*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Goldman, R J (1965b), The implications of developmental education, *Learning for Living*, 4.5, 4-9
- Goldman, R J (1965c), Dr Goldman replies, *Learning for Living*, 5.1, 24-26
- Goldman, R J (1967), Two kinds of fundamentalist, *Learning for Living*, 6.3, 14-16
- Greeley, A M and Rossi, P H (1966), *The Education of Catholic Americans*, Chicago, Aldine
- Grimmitt, M (1973), *What Can I do in RE?*, Great Wakering, Mayhew-McCrimmon
- Grimmitt, M (1991), The use of religious phenomena in schools: some theoretical and practical considerations, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 13, 77-88
- Hardy, D (1975), Teaching religions: a theological critique, *Learning for Living*, 15.1, 10-16
- Hay, D and Hammond, J (1992), 'When you pray, go to your private room' A reply to Adrian Thatcher, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 14, 145-150
- Hay, D, Nye, R and Murphy, R (1996), Thinking about childhood spirituality: a review of research and current directions, in L J Francis, W K

- Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Higgins, A (1979), *Teaching About Controversial Issues in Catholic Schools*, Centre for Applied Research in Education, Occasional Publications no 7.
- Hirst, P H (1972), Christian education: a contradiction in terms? *Learning for Living*, 11.4, 6-11
- Hirst, P H and Peters, R S (1970), *The Logic of Education*, London, Routledge
- Holm, J L (1975), *Teaching Religion in School: a practical approach*, London, Oxford University Press
- Hornsby-Smith, M P (1978), *Catholic Education: the unobtrusive partner*, London, Sheed and Ward
- Hull, J M (1975), Agreed syllabuses, past, present and future, in N Smart and D Horder (eds), *New Movements in Religious Education*, London, Temple Smith
- Hull, J M (1989), *The Act Unpacked*, Birmingham Papers in Religious Education No 1, The University of Birmingham and the Christian Education Movement
- Hulmes, E (1979), *Commitment and Neutrality in Religious Education*, London, Chapman
- Hyde, K E (1963), Religious concepts and religious attitudes 1 *Educational Review*, 15, 132-141
- Hyde, K E (1963b), Religious concepts and religious attitudes 2, *Educational Review*, 15.3, 217-227
- Hyde, K E (1965), *Religious Learning in Adolescence*, University of Birmingham Institute of Education, Educational Monographs no 7.
- Kay, W K (1981), Religious thinking, attitudes and personality amongst secondary pupils in England and Ireland, University of Reading, PhD
- Kay, W K (1996), Male and female conceptualisations of science at the interface with religious education, in J Astley and L J Francis (eds), *Christian Theology and Religious Education: connections and contradictions*, London, SPCK.

- Kelly, S E (1978), *The Schools of the Established Church in England: A study of Diocesan Involvement since 1944*, University of Keele, PhD
- Konstant, D (ed.) (1976), *Religious Education for Secondary Schools*, London, Search Press and Macmillan
- Loukes, H (1961), *Teenage Religion*, London, SCM
- Loukes, H (1965), *New Ground in Christian Education*, London, SCM
- Mabud, S A (1992), A Muslim response to the Education Reform Act 1988, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 14, 88-98
- Marfleet, A (1996), School mission statements and parental perceptions, in J Mark Halstead and M J Taylor (eds), *Values in Education and Education in Values*, London, The Falmer Press
- Matthews, H F (1966), *Revolution in Religious Education: a commentary*, Oxford, Religious Education Press
- May, P R and Johnston, O R (1968), *Religion in Our Schools*, London, Hodder and Stoughton
- McGrady, A G (1994), Metaphorical and operational aspects of religious thinking: research with Irish Catholic pupils (part 1), *British Journal of Religious Education*, 16, 148-16
- Murphy, J (1971), *Church, State and Schools in Britain (1800-1970)*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Murphy, R J L (1980), An investigation into some aspects of the development of religious thinking in children aged between six and eleven years, St Andrews, PhD
- Nesbitt, E and Jackson, R (1995), Sikh children's use of 'God': ethnographic fieldwork and religious education, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 17, 108-120
- Nichols, K (1979), *Cornerstone: Guidelines for Religious Education/1*, Slough, St Paul
- Nipkow, K E, Schweitzer, F, Faust-Siehl, G and Krupka, B (1996), Developmental research in the classroom: an empirical study of teaching-learning, in L J Francis, W K Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Norwood Report (1943), *Curricula of Secondary Schools and Examinations*, London, HMSO

- O'Keeffe, B (1996), Christian children at school: their religious beliefs and practices, in L J Francis, W K Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Orchard, S (1993), A further analysis of HMI reports on religious education: 1989-91, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 16, 21-27
- Pedley, R (1970), *The Comprehensive School* (revised), Harmondsworth, Penguin
- Perman, D (1977), *Change and the Churches*, London, Bodley Head
- Plowden Report (1967), *Children and Their Primary Schools*, London, HMSO
- Pring, R (1968), Has education an aim?, in B Tucker (ed.), *Catholic Education in a Secular Society*, London, Sheed and Ward
- Robinson, J A T (1963), *Honest to God*, London, SCM
- Rodhe, S (1977), The Teaching of Religions, in W O Cole (ed.), *World Religions: a handbook for teachers*, (3rd ed), London, The Commission for Racial Equality
- Rummery, R M (1975a), *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society*, Sydney, E J Dwyer
- Rummery, R M (1975b), Catechesis and religious education, in N Smart and D Horder (eds), *New Movements in Religious Education*, London, Temple Smith
- Russell, R (1976), Reason and commitment in education, University of Bristol, M.Ed thesis
- Schools Council (1971), *Religious Education in secondary schools: working paper 36*, London, Evans/Methuen Educational
- Schools Council (1977), *Journeys into Religion: a teacher's handbook*, St Albans, Hart-Davis Educational Ltd
- Schools Council Occasional Bulletins (1977), *A Groundplan for the Study of Religion*, London, Schools Council
- Short, G and Carrington, B (1995), Learning about Judaism: a contribution to the debate on multi-faith religious education, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 17, 157-167

- Slee, N (1989), Conflict and reconciliation between competing models of religious education: some reflections on the British scene, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 11, 126-135
- Slee, N (1996), Further on from Fowler: post-Fowler faith development research, in L J Francis, W K Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Smart, N (1968), *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion*, London, Faber and Faber
- Smith, J W D (1970), How Christian can state schools be today?, *Learning for Living*, 9.4, 7-9
- Snelling, R H (1973), *Worship in the maintained secondary school*, University of Southampton, MA(Ed) thesis
- Souper, P C and Kay, W K (1982), *The School Assembly Debate: 1942-82*, Southampton, University of Southampton
- Storkey, A (1979), *A Christian Social Perspective*, Leicester, Inter Varsity Press
- Strawson, W (1969), *Teachers and the New Theology*, London, Epworth Press
- Swann Report (1985), *Education for All*, London, HMSO
- Tamminen, K (1996), Gender differences in religiosity in children and adolescents, in L J Francis, W K Kay and W S Campbell (eds), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster, Gracewing
- Thatcher, A critique of inwardness in religious education, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 14, 22-27
- The Durham Report on Religious Education: The Fourth R* (1970), London, National Society and SPCK
- Tilby, A (1979), *Teaching God*, Glasgow, Fount
- Townsend, H E R, (1971), *Immigrant Pupils in England*, Slough, NFER
- Tucker, B (1968), Introduction, in B Tucker (ed.), *Catholic Education in a Secular Society*, London, Sheed and Ward
- Warwick, D (1975), *Curriculum Structure and Design*, London, University of London Press

# PRESENTATION AND PROBLEM INVENTORY: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SWEDEN

**Main contributor:**

**Dr Edgar Almén**  
**Linköpings universitet, Sweden**

<b>A</b>	<b>Two perspectives on the history of the objectives of religious education in Sweden:</b>	<b>60</b>
1.	A continuous effort to try to make sure that all parents can trust to let their children take part in the same religious education	60
2.	The formulation of the objectives of religious education as part of the elaboration of the objectives of the Swedish comprehensive school.	65
<b>B</b>	<b>Three special historical perspectives</b>	<b>67</b>
3.	The Swedish concepts 'livsåskådning' (view of life) and 'livsfråga' (question of life) and how they work hermeneutically	67
4.	Starting in the teaching subject matter or in the individual pupil?	71
5.	The roles of teachers and pupils and the concept 'knowledge'	74
<b>C</b>	<b>As yet unreconciled perspectives on content, teaching methods, and educational materials</b>	<b>78</b>
6.	Perspectives on Non-Christian religions	78
7.	Perspectives on Christianity	81
8.	Perspectives on views of life, ethics and questions of life	85
	References	90

**A Two perspectives on the history of the objectives of religious education in Sweden:**

**1. A continuous effort to try to make sure that all parents can trust letting their children take part in the same religious education.**

As in most European countries the schools in Sweden historically have had close relations to the church. That was true to the medieval cathedral schools and to the first Swedish university, that of Uppsala founded in the 15th Century. That was also true when the 'gymnasia' were established in the 17th Century in the cities with cathedrals as a part of organising the Swedish 'empire' of that time preparing not only clergymen but also judges and officers for the new civil service. The lecturers of the gymnasia got their living as prebendaries of parishes around the cathedrals from that time into the 20th Century and formed the Protestant chapters of the dioceses of the Church of Sweden until the 1930s. The bishop was eforus (a kind of inspector) of the gymnasium until 1957.

The Church of Sweden was interested not only in higher education but also in elementary education for everybody. According to the Lutheran doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, every adult baptised person should be a mature Christian with a sound judgement on matters of faith. When the bishop visited the parish, every adult, both men and women, both master and maid, should respond to the question whether the vicar preached the gospel 'purely' or not. Every parent was responsible for the Christian education of his/her children, and hence no one was allowed to marry without approval in the annual examinations carried out by the vicar on Luther's small catechism with its table of duties. So in this 'world of the table of duties' of the 17th-19th Centuries it was the responsibility of the master to promote for his household the knowledge of the catechism and hence the ability to read. And it was the responsibility of the vicar and the church to help the masters to meet these demands. In the 18th and 19th Centuries parish clerks often were engaged with a special responsibility for reading classes. In the agrarian society of that time the ability to read was comparatively high in Sweden.

In the first half of the 19th Century this old system for elementary education became inadequate. When the fields were shifted, the villages broken up and farm-hands and maidens moved out of the house of the farmer to small cottages of their own, the world of the table of duties lost its self-evidence. That was sharpened when the new early industrial villages grew, by rivers and railways. It was very difficult to maintain the old system in the new situation, and if you succeeded in doing that, the old system was still not able to give the education now needed.

The public elementary schools were founded in the 1840s as a way of coping with these difficulties. They were defined by the parliament as a task for every 'socken' (before the tasks of the 'socken' were divided between the tasks of the parish and the tasks of the municipality). The vicar was, as the main officer of the 'socken' and as an academically trained person, given the task of supervising the school and its education. A main task for the school was to continue the education of the old system, preparing for the confirmation of the youth, but new tasks were added. More stress was laid also on writing and counting and on subjects such as history and physical training. In the 1870s it became not only a municipal duty to provide opportunities for attending schools but also a duty for every child to do so. The connection to the church and the content of the curriculum, however, were not very much changed.

The changes in the society of the 19th Century were also the beginning of the 'modern' Sweden with its popular movements such as the temperance movement, the Free Church movements and the labour movement. With the universal suffrage in 1918 this 'modern' Sweden also seized the political power. In this new situation the traditional religious education of the compulsory school became problematic. It was problematic from the point of view of the often anti-clerical Swedish labour movement, and it was even more so from the point of view of the denominations, which didn't accept their children being taught according to the doctrines of the Church of Sweden. Some parents wanted to get permission to start schools of their own with religious education corresponding to their beliefs.

The way Swedish authorities tried to solve this conflict discloses an attitude which since then has grown into a specific Swedish school policy. The unity of the school system was defended when the religious unity

was lost. Religious education was in the national curriculum of 1919 concentrated on the study of the Bible and especially of the New Testament, understood as and read as something that is common to all Christians and as something promoting understanding between Christians, and to some extent on the study of the history of Christianity. It was explicitly forbidden to use the official exposition of the Small Catechism of Martin Luther as a textbook in public schools. Religious education at school was formally separated from the preparation for confirmation in the Church of Sweden (but the church still recognised it as an important part of the Christian upbringing of the youth).

This decision from 1919 was not only a defence of traditional school unity but also a compromise with the Free Churches. School unity was defended out of fear of a segregated society. If all parents could trust the same school, then all youth could be educated in the same milieu, sharing a rich common frame of reference, having childhood friends with backgrounds formed by other opinions and perhaps also by other social conditions. This fear and this dream were important factors behind the evolution of 'the Swedish model', and most Swedes share them, even those who today find faults within that model. Even those today starting 'free schools' (on a larger scale allowed since the early 1990s) mostly argue against segregation and for these schools as a new means to create community and new connections between people.

In making this decision the authorities chose the perspective of the children, not that of the parents. The children were given the right to get a broad orientation about different opinions. The parents were not allowed to organise schools in such a way that their children know of only those opinions their parents decide. Consequently in 1953, when Sweden signed the protocol to the convention of human rights and fundamental freedoms set out by the Council of Europe according to which legal proceedings can be taken against Sweden at the European Court of Human Rights, the Swedish government explicitly declared that it did not accept an interpretation of the right of the parents giving them an unquestioned right to get public support for schools motivated by a request for special religious education (Prop 1953:32). Catholic and Jewish pupils have been allowed to attend special religious education organised by their communities and approved by the authorities instead

of the religious education in school. Today, however, also most of them take part in the religious education in school.

This attitude has led to some further steps. In the 1940s and 1950s the worried parents were not so much those of other Christian denominations but those who did not understand themselves as Christians. Could they trust the religious education of the compulsory school? Against any form of Christian indoctrination they wanted an objective teaching. In the national curricula of 1962 for the then new comprehensive school and the one of 1965 for the 'gymnasium' this demand for objectivity was heavily stressed for all subjects but especially with regard to religious education. At about the same time the collective morning prayer (mostly of an ecumenical character) was changed into a morning assembly. This could still have a Christian content, but often an ethical question was explored or a poem or a piece of music was performed. These assemblies have since then mostly disappeared, largely for practical reasons, but sometimes you find them arranged within a class in the primary school.

As a consequence of the immigration not only from Western Europe but also from Turkey, Iran, Vietnam etc., more and more Swedes think of themselves as Muslims or, to a minor extent, as Buddhists. Therefore, another step on the same road has to be taken, in which the Swedish school tries to give a religious education which also these new Swedes can trust as parents. Some Muslim 'free schools' are started and in many respects they are run very well. When they are criticised, however, those organising them tend to interpret critical remarks from the outside as another form of hostility to foreigners or of racism and do not understand that the motives behind these remarks can be fear of segregation and that dream of shared pluralism mentioned above. The consistent restriction on the right of the parents to choose freely the educational milieu of their children is often even more difficult for them to understand, especially if this has as a consequence that a teacher of religious education is given the right to give another view than the parents of their religion. It is not certain if these parents will trust the religious education of the Swedish school. You cannot obtain trust by force. You must be prepared to deal with lack of trust. But from the now traditional Swedish perspective on religious education, such a lack of trust must be judged as a failure.

## **2. The formulation of the objectives of religious education as part of the elaboration of the objectives of the Swedish comprehensive school.**

The development of the Swedish school system since the 1940s (prepared even earlier) is as a whole very consistent. Having two parallel systems, one privileged and one for the people, was already questioned in the late 19th Century. In the first half of the 20th Century gradually more and more connections and possibilities for passing over from the second system to the first were opened. Now, since 1962, we have a 9 years 'grundskola' or comprehensive compulsory school followed, since 1994, by one 3 years 'gymnasieskola' or upper secondary school with 16 programmes for more than 90% of an age group.

The main document behind this development has been the report from the 1946 School Commission. It stressed two main objectives for the school, that every child should get the best possibilities to develop its personality and mature towards a rich life, and that every child should get the education needed in order to be able to take an active part as a responsible citizen in the development of our society. It was very influenced by progressive educational ideas, and it considered education as one of the most important tools in the social-engineering project of creating a better society. Of course the needs of the industry and of the labour market in general were not neglected. In this educational tradition the main focus was on the problems in our society, how they could be solved, and what kind of society we want. The school system was regarded as one important and sometimes the only available tool to use for this along with the welfare system. And the school subjects were regarded as relevant and could defend their space on the timetable as far as they could contribute to these ends. This way of thinking was unquestioned in Sweden for decades but is since the 80s questioned, mainly by the conservatives.

This project of a better society of course wanted to create opportunities also for those unprivileged in the old educational system, but it also showed a special concern for those with 'special needs'. It stressed the broad development and maturing of different possibilities of the individual and the richness of getting and cultivating impressions from

many different social surroundings. Hence it stressed pluralism, but pluralism as an open milieu with many social relations and with as many traits of common frames of reference as possible. In the 1950s and 1960s, perhaps influenced by the possibilities of a neutral state to build positive relations to the new states in what we now call the third world, it widened its scope to international solidarity and understanding.

In this project religious education became important in many ways. The subject formerly called 'kristendom' (Christianity) or 'kristendoms-kunskap' (study or knowledge of Christianity) was now changed into 'religionskunskap' (religious studies or knowledge of religion) and a new subject 'samhällskunskap' (social studies or knowledge of society) was created. Both of them were emphasised as especially important in relation to the central objectives of the school, and 'religionskunskap' was understood as a main tool both for personal development in general and for the development of a personal view of life, for the promoting of understanding and mutual respect and of enriching exchange of ideas within the society, and for the promoting of international understanding.

In this perspective religious education became again in some respects an ideological agent, now not so much for churches and religious communities as for the school system of 'the Swedish model'. In some respects the expectations on the subject were very demanding, in other unreasonable. Some teachers tried to delimit possible tasks and/or to stress the possibilities within the subject to discuss also these expectations and how they influence the views of life of Swedes. Other teachers, often class teachers in the primary school (teachers of all subjects), were at a loss about what to do.

To some extent this perspective is now questioned and a new stress is laid on certain and measurable knowledge and on school merits valuable on the Swedish labour market and promoting the competitiveness of Swedish industry on the world market. Of course this can change the expectations on religious education. These expectations may also change due to new tensions within the Swedish society.

## **B Three special historical perspectives**

### **3. The Swedish concepts 'livsåskådning' (view of life) and 'livsfråga' (question of life) and how they work hermeneutically**

Of course different interpretations of the concept religion are important for religious education also in Sweden (see below, part 6). In Swedish schools, however, this is not a discussion between different interpretations of what is specifically 'religious' and hence separating it from what is 'not religious'. Instead the concepts 'livsåskådning' and 'livsfråga' are used as key concepts in interpreting both religions and other views of life as something dealing with the same kind of questions. This has interesting - and for others perhaps problematic - roots in the Swedish tradition and in the Swedish modern conception of pluralism. And, of course, it has consequences for the way we teach about religious and non-religious views of life.

The term 'livsåskådning' is as far as we know used officially for the first time in the national curriculum of 1909 for the 'gymnasium' (SFS 1909 N:r 28). The objectives of the education in the subject 'kristendom' (Christianity) are said to be to "to an extent in accordance with the general educational objectives of the gymnasium, and in a way that can foster the religious and moral development of the pupils, give knowledge of the documents and history of Christianity and of its 'livs- och världsåskådning' (view of human life and of the world)". This concept 'livs- och världsåskådning' is later in the same document used as a synonym of 'den kristna tros- och sedeläran' (the Christian doctrine of faith and morals), which shows that 'livsåskådning' is thought of as that part of the object of systematic theology which in the academic study is called (theological) ethics. The same terminology is used in the curriculum of 1914 for the teacher training colleges (seminaries) (SFS 1914 N:r 133) and in an influential textbook from 1924 for these colleges, 'Den kristna tros- och livsåskådningen' by Gustaf Aulén (professor of dogmatics) and Hugo Rosén (senior lecturer of ethics). In these curricula was also mentioned "the importance of the Christian view of life ('livsuppfattningen') in the present struggle between an idealistic and a materialistic view of the world ('världsåskådning")", a theme obviously used for apologetic

purposes in a textbook for the gymnasium by Adolf Ahlberg, used from 1918 into the 1950s.

The following period of the history of the concept is influenced mainly by two sources with divergent and not easily combined consequences for the school.

In the study circles and folk high schools of (some of) the popular movements there was a need for teaching material that could be used as a basis for discussions about religion including critique of religion and other alternative views of life. Especially Alf Ahlberg and Thorsten Åberg from a Christian humanist point of view wrote some books about 'livsåskådningar' such as Marxism, Existentialism, Christian and Non-Christian humanism, and Naturalism. From this point of view a 'livsåskådning' is a tradition reacting on new ideas and new social situations and returning to very influential, 'classical' thinkers and texts. The core of this tradition is often described as a view of man, a view of the world/ cosmos, central moral ideas etc., that is, 'views' mediating between philosophical ideas and existential problems. The individual is described as somebody who has to take sides himself, but who is also invited to take part in a struggle between competing forces where the individual is one in a collective.

In a more academic discussion there is a growing uneasiness with this kind of collective thinking within traditions. One example is the article 'Livsåskådningar' (*Prisma*, vol 2, 1949) by Ingemar Hedenius, professor of practical philosophy in Uppsala and in these years author of two books furiously criticising at least the Swedish theology and the leaders of the Church of Sweden of that time, perhaps the Christian faith as such. He says that disruption characterises the situation in the area of traditional 'livsåskådningar', that the scientific study of the reality cannot help us with clear answers, and that the individual has to take a personal responsibility for clearing up in this area of obscurities and for creating a personal view of life, where the 'answers' on questions of life are not verifiable facts but more of a reaction towards life, founded in irrational strata of our nature. 'Livsåskådning' is here an individual project, in opposition to all great ideas calling for our loyalty.

In the 1960s the concept 'livsfråga' (question of life) became central in the curriculum. The stress on objectivity had not solved all pedagogical problems, and religious education was rated low in inquiries on the interest in different subjects. The National Board of Education initiated a survey on attitudes and outlooks of teenagers towards religious questions, more general or philosophical questions about human life, and existential and moral questions about love, suffering, global justice etc., published 1969 as *Tonåringen och livsfrågorna (The Teen-ager and the Questions of Life)*. The result was evident. The teen-agers (13-15 years old, in the upper part of the comprehensive school) were very interested in the existential and moral questions and not very interested in the religious topics. The report argued that ultimately the religions (and the non-religious views of life) dealt with exactly these questions of life and could be interpreted as different ways of 'answering' these questions. The task for religious education in the new curriculum of 1969 for the comprehensive school was formulated so as to give opportunities to a comprehensive and balanced study and a personal understanding of the fundamental questions of life through a study of Christianity, other religions and non-religious views of life and through the study of how these fundamental questions were experienced through the contemporary changes of society and culture. A similar survey was made on older teen-agers (published 1971) with similar results, and mainly the same concepts were used in the curriculum for the 'gymnasium' of 1970 (for religious education revised in 1978). In the curriculum of 1980 for the comprehensive school the social subjects were formulated less academically, and religious education was formulated as "The questions of man in front of life and existence; religious studies". The description of the subject started with questions of life, pointed out that the study should start in these questions and then continued "in the education shall also be included study of" the Bible, the history and faith of Christian churches and denominations, other religions and non-religious views of life.

Thus in this perspective questions of life ('livsfrågor') are introduced as a hermeneutic key to religions and views of life in general ('livsåskådningar'). The fundamental argument to do so was not that this was the self-understanding of churches and other religious communities but that it would help to make the pupils interested and hence to fulfil the objectives of the subject as part of the objectives of the com-

prehensive school. However, the Church of Sweden in the 1970s gave instructions for the preparation for the confirmation using the same concepts, and this terminology heavily influenced the way many people talked about and thought of their own faith/religion (or non-religious 'livsåskådning').

The hermeneutic and pedagogical advantage of this terminology, of course, is that it allows us to describe something commonly human, to which there are different ways of responding. These questions of life constitute a form of community or fellowship in which we all share, and they help us to compare and discuss the different 'answers'. This community or fellowship is even larger than if you would use the concept 'religion' as a similar tool, when the non-religious are left outside and the subject tends to stress what is common to the religions as against those who are not religious. As the questions of life are thought of as very open and perennial, every attempt to claim a final answer or truth is questioned and it is reasonable to listen to other contributions to the continuous struggle with these questions.

Probably there are also some disadvantages. There is perhaps a tendency in this approach to concentrate on thoughts and opinions in a way that is not fair to all forms of religious belief/life/piety. Compared with religious education in other countries religious education in Sweden is less perhaps interested in 'religious' practice like how often you pray, the experience of holiness in services/liturgy, veneration of icons or shrines etc. or perspectives from in the psychology of development on such practices.

This approach may be more stressed today than 30-40 years ago in Sweden, but probably it is formed and inspired by the Swedish background. Professor Hedenius wanted, as already shown, to dissolve the systems of 'livsåskådningar' in order to find honest and meaningful answers to 'livsåskådningsfrågorna' (the questions of the views of life). And in a critical comment towards an earlier version of the new curriculum of 1919 professor Einar Billing said that the task of the catechetical religious education is, not to collect and organise lessons from the bible study, but to "confront that history which has its all dominating centre in the person and work of Jesus Christ with the human life as it now lived with all its ultimately continual questions, struggles and tasks in order to find

out what light is falling upon them from the faith in Christ and what it means for an individual, now as always, as regards to moral and religion to know and believe in him" (Billing 1914, p 294).

This, and the traditional stress on catechism-knowledge and on the sermon as the vital part of the liturgy, may have made for also the rapid adjustment of the academic research and even academic disciplines. In the undergraduate programmes of the theological faculties of Sweden (Uppsala and Lund) systematic theology (dogmatics, ethics and philosophy of religion) was from the late 1960s named 'tros- och livsåskådningsvetenskap' (literally the study of faiths and views of life, officially ethics and philosophy) and in Uppsala the postgraduate programme of dogmatics was changed into a programme also named 'tros- och livsåskådningsvetenskap' (officially 'theological and ideological studies') and an extensive research was done, especially on the views of life held by individuals, described as "consisting of a person's central values and norms, the basic feelings which can be said to characterise his experience of life and those cognitive elements which influence, or are dependent on, the ethical and attitudinal components" (Gyllenkrok & Jeffner 1976, p 129). This research is summarised by Carl Reinhold Bråkenhielm in *Concilium* 1994/6 in an article, from which it is also evident that there behind this research is a conviction that "the world-views and values of ordinary men and women in today's world" are of theological relevance, not "merely as a provider of background knowledge to Christian ministry and religious affirmations in general. It may even have some bearing on religious truth" (Bråkenhielm 1994, p 24, 33). The same kind of survey-questions were used in November 1995 in St Petersburg within the PETER project by graduate students from Linköping who published their results under the title *Cabbage and Caviar*.

#### **4. Starting in the teaching subject matter or in the individual pupil?**

In the history of all school subjects (as in the history of teacher education) you can find strains between a tendency to see the school subjects as a popularised versions of academic disciplines and a tendency to see them as tools used to help the pupils to come to maturity, to develop their possibilities, to get an overview of nature and society and to find,

create and realise meaning and values. Often you find more sensitivity for the needs of children in the lower forms and for academic demands in the higher forms. Of course this is true also for religious education.

On the whole, religious education has changed in Sweden in the 20th Century towards an approach more consciously starting in the thinking of the pupil - perhaps partly diffused in the new curriculum of 1994 (cf. Hartman 1994). When you look more in detail, however, you can find different ways of stressing the thinking, interests and needs of the pupil entering and disappearing into the curriculum and the textbooks, probably in an interesting interplay with changing interests in different teaching subject matters. Here we will concentrate on some aspects.

As is already discussed in part 1, there is an established tradition in Sweden to organise religious education not starting with the wish of the parents to raise their children within their own tradition but with the right of the children to get a broad orientation about different opinions and traditions. In this tradition there is a fundamental respect for the children's own thinking and judgement. Principally it perhaps also gives the pupils not only the right to be comprehensively informed but also the right to choose what information they will discern as relevant and important. To what extent this has influenced the choice of teaching subject matter in different periods of this century should be investigated more in detail, but the fact that lack of interest from the pupils brought about a survey and changes in the curriculum in the 1960s indicates that this was important at least at that time.

Also the perspective of the 1946 School Commission starts not only in the academic disciplines but even more in the thinking of the pupils. They stress that the school should be a milieu of free growth of the children and that the free shaping of personalities is the most important task of the school. One important part of this is how the school can contribute to the attitude to the problems of a view of life ('inställningen till livsåskådningsproblemen'). The school should give objective information about the content and ends of different views of life, about their history, relations to reality and views of reality. "The task is thus to give knowledge. But this knowledge must be given in such a way that the pupils open their eyes for the deep seriousness and importance of the questions. The school should in this way lay the foundations for the at-

tempts of the pupils to reach to a personal conviction, to a view of life grounded on personal experience" (SOU 1948:27, p 36-37).

The survey initiated by the National Board of Education and published in 1969 is already mentioned in part 3. It was followed by studies also on primary school pupils and their way of experiencing and interpreting first religious symbols and later explicitly questions of life. These studies are summed up in Hartman 1986 and Hartman 1994, p 42ff. The results questioned the assumption of evolutionary psychology that children in these ages are outward oriented, active and full of energy but rather superficial and unable to reflect on deeper questions. Of course there is a great variety of content and depth, but there are good reasons to assume that all children reflect on the fundamental conditions of their lives. Reflections on questions of life are strikingly frequent in surveys, but they are mingled with reflections on everyday and trivial matters in such a way that adults often overlook them. (Hartman 1994, p 44-46)

This perspective was, as mentioned above, heavily stressed in the curriculum of 1980, where it was prescribed that the teaching of religious education "should start from and be connected on to the own experiences of the pupils, actual events and phenomena and discuss contemporary persons of current interest". This could be interpreted as a clear expression of a 'dialogical code of curriculum' (as against a 'proclamatory', see Hartman 1994, 24-28). But there was also in the same curriculum an unclear relation to the teaching subject matter - "in the education shall also be included study of..."

In an earlier version of the curriculum of 1994, this 'dialogical code' was even more stressed: "Religious education in school has as its objective to stimulate and foster the process in which pupils interpret their lives and to let them meet the most important traditions of views of life" (SOU 1992:94, p 238). The political discussion before the final decision dealt to a certain extent with these objectives of religious education. One of the parties in the government of that time, the Christian Democrats, wanted to stress that the school should rest on the foundational values of Christian tradition. The political process ended in this formulation of the "targets to aim for", which of course can be interpreted as a set back in the direction of more stress on the teaching subject matter:

The school in its teaching in religious studies should aim to ensure that pupils

- \* reflect over, develop and deepen their knowledge of religious, ethical and existential questions as a basis for forming their own viewpoints,
- \* deepen their knowledge of Christianity and the other major world religions, and about religious representations from other religions in our own age and historically, as well as on non-religious conceptions of life,
- \* understand how Swedish society has been influenced by the bible and the Christian faith,
- \* deepen their understanding and respect for the views of other persons in religious and ethical questions and distance themselves from people being exposed to persecution on account of their religion or view of life,
- \* appreciate the value of basic ethical principles and are able to reflect on the reasons for religious or other views of life concerning values such as truth, justice and human dignity. (Lpo 94, p 65-66)

## **5. The roles of teachers and pupils and the concept 'knowledge'**

The roles of and expectations on teachers have changed very much during the 20th Century in Sweden as everywhere. From the point of view of religious education you can see these general changes from a specific perspective, but you can also see some special, and for the teachers especially, challenging and perhaps also frustrating changes.

An often neglected aspect is that teachers trained for a certain school system with a special curriculum continue to teach for, say, 40 years and that very much can happen during these years both to the school system and to the way a specific subject is conceived. A few teachers trained in teacher training colleges before 1919 taught for some years in the 1960s in the comprehensive school with not very much in-service training! Some of them followed the discussions and greeted the changes, others did not but felt uncertain and insecure. The latter was to many teachers the case especially with regard to religious education.

As religious education in the compulsory school before 1919 was thought of as a preparation for the confirmation, the teacher was thought of as a sort of lay assistant to the local vicar (of the Church of Sweden).

The concentration in the next period on the bible and on church history called forth a new teacher role in religious education, that of a teacher concentrating on that which is considered the uncontroversial common ground of the Christian churches and an important part of Swedish cultural heritage. The role of the teacher is something like a warden of common treasures and of generally agreed moral values. In the Old Testament that was the narratives of Genesis and the history of the kings and prophets - not as much as before the regulations, the theological interpretations, the psalms or the wisdom literature. In the New Testament there was a concentration - perhaps influenced also by the liberal theological tradition - on the teachings of Jesus and on what Jesus and the apostles did - not so much as before on theologically controversial texts trying to conceptualise the importance of what had happened to Jesus in that week that is the heart of the gospels and that around which everything is centred in the epistles. The history of Christianity is described as a history full of strong persons to be impressed by and to imitate and as a, on the whole, harmonious history where Protestantism is the evidently proper continuation of everything precious in the preceding history and where the Church of Sweden is preserving all these riches. In this way most teachers (and church ministers) did not experience any conflict between this uncontroversial common ground and the message of the Church of Sweden, and it was accepted that the chapters of the diocese had some authority over the religious education in all schools and that only members of the Church of Sweden could teach that subject until 1958 - since you couldn't leave the Church of Sweden without entering another religious community approved by the authorities until 1951, and since most members of the Free Churches were also members of the Church of Sweden, that was a problem of conscience for quite a few individuals, but juridically it was a problem mainly for Catholics (and Jews).

The demand for objectivity in the curricula of the 1960s was interpreted as questioning this former role of the teacher and asking for a more neutral and passive role of the teacher. Many teachers were afraid of

being accused of indoctrination or of trying to influence the pupils in these matters. The demand for objectivity seemed to challenge their view of being a teacher. Education for them included trying to influence at least the moral thinking of the pupils, since most of them had thought of the task of the teacher as being to help pupils to develop their personalities and to mature and/or to inculcate the pupils into the traditions and values of our society. This demand for objectivity was very soon accompanied by declarations from the authorities that the objectives of the school were not only to bring knowledge but to educate in the widest meaning with also moral aspects, and the remaining impressions of many teachers in the 1960s and the 1970s became that there was something special and very difficult with religious education. Many class teachers tried to avoid the subject, and in an evaluation for the new National Agency for Education, it was obvious that especially teachers in the late primary school tried to avoid the subject, which thus got less time than prescribed (Svingby 1990, 65).

The demand for objectivity was in the 1969 curriculum reformulated into a recommendation to teach with commitment and matter-of-fact-ness. This was meant to stress that the teacher, in order to be able to make the pupils interested, is of course allowed to show that he himself is interested in the topics and questions on the agenda and that this could be done without forcing the opinions of the teachers upon the pupils. A lot has been done in order to develop this line of thought, and in Almén (1994) it is described as a way of avoiding the temptations of objectivity with the help of markings or signs of educational curiosity. For many teachers, however, this was experienced as a new, even more demanding and difficult quest not only for a neutral objectivity but for a committed objectivity.

The new perspective of questions of life put additional problems to many teachers. How were they to teach this kind of problems without any clear solutions? The expected expertise was not of the same kind as in most other subjects, and the role of the teacher was also a new one. As a teacher of religious education you ought to know a lot about how people within different traditions (and for example authors and philosophers) interpret and struggle with or find ways of handling these questions. You never know enough. As a teacher you are also expected by the pupils to have thought a lot yourself, but even if you have, you of

course have to admit that you are at least as puzzled and worried as your pupils. If you as a teacher want your pupils to trust you and to think that you take these questions as seriously as you want them to do, you have to let them see at least hints of your real self behind that facade with which you as a teacher usually confront your pupils. That can be personally hard, and that can force you to question that role as a teacher you have put your trust in.

These difficulties are of course not only difficulties but also possibilities towards a new, richer and more creative role as a teacher. They are not difficulties and possibilities for the teachers of religious education only, but are to some extent or other shared by most teachers. But they have become very obvious for all who teach religious education in Sweden, and they are experienced not only as possibilities but, perhaps even more, as difficulties. The usual reaction of Swedish teachers confronting difficulties is - perhaps as part of the heritage from the time of social engineering - to ask for more in-service training. That would certainly help to some extent. But the problems at stake here - the conception of myself as a teacher and how I would be able to find a role as teacher where a certain kind of sharing fundamental human problems with the pupils does not threaten my integrity and authority as a teacher - are certainly not 'solved' in a few lectures or seminars.

And also the pupils can have difficulties with such a subject. Usually it is a successful strategy as a pupil first to try to find out what each teacher expects from you and then to do as the teacher expects. But what is expected in religious education with the 'targets to aim for' expressed in the Swedish way? Can you trust that the teacher really respects your own way of reflecting over, developing and deepening your own knowledge of religious, ethical and existential questions as part of your own forming of your own viewpoints, or should you try to reflect the way the teacher wants over questions formulated by the teacher? Do you not as a pupil have to trust that the way the teacher puts the question will really help you in a better way than the way you put the question yourself? And will it not (and should it not) pay better off in the final marks in the late comprehensive school and in the 'gymnasium', if you concentrate on facts about different religions and traditions and try to describe their views and ways of working within their traditions than if you work in your own way with your own thoughts and with your own attitudes?

At stake here, as in so much of current school debate in Sweden, is what we want pupils to learn in school, what we mean by 'knowledge'. The central chapter in the report of the commission preparing the new curriculum is on the concept 'knowledge', where knowledge is understood not as a reproduction of reality but as a human construction, situated in a practical, social and linguistic context and created in an interplay between what you want to attain, the knowledge you already have, problems experienced from within that knowledge, and your experiences (SOU 1992:94, 79). This discussion is perhaps especially relevant for religious education, but religious education shares that discussion with the (comprehensive) school as a whole and will have to cope with it in a way consistent with (or clearly defined in relation to) the way it is coped with in the other subjects.

### **C As yet unreconciled perspectives on content, teaching methods and educational materials**

#### **6. Perspectives on Non-Christian religions**

The history of religions became a part of theological education in Sweden comparatively early (cf. Sharpe 1975). The first professor of theology who understood the history of religions as his main task was the later archbishop and ecumenical pioneer Nathan Söderblom. To him the study of the development of religious thought was both a way to understanding what is essentially religious as a central aspect of what is essentially human and a way of tracing the development of religious thought into its 'higher' forms. In that way the history of religions became for him an important way to a deeper understanding also of Christianity.

This perspective has played a certain role also in Swedish schools, especially in the 'gymnasium'. The study of Non-Christian religions is there regarded not so much as a way to understanding minorities within their own country and not only as a way to understanding people living in remote cultures but as a cultivation of our common heritage and a way

to understanding ourselves. The 'primitive' religions are important - interpreted both as in some respects showing the essence of piety and as showing what should be cultivated - as are the classical documents of the great traditions. In Swedish - and even more in Danish - religious education there is a certain concentration on original documents, on understanding Hinduism from the Veda literature, from the Upanishads and from the Bhagavadgita, on understanding Buddhism from the Tripitaka, etc. That the religion of ancient Greece still in the 1970s should be studied the last year of the comprehensive school, could be understood as a reminiscence of such a perspective. There were some hesitations in using the same perspective on Islam and Judaism. Here you also in some way or another had to handle the historical relations between the three religions, and for that the start in the original documents was not enough. But also on Islam the tendency in the textbooks in religious education has been to describe the life of Muhammed and (some central thoughts in) the Quran as the 'religion' Islam and then to leave it to the subject history to describe the 'cultural' and 'political' relation between the Christian world and the world of Islam.

The perspective on Non-Christian religions changed in the 1950s and 1960s, when the objective of international understanding was stressed. In this perspective the 'world religions' were interpreted more as something determining the atmosphere and the way of thinking, experiencing and valuing human life in different parts of the world. As the academic foundation for this basically the same handbooks as before (with their mainly historical perspective) were used, but at least in principle the focus was now on the present functions of the religions. The religions were studied in the milieus where they dominate, where they influence the whole culture, where they are part of what is thought of as self-evident, determining the frames of references within which the individuals develop their identities. The question of how to discriminate between the religion and the culture is always present, but the perspective insists that this question can never be definitely answered. The emphasis is on the interplay between religion and culture (not on what is unquestionably religious), on the common frames of reference (not on the disputes or different interpretations within that frames).

At the same time Non-Christian religions were now also thought of as material for each pupil's individual project of forming a 'livsaskadning'.

In this perspective the world religions must be thought of as possible to separate from those cultural milieus where they form the frames of reference. They must also be thought of as consisting of elements you can use for your own purposes in your own context without accepting the religion as a whole (and one of those cultural contexts where it dominates). From the point of view of the believer of that religion this is, of course, a highly controversial presumption, but it seems logical if the objective is not to convert but to "reflect over, develop and deepen /the pupils'/ knowledge of religious, ethical and existential questions as a basis for forming their own viewpoints". And from this perspective religious education should concentrate on those elements in the religious traditions that could be of special interest for Swedish adolescents today. And these could be quite other elements than those helping you to understand a person who had grown up in a cultural environment determined by that religious tradition.

Those two perspectives of the 1950s and 1960s were never reconciled, and they are still both used unreconciled. An illustrating example of this is the debate in *Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift* (1988) and in Geels (1988) and Johannesson (1988) on what material to use teaching about Hinduism. According to Antoon Geels (a university senior lecturer of the history and psychology of religion) the Upanishads do not help you understand the religion of ordinary Hindus. Instead you should concentrate for example on the rituals in a village when someone is dead. Rudolf Johannesson (a gymnasium lecturer and author of some very influential textbooks) replied that that would not help or challenge the pupils in the same way as the Upanishads could.

The concept 'livsfråga' asks for some additional perspectives on the Non-Christian religions. This is not yet very elaborated in Swedish school textbooks (or in Swedish academic study of religions). It seems to be difficult. Perhaps this is because this perspective of 'livsfrågor' is (as the perspective of religions as material to be used in forming individual views of life) a kind of 'ethical ethnocentrism' putting our questions in the centre and the questions of other cultures at the periphery (so Hedin 1996). But it could also be that it is difficult because we up to now have concentrated only on trying to ask what is experienced by many people today as relevant questions and to interpret Christian faith in relation to them and have forgotten the original idea from the 1960s of trying to

deepen and generalise these questions in order to make it easier to relate not only to Non-Christian religions but also to how these questions of life are treated in fiction and in philosophy.

It should be noted that, when these perspectives were formed, there were not many pupils in the Swedish classrooms with parents thinking of themselves as Muslims (or Buddhists). Now, when there are many such pupils, religious education has to consider also the minority situation and, in my opinion, also the process of being loyal to, working with and responsibly transforming the tradition you live in also from the point of view of these religions.

## **7. Perspectives on Christianity**

The discussions and debates about religious education in Sweden has mainly dealt with the teaching about Christianity. Consequently, all changes and reforms of religious education should have had effects on this teaching.

At the same time there are good reasons to say that exactly the teaching about Christianity has changed to the least extent. If this is true, old ways of teaching about Christianity are expected to work in new contexts. The effect can be that exactly that part of the subject in relation to which the arguments for change are articulated tends to be alongside the changes - and the new possibilities.

In a separate article also used in the PETER project (Almén 1994) I have discussed the special problems of teaching about Christianity in a more exhaustive way. Here I want to concentrate on some points.

There is a perhaps particularly Swedish tradition of using (an exposition of) Luther's small catechism as a textbook in elementary religious education. The catechism was meaningful and useful when it was understood as an explication of the belief which is primarily expressed in the creed, in prayer and in liturgy. But when the presupposed conception of truth in due time became increasingly more empirical and scientific and the implied references to the creed, prayer and liturgy were lost, the

language of the catechism became difficult to understand and evoked an image of Christian faith which became to many uninteresting and, in my opinion, misleading. When this theorising tradition of catechism was later taken over by the school, the 'knowledge' of catechism was interpreted as a knowledge of the same kind as the scientifically based knowledge of other subjects, and that deepened the difficulties.

That is, of course, not the only way to use the catechism tradition. The quotation from Einar Billing above in part 3 shows a possibility more in harmony with the perspective of questions of life. I will argue for something like that, but I have to admit that to-day the usual way of looking at the catechism in school and church is not this one.

It is the school - not the churches (or one church) - which is responsible for the image of Christian faith given by religious education at school. At the same time, the image given by religious education can not be totally different from the image given by churches and denominations. In the Christian churches in Sweden to-day there are large and influential groups, to whom that assertive language is not problematic at all, and who not hesitate to support this assertive language with disconnected quotations from the Bible. In the Church of Sweden, however, the broad 10 year study work preparing for the 400 year jubilee of the convocation of Uppsala 1593 showed a marked interest in expressing the message of the church in a way relevant and important to the questions and thinking of modern Swedes. Pupils in school should hear also about such thoughts and be given opportunities to penetrate them.

In this traditional language it is difficult not only to describe the 'content' of Christian faith but also to show how it is related what you teach about the Bible and about the ecclesiastical history. These difficulties to relate the different parts of the teaching about Christianity to one another are, to my opinion, evident in most textbooks.

When you have chosen a perspective and a terminology for religious education, also Christian faith and Christianity (in Swedish we have some difficulties in differentiating between them and relating them to one another) must be described in the perspective and in the terminology chosen to be the framework of the subject helping it to achieve its objectives.

But to ask for that is to ask for more than the old theorising tradition in a slightly more modern dress. If you define 'questions of life' in such a way that the old answers of the exposition of Luther's catechism can be used as 'answers' also to these 'questions of life', then you both answer the wrong questions and give a very problematic impression of what should be meant by an 'answer' to a 'question of life' and a rather odd image of Christian faith. For, if 'questions of life' really are what all men have to struggle with, there can be no 'answers' helping you to live outside of that struggle - an 'answer' must be more of a way of handling the 'question' in a creative way not destroying one's courage to be. If these questions not only worry men but also make them think life is worth living and force them to all forms of cultural efforts, isn't it an odd image of Christian faith to describe it as to live far from that wrestling with those questions? For me it is more convincing to follow for example Paul Tillich and describe Christian faith as the courage enabling us to endure the anxiety and the questions of life without diminishing or constricting them, in true solidarity also with those who suffer from them.

To be able to broaden and deepen such a description of Christian faith within such a perspective of 'questions of life', religious education needs the help both of the churches and of university education and research. In my opinion it must be in the interest also of the churches to be described in religious education at school for young people as something urgent and relevant to the questions they find to be of great importance. And this perspective could be very fertile indeed also for the academic study.

One way of describing Christian faith in accordance with the perspective of Swedish religious education could be this: The biblical texts about the early Christian church are studied as outcomes of interpretational processes where what happened around and with Jesus is interpreted as something related to (then current versions of) the central questions of life, as attempts to express that and how Christian faith is something overcoming anxiety and creating courage to be - at first in a Jewish milieu related to the promises and frames of reference of the Old Testament, and then in a Hellenistic milieu related to its quest for eternal life. In the following epochs Christians often have required new expressions

and interpretations because the old ones have not been perceived as relevant in relation to the central questions of life as they then were experienced and in order to be able to witness to Christian faith as something overcoming anxiety and creating courage to be also in their situation. And the teaching about Christian faith to-day should then be to show different similar attempts to describe it as something overcoming or helping men to handle anxiety and promoting courage to be in relation to the most urgent questions of life of to-day - which perhaps are the same old questions in new forms.

There are many points in such a way of teaching about Christian faith. Such a teaching is open and curious about new attempts and new interpretations. It encourages solidarity and listening to the experiences and questions both of the pupils and of Christians in other times and in other cultural surroundings. It focuses on the process of being loyal to, working with and responsibly transforming the tradition you live in, something which is also a process every pupil lives in. It describes Christian faith as something not giving one single answer to very 'question of life' but giving frames for your struggle with and your way of handling them and pointing in certain directions. And - not the least important thing to teachers of religious education - it opens up for a fruitful way of action in relation to the demand for objectivity (for a more detailed discussion, cf. Almén 1994).

Such a teaching about Christian faith should to some extent use other texts and teaching materials than the more traditional ones. To the more elaborated formulations and expressions of Christian faith must be added material suggesting what those creating or using these formulations and expressions thought was really important in human life and material showing the interplay between the way life was experienced and the way Christian faith was interpreted. In that perspective the used material is not only something to observe and set down in remembrance but more something inviting you to work with, to interpret and use. Also the texts of the Bible appear as open texts, as texts to which people have returned with different questions and out of which I can draw new aspects if I take my own situation seriously.

Such a perspective seems to me consequent and useful in relation to the objectives of the religious education in Sweden. It seems to me also sci-

entifically very fertile. But it is not the perspective dominating the teaching about Christian faith in religious education in Sweden. And it is certainly not uncontroversial, since it is contrary to the interpretation many Swedes make of their own Christian faith.

But I think it is important to make clear such controversies, because then it will be evident that the perspective of Swedish religious education is by no means unproblematic, that it is by no means certain that it is neutral to all interpretations of Christian faith and that it is also used on other religions and can lead to descriptions contrary to interpretations some of its adherents make of their own faith.

## **8. Perspectives on views of life, ethics and questions of life**

Here the perspective of religious education in Sweden is described starting from the concepts 'livsåskådning' and 'livsfråga'. The consistency of the perspective is then depending on the clearness of these concepts. Probably they are used in different senses. Behind these concepts there are many sources of inspiration and perhaps also incompatible intentions. There are many clarifications and a lot of theoretical work to do.

One first motive, then, for using these terms was to be able within the subject to treat also the views of those criticising religion. In the 1940s many atheists and agnostics felt that the religious education of that time implicitly denied that it was possible to have as serious and well-grounded a morality when you were not a Christian. Since the aim was that all parents should trust sending their children to the same religious education, efforts should be made to find a perspective including and acknowledging also the opinions of these parents. The concept 'livsåskådning' seemed to make this possible.

In this sense 'livsåskådning' is very much a non-religious phenomenon thought of as a parallel phenomenon to religions, that is as a kind of traditions kept together by a history, central texts, recognised representatives and common central values. When the religious education of the 'gymnasium' should include such 'livsåskådningar' in the 1960s, the

textbooks talked about two manifest 'livsåskådningar', Marxism and Existentialism. But they also, in accordance with the tradition from the folk high schools, mentioned what some of them called tendencies towards 'livsåskådningar' as Christian and Profane Humanism, Rationalism or Intellectualism and Naturalism. The material used in the Swedish textbooks as examples of Marxism was texts by Marx himself (often texts by 'the young Marx') and sometimes texts by Lenin, some social democrats and/or some contemporary 'humanistic Marxists'. Examples of Existentialism were always Sartre (especially *Existentialism is a Humanism*) and sometimes also Heidegger. These canons of the mentioned 'tendencies' were established already in the folk high school literature.

'Livsåskådningar' in this sense are still important in the university courses for teachers of religious education and at least in the upper secondary school, even if the perspective showed up to be problematic. Anders Jeffner showed already 1968 that the 'tendencies' perhaps could be recognised as traditions but that their central values could not be separated. The importance of Existentialism is probably not so great now as in the 1960s, when by the way Sartre insisted that it should be interpreted as a movement within the Marxist tradition. And many of the ways in which Marxism was described as a 'livsåskådning' in the 1960s and 1970s are not very convincing after the end of the Cold War.

But this was not the only sense in which the term 'livsåskådning' was used. Ingemar Hedenius criticised that kind of 'livsåskådningar' in the same way as he criticised religion. To him 'livsåskådning' should be an individual project, and the same perspective is implicit in the thought of shaping personalities as it was expressed by the School Commission. Also the research of Anders Jeffner was built on an individualistic definition of 'livsåskådning'.

Also 'livsåskådning' in this individualistic sense is still important in the religious education, especially in those arguments for the subject, where work on the individual 'livsåskådning' is said to be a central part of personal growth and maturing of each pupil. But it is difficult to teach about such 'livsåskådningar' and to write about them in textbooks. Which examples should be described and discussed? Perhaps empirical research (cf. Bråkenhielm 1994) could make it possible to recognise some

trends and common traits that could be described and discussed, but in this sense 'livsåskådningar' are in principle extremely many and different because to build such a 'livsåskådning' is a project of every individual, close to individual identity and integrity.

'Livsåskådningar' in both these senses were thought to be closely related to the ethical choices a person makes. National curricula and textbooks for religious education from the 1960s and 1970s stressed this, and the advisory material for the 'gymnasium' from the National Board of Education from around 1970 discussed two types of course planning. One of them started by presenting the religions and the non-religious views of life and then used these presentations to try to put light upon and deepen the understanding of some ethical problems. The other started with discussions of ethical problems in order to create a 'Vorverständnis' in which the pupils should be able to get more out of the following presentations and discussions of religions and non-religious views of life. It was not so explicitly said, but certainly also the work of every pupil on his or her individual 'livsåskådning' was thought of as something done in an interplay of scrutinising the possibilities of elements from different views of life and using the always preliminary 'livsåskådning' when ethical choices are inevitable.

The way the relation between a religion or view of life and the ethical choices was described could easily be too straightforward and unsophisticated. The teacher (and some textbooks) could give the impression that a certain faith or view of life implied a certain ethical choice. There was very often a lack of ambition (or lack of terminology) to discuss how a certain religious tradition or a certain non-religious tradition can offer a discourse or tools for structuring and analysing ethical problems in such a way that the problem is still open to different choices and to uncertainty but that the later choice can nevertheless be seen as motivated and significant in relation to it. The attempts to relate views of life and ethical choices were not made easier by the fact that the terminology with which ethical problems were philosophically analysed in Sweden at that time offered very few connection links to religious faith or 'livsåskådningar'.

The ethical problems should still be treated within religious education, but now normally less time is spent on them, and their role as proposed hermeneutic keys and interpretational context for religion and non-religious views of life has been given to 'livsfrågorna' (the questions of life). These 'livsfrågor' seem to play these roles in a comparatively successful way, but perhaps to some extent this is possible just because also this terminology can be used within different frames of reference, hiding different aims and different concepts. To be able to deepen this perspective and examine its possibilities - and limitations - also such differences must be elucidated and discussed.

There are different sources of inspiration to the concept 'livsfråga', sources which perhaps are not wholly compatible. To some people the inspiration comes from theoretical systems as Jasper's 'Grenzfragen' or Tillich's correlation theory, to others from fiction or from respect for the expertise of every individual (also pupil) on the way he or she experiences his or her own life.

The relation between 'livsfrågor' and religions/'livsåskådningar' can be thought of in different ways. If you think of 'livsfrågor' as something that can be answered, religions and 'livsåskådningar' are (systems of) answers to these questions, frequently answers mediated by very general theories about man and human life which are interpreted as elements of the religions/'livsåskådningar'. If you on the other hand think of 'livsfrågor' more as mysteries of life, questions that you can never get rid of by answering them but always have to struggle with and at its best can find a way to handle without losing your courage to be, then religions and 'livsåskådningar' must be described in another way.

Perhaps you should talk about different kinds of 'livsfrågor'. Those which can be answered could be called questions of 'livsåskådningar', and the rest questions of life in a more proper sense. If so, you have to decide if you want to try to describe religions and 'livsåskådningar' in relation to both types of questions (and try to find out what such descriptions would look like), or if you want to stress one type of questions. Or would you say that some religions and 'livsåskådningar' should be described in relation to the first type of questions, other religions and 'livsåskådningar' in relation to the second type? Or would you say that

the same religion or 'livsåskådning' can get different shapes depending on from which type of questions they are viewed?

Such an obscurity can encourage the use of different perspectives and of different types of expertise and of different types of texts and other materials (e g representative texts of religions and 'livsåskådningar', fictional texts, newspaper articles, news-items on human reactions from ordinary life or texts written by the pupils). Such a pluralism can be enriching.

But in the long run it will be enriching only if you try to make this pluralism conscious, distinguish between the different perspectives and use them as a means to try different ways in order to deepen your understanding. What does a certain religion or 'livsåskådning' look like, if you use this kind of material and this way of understanding 'livsfrågor'? In which respect seems a certain perspective to be fertile, and in which respect can another perspective be more helpful?

A religious education which is pluralistic in this sense could be something more than teaching a system of classification or categorisation, in which somebody has decided which principles should determine how to classify or categorise. It could be a way of providing the pupils with tools for their own experimentation with and cultivating their personal views of life. It could also be a common adventure where teachers and pupils try to experiment and work in such a way that they can contribute to the common cultural consciousness and to real knowledge about how meaning is created and sustained in that society of which their school is a part!?

## References:

Almén, Edgar, Frestelser och vägmärken för undervisningen om kristendomen. Almén, Edgar, Furenhed, Ragnar & Hartman, Sven G, *Att undervisa om religion, livsfrågor och etik i skolan* (Skapande Vetande Nr 26), Linköpings universitet 1994, pp 135-149. (Unpublished translation with the title *Temptations and Markings for Teaching About Christianity* used within the PETER project.)

Billing, Einar, /Yttrande av sakkunniga/ I. *Folkundervisningskommitténs betänkande IV angående folkskolan*, Stockholm 1914, pp 283-306

Bråkenhielm, Carl Reinhold, Christian Tradition and Contemporary Society. *Concilium* 1994/6, pp 23-34

Elofson, H, Eriksson, K, Gustafsson, P, Johansson, K, & Öster, K, *Cabbage and Caviar. Views on Life, Mankind and Religion among Young People in St. Petersburg - a City of Contradictions*. Essay 1996, Linköpings universitet, Institute of Tema, Department of Theology and Religious Studies

Geels, Antoon, Buddhism som "folkreligion". *Föreningen Lärare i Religionskunskap Årsbok* 1988, pp 67-95

Gyllenkrok, Axel & Jeffner, Anders, Theological and Ideological Studies. *Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University* (ed Helmer Ringgren), Almqvist & Wiksell International, Uppsala 1976, pp 119-129

Hartman, Sven G, *Barns tankar om livet*. Natur och Kultur, Stockholm 1986

Hartman, Sven G, Hur religionsämnet formades. Almén, Edgar, Furenhed, Ragnar & Hartman, Sven G, *Att undervisa om religion, livsfrågor och etik i skolan* (Skapande Vetande Nr 26), Linköpings universitet 1994, pp 11-41

Hartman, Sven G, Barns livstolkning. Almén, Edgar, Furenhed, Ragnar & Hartman, Sven G, *Att undervisa om religion, livsfrågor och etik i skolan* (Skapande Vetande Nr 26), Linköpings universitet 1994, pp 42-70

Hedenius, Ingemar, Livsåskådningar. *Prisma*, vol 2 (1949), pp 2-7

Hedin, Christer , Människovärdet i fokus. Religionskunskapens roll och inriktning i dagens skola. *Religion och Livsfrågor* 1996 N:r 1, pp 18-21

Jeffner, Anders, *Naturalism, Materialism, Rationalism och Humansim. Analys av terminologi och begreppsbildning i en typ av moderns svensk livsåskådningslitteratur* (Livsåskådningar i det moderna samhället, preliminär forskningsrapport nr 2), (stencil), Uppsala University, Department of Theology, Uppsala 1968

Johannesson, Rudolf, Skev bild av hinduismen i skolans läroböcker? *Religion och Livsfrågor* 1988 nr 3, pp 28-29

*Lpo 94 Syllabi for the Compulsory School*, (stencil) Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, 1995

Prop 1953:32 Kungl Maj:ts proposition nr 32 (*Bihang till riksdagens protokoll* 1953. 1 saml N:r 32)

SFS 1909 N:r 28 *Undervisningsplan för gymnasiet*

SFS 1914 N:r 133 *Undervisningsplan för statens folkskoleseminarier*

Sharpe, Eric, *Comparative Religion. A History*, Duckworth, London 1975

SOU 1948:27, *1946 års skolkommissions betänkande med förslag till riktlinjer för det svenska skolväsendets utveckling*, Stockholm 1948

SOU 1992:94, *Skola för bildning. Huvudbetänkande av Läroplanskommittén*, Stockholm 1992

Svingby, Gunilla, Lendals Birgit & Ekbom, Dennis, *Omvärldskunskap: SO. Bakgrund, Beskrivning av undervisningen, Fostran till demokrati* (Rapporter från institutionen för pedagogik 1990:02), Institutionen för pedagogik, Göteborgs universitet 1990.

*Tonåringen och livsfrågorna. Elevattityder och undervisningen i livsåskådning och etik på grundskolans högstadium*, SÖ-förlaget, Stockholm 1969

# **PRESENTATION AND PROBLEM INVENTORY: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN RUSSIA**

**Main contributor:**

**Dr Vladislav Arzhanoukhin**

**Alexander I Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia,  
St Petersburg**

In Russia the development of religious education was traditionally determined by the Russian Orthodox values and norms. In contradistinction to the Western Christianity there were no such priorities as the development of mind, thought, science and human culture in general in the Orthodox doctrine. It was secular authorities- tsars- and the state that took care of the cultural and educational development. Though some schools were under control of the Church, the latter did not consider religious education to be its first responsibility and concern. In Russia, as else where in the Orthodox East, church schooling and religious education were not considered as being an absolute church value and a part of the clergies and monks' duty. Appeal to science and teaching meant nothing for either the minds or hearts of Russian bishops or monks.

To establish the system of religious education in Russia the states active participation was necessary. At the beginning of the 18th century Peter The Great's Church Reform took the first steps in that direction. The reform was carried out according to the German Protestant example: it put the church into direct dependence on the state and determined that the main social task of the clergy was the instruction of the people. The Russian Church strongly opposed the reform. The idea of Peter 1 being Anti-Christ emerged in the religious consciousness of the common people. A lot of priests who were against education supported this idea. The government was forced to pass a law under which the clergy's children were not allowed any promotion within Church unless they studied in newly established theological schools and seminaries. Though, for

decades, those schools were of general educational character, rather than of theological nature. Only in the second half of the 18th century did theological classes appear in Russian seminaries.

The school act of 1797 influenced greatly religious educational development in Russia. Under this Act the first theological academies were founded in St. Petersburg and Kazan. Then were Moscow Academy and Kievan Academy were opened in 1814 and 1819 respectively. In 1817 the government made an effort to introduce religious education in secular universities. The Ministry of Education was transformed into the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education. Theology and Church history became compulsory subject for all students in Russian Universities. Religious education under this reform became the means of ideological indoctrination, the means of patriotic upbringing. The new Ministry issued instructions proclaiming the necessity for schools to direct education towards belief, knowledge and power. This tendency was even more strengthened in 1850, after the European events of 1848. The philosophy Departments in all the Universities were closed. Instead Theology Departments were established.

In primary school religious education was also considered a part of patriotic upbringing. In the 20s of the 19th century new structures emerged within the Russian educational system, i.e. "church-parish" schools. These schools were established by Russian missionaries in Alaska. Teaching there included Russian, arithmetic and catechism. During the following 50 years thousands of such schools were opened throughout Russia. These schools belonged to the Church. By 1910 the number of "church-parish" schools was 26 100, and more than 1, 5 million pupils attended them.

After the revolution of 1917 a crisis of religious education was the natural consequence of the general crisis in Russian society. From that time on atheism had become the basis for formulating students' attitudes to religion. It is necessary to point out that during the Soviet period a lot of people were forced to take part in the struggle against religion, though they did not wish to and were not willing to make a break with religion. Having broken off from church ideology, they still retained respect for religious ideas. This phenomenon strongly resembled the European movement of Reformation; one religion actually gave place to another ,

the latter being artificially constructed. The movement called Russian Rogestroitelstvo (Godconstruction) became the greatest and most remarkable manifestation of this alternative religion. This ideological movement considered Marx' Theory as the highest form of religion. In the 1930's the Russian poet I. Mendelstam wrote: "The Communist Party is the obverse of the Church, a church without the Cross."

What did atheistic school programmes mean at that period? In other words: How did the new religion criticize the old one? The system of religious/ ideological upbringing was replaced by the system of antireligious ideological upbringing. From the 1920s and up to the middle of the 1960s all information about religion in school and university curricula was only negative. The main tendencies in criticizing religion in school curricula were:

- the social criticism of religion. Soviet atheism regarded religion first as a class and political phenomenon. This approach resulted from the fact that religion had no place within the theoretical and canonized model of socialism;
- science and religion were seen as an antithesis. This antithesis was the basic attitude to religion and was adopted in 1934. According to this approach, science should struggle against religion and not investigate it. In this attitude religion was represented as a miserable replica of science, a primitive effort to explain the world.

It is important to understand that the Soviet period was a process and not a period of stagnation. That being so we can explain the pressure of the state on religion as a diminishing pressure. The reduction of such pressure started in the 1960's. It was the beginning of communist decadence. Indications of decadence of this totalitarian ideology were a disintegration of ideology and the humanisation of its manifestations. The ideology of communist decadence has led to a humanistic approach in the legalisation of religion in Soviet society. It also led to ecumenism and formal contacts of the church with the outer world. It is possible to say that the church was legalized in the Soviet life as a pacifist organisation but not as the spiritual unity. It was a church phenomenon and in a sense lay alongside the church.

On the other hand the time of the 1960s and 1980s was a time of the humanisation of official communist ideology. It was an attempt to create communism with a human face. Nobody suggested a return to classical marxist ideology. Its resources were exhausted. The official ideology of the 1970s was quasi- Marxism. That was the beginning of the post-Soviet intellectual Renaissance as well.

The religious Renaissance which became an important sign of the decay of the totalitarian state and a characteristic feature of post-Soviet intellectual life did not only make the faith available to all people, but also made the Russian educational system consider the problem of the status of religion in educational curricula. The question was, as we can now see, that none of the state educational establishments could deal with religious education based only on their own conception of a confession or a denomination, without at the same time affecting human rights.

The development of the post-Soviet schools confirmed the axiom accepted by all democratic communities, that having included religion into educational plans, schools have to solve the problems which are wider than teaching.

There are three fundamental juridical acts in Russia, which regulate the relations between state schools and religion. They are the Constitution, the Law of Education and the complex of laws on religion and religious communities. How effectively do they fulfill their task? Do they always help to make such educational programmes, which can combine universal principles of religion freedom and secular education, accepted by the whole democratic community, with the necessary knowledge of religion an respect it?

What are the results?

The Constitution of the Russian Federation is the basic document which regulates the relations between the state and religion. It separates religious communities from the state and proclaims the liberty of the faith. So, the Russian State lets its citizens understand that relations between the individual and religion must not be under state control. Religion is an absolutely personal affair for human kind and it does not need approval of the state. The propagation of religious or atheistic ideas must

not depend on the will of the government and its approval. Of course, many subjects of the Federation have their own confessions or denominations which are supported by many or even most people, for example Orthodoxy prevails in the main part of Russia, Islam in Tataria and Bashkiria, Buddhism in Kalmykia and Buriatia. However, this does not mean, that the state must not guarantee the liberty of religion for the religious minority as well as for the majority. Some tendencies in national state cultures of the last ten years give examples of the ignorance of these duties, and the result of it for educational and religious development which we can now see. An overlap of national and religious interests is implied in the post-Soviet culture. For the traditional confessions the negative consequences of this situation are clear. The expansion of religious activity outside religious organizations and independently from them leads finally to their secularization. Besides that such a situation leads to the sacralization of the ethnicity. Thus the influence of stylized confessional and ethnic-confessional forms in religious education is rising. The most important of such forms is the idea of the identification of a single religion with a single ethnic group. As a result of the realization of such ideas in the context of the Renaissance of national culture, individual religions begin to achieve some features of state religions.

Nevertheless the adoption of the juridical norms which separate religious organizations from the state to guarantee the liberty of conscience has become very important in making the system of law in Russia coincide more closely with international standards, which give "liberty of thought, conscience and religion for every human". This is the freedom for "humanity to have or accept religion or belief individually as well as with other people" (The International Pact of Civil and Political Rights). Juridical acts of liberty of conscience and separation of religious organizations from the state, adopted by Russia, do not give rights to state educational establishments to organise education on the basis of specific confession or denominations. Only religious organisations have such rights in a democratic society. The Law of Education which is in force now formulates an adherence to secular education in state educational establishments.

However, in reality, many schools tend to introduce confessional religious education into their curricula. As a result, the status of religious

education in state schools remains vague. Religion as a phenomenon of the history of culture and religion as the goal and mean of education are two poles of this juridical lack of convergence.

Religious education has to exist now between those two poles, where a priest tries to replace the teacher, and the teacher tries to replace the priest. It is evident, that the system of laws must not enshrine this vagueness, which show the consequences of the post-Soviet state to be a guarantor of an ideological trend in education. This failure, directed against the communist approach has not, however, stopped a tendency to regard to education as an ideological artifact.

In this situation, the state does not want to be responsible for ideology in the teaching process, and the schools have faced the task to resisting the temptation to replace the totalitarian ideology with another one with affinities to religion.

The system of ideological upbringing, which had been created and had been developing through the decades of the post-communist period was turned into a power, which has started to compete with the Church itself in propaganda for religion; and, having a great experience, it is obviously retaining its initiatives.

As a result of the activity of this system we have a kind of religious culture forming under the slogans of confessional patriotism, but existing independently from the Church and even despite its desires.

The aspiration of those who organise the teaching process to use the religious enormous spiritual potential in state secondary and higher schools is quite understandable. This aspiration corresponds completely to the post-communist society ideas about ideological structures providing a precondition and mechanism for social development. In the context of these ideas actual reorganisation and social activity are being replaced by intellectual training, the creation of mental outlook and dispositions and a revival of spirituality.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the simple transmission of religious ideas from church schools into state educational institutions tends to devalue the principle of freedom of conscience.

However, clericalization of the state educational courses threatens not only democratic institutions of the society, but also religious organizations themselves. Today it is one of the main causes of secularization as a result of which religious culture is being liberated from Church influence. Now, religion is presented as a kind of culture with intellectual, aesthetic and ethical features.

Such an understanding of religion, establishing itself under the slogans of confessional patriotism, leads to the decay of formerly important religious organizations as the basis of confessional life. Personal intellectual, aesthetic and ethical perceptions and experience are becoming its new basis.

This gives us the right to state that efforts to clericalize state school educational courses are connected not only with the restoration of cultural development, but also with real dangers to the present formal confessional balance and to traditional religious institutions. They also lead to transformation of religious ideas.

**The concept of religious studies courses:  
The department of the history of religion.**

1. General

Religious studies courses are the study courses that are being worked out by the departments' professors on the basis of scientific approaches to different forms of religion and religious culture. Religious studies courses (RSC), being one of the elements of the realisation of the state policy both in the field of education and in the field of relations between the state and religion, and are being developed on the basis of federal standards.

2. Factors standing outside the theoretical and methodological boundaries and limiting the religious studies courses content.

The RSC contents, in contradiction to other study courses' contents, are strictly regulated by the state legal and political norms. Nowadays there are three main legal acts in Russia that directly or indirectly define the contents of the RSC in state educational establishments; they are the Constitution, the Law on Education and the statute book on religion and religious communities. These acts do not allow state educational establishments to organise the educational process on the basis of any confession or on the basis of religious patriotism as a whole. The above acts also define indirectly the circle of specialists who can give lectures on RSC.

3. The RSC aims and their development

The modern RSC are characterized by the rejection of the aim of ideological indoctrination of the students' consciousness. The main RSC aim today is a balancing of the students' professional knowledge, with the main elements of human culture. The steady decrease of students' cultural attainments is a factor of no small importance that determines the necessity for this balance.

The Universities have stopped being elite educational establishments with a high cultural level. Their students have a weak general education. However, this aim cannot be the only dominant factor for the department. The general cultural compensation is not only possible but also inevitable in the future of general secondary schools. That is why the project seeks to differentiate the RSC aims and suggests the following steps.

- 1 st level. Cultural compensation. Its aim is to teach a student to act in the traditions of several cultures (atheistic-religious, secular-confessional, etc) The result of this RSC level should be intercultural competence of a student.
- 2 nd level. RSC as an element of training teachers of different subjects (History, Russian Literature, foreign languages). The presence of RSC, included into the programmes of training teachers of different subjects, will provide for the possibility of the systematic structural approach to humanitarian education.
- 3 rd level. RSC for training teacher as of the history of religion in secondary schools.

#### 4. Social Context of RSC

The necessity to differentiate RSC and their aims follows from their social context, the main elements of which are,

- the revival of natinalistic and ethno-nationalistic movements and ideologies;
- economic, political, social and cultural integrational processes, leading to the strengthening of confrontation between different religions and religion - oriented cultures;
- secularisation, that is understood as throwing out religious ideas into the secular sphere. Secularisation is one of the main tendencies in the evolution of modern religion.
- the awakening of religious fundamentalism;
- the awakening of the politically oriented ethno-confessional consciousness.

## 5. Participants of the educational process

Equally with the students and professors of the department the participants of the educational process are:

- schools of Saint-Petersburg and the North-West of Russia;
- departments of the social sciences' circle of the University;
- departments of the humanitarian faculties of the University.

## 6. The tendencies of evolution in education, defining the character of RSC.

- “universitisation” of education, the main idea of which is the growing significance of fundamental sciences and fundamental scientific education;
- regionalisation of education. The orientation to the region is not limited to the political or administrative boundaries, but can also be geographical (for example, the Nordic Council);
- teacher-training orientation of the University programmes.

# REFLECTIONS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN RUSSIA, SWEDEN AND ENGLAND

**Professor Ninian Smart**  
**University of California Santa Barbara**

In reflecting on the papers which deal with the situation and problems concerning religious studies in Russia, Sweden and England, it is important for us to think about recent histories. By the way, I use the word "England" deliberately, for different factors reign in Northern Ireland and Scotland. By the way, Northern Ireland illustrates the perils of the notion of "confessional patriotism", and item discussed in the Russian paper. In Northern Ireland the division between Catholic and Protestant schools has led to an ethnic division. Had all Catholics been black and all Protestants white, no modern government could have tolerated the segregation; but because modern life makes conceptually confused distinctions between ethnic, racial and religious divisions, the irony goes unnoticed. But to return to our main countries, Russia's history poses the deepest current problems.

During the Soviet era, traditional religions were mostly under strong pressure. In effect, Marxism-Leninism was itself a counter-religion established by the State, and backed by educational authorities, the penal system and propaganda. Now it seems that there is a temptation for a formerly oppressed institution to respond in kind. Consequently, there is a move towards the clericalization of religious education in the school systems of the Russian Federation. Mostly the Orthodox Church is the most dominant force, but as the Russian paper points out Islam dominates in some regions, such as Tatarstan, Chechnya and Bashkiria and Buddhism in others, such as the Buryat and Kalmuk Republics. But the clericalization of religious education echoes the former Soviet system, though more halfheartedly. As the Russian paper argues, it tends to issue in a sort of confessional patriotism. But this creates what is a bottom a political problem. For minority populations in an area dominated by

confessionalism then are deprived of nurture in their own faith. That is, if we assume that the purpose of religious education is a kind of existential indoctrination. Moreover, much of the study of religion goes beyond, or ought to go beyond, the absorption of one's own faith (if any). For it ought to sensitize us to the beliefs and feelings of others and to their ritual and practical activities. In other words, a lot of religious studies is descriptive and historical, and also therefore phenomenological. It is important for people to understand something of the culture and religious experience of the world at large; and obviously in Russia, though Orthodoxy will necessarily play a major part, a knowledge of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and shamanism is vital (as well as of Marxism-Leninism because of its role in Russian history).

It is worth noting, in view of this last comment, that there is an obvious role in the study of religion for the exploration of secular world views. Be it also noted that the word "secular" here means non-religious or anti-religious; although the word is also used to mean "pluralistic", as when we talk about India's secular constitution, though India is obviously very religious. In fact, pluralism is the political expression of democracy, in which all persons have rights and freedom of religion. Clericalization typically inhibits pluralism. This is a point of vital importance in the emerging patterns of Russian life after communism.

All this is relevant to the Swedish paper and the realities which it mirrors. Although Swedish society is less plural than many, it has also been a pioneer in social democracy, and has highly liberal institutions. This means that what I have termed above "existential nurture" has to be given a pluralistic interpretation. Edgar Almen's perspicuous paper sets out the contrast in Swedish religious education theory between *livsåskådning* and *livsfrågor*, that is between a view of life and a question of life. This has echoes as we shall see between English contrasts between explicit religion and implicit religion. The first of the Swedish terms has affinities with the German *Weltanschauung* which by the way has become more or less an English word (someone quipped that there is a perfectly good English word for "world view", namely "Weltanschauung"). In effect the life questions gives a slant to part of religious education: it is in part a way of removing dogma in guiding students' questions, but stimulating responses to (ultimately) theological questions. Since the students are to grow in sensitivity to deeper issues, such as are

dealt with in the different world views or religions of the world, there is a connection between the life-view and life-question aspects of religious educations. But also the life-questions approach give a place for existential theological questions: but in effect in a pluralistic manner. This is a way to retain the doctrinal or philosophical dimension of religion in a genuinely plural way; thus avoiding the problem of confessionalism.

There is some discussion in the Swedish paper on the concept of knowledge. It is viewed often as not a reproduction of reality so much as a social and personal construction. That is fine, but if we take knowledge seriously in religious education we shall have to conclude that religious claims on the whole are uncertain, though they may attract individual and some collective conviction. On the other hand, descriptions of religious teachings and practices can constitute knowledge. This knowledge is important in understanding world affairs, for instance, on the analytical front; and it can be existentially vital in showing, for instance, differing traditions may contain similar experiences. That is both a challenge and a reinforcement of one's own tradition and live-view. It is worth seeing that the Swedish solution is pitched essentially in individualist terms. This is itself a consequence of democratic values as well as those of capitalism (referred often sketchily these days as "the market"). The latter, though in practice it may be socially unjust, has an individualist aspect, in that race, religion, ethnicity, gender etc., do not matter in employment. Each person is a movable unit. Individualism is often now criticized by communitarians; and it is obvious that a large chunk of each individual is formed by her or his community. The problem however with communities is their capacity to inhibit individual freedoms in suffocating ways.

As is acknowledged in the Swedish paper there are tensions about how to teach religious studies in the new pluralistic and global context (see the section on perspectives on non-Christian religions). The *livsfrågor* approach favours more theological texts; but these scriptures do not tell you much about the actual meaning of Hinduism in the lives of people. This is where it is vital to note that religious studies is a multidisciplinary activity including social science approaches. It is not a problem only in regard to non-Christian religions. Often Christianity is treated without enough reference to its diversity and dynamics on the ground. The fact is that religious education must involve the global and varie-

gated character of world views, as part of the development of young knowledge. This perhaps is an aspect which is underplayed in the Swedish document, which nevertheless opens up real possibilities in religious education.

The English (or more properly the Anglo-Welsh) paper is very full and clear in its tracing of the history of religious education in Britain. There are rich sources here to trace some of the issues I have sketched above. The fact is that in the last decade or more debate about religious education has become increasingly politicized, because of the Nisus among (especially) conservatives towards confessional patriotism, in which England and Wales are declared to be a Christian nation or nations; and Britain more generally. This is an inappropriate hangover from the establishmentarian mood once dominant. Though the paper points out that modern immigration has developed a plural society, the fact is that Judaism is very old in Britain, and humanism has flourished since the 19th Century and before; while Catholics and Nonconformists differed importantly in the old days. So pluralism is not a new issue; but it is very obvious now. However the case for teaching world religions was never, in my mind, parochial; it is important in understanding world culture.

Though the 1988 Education Act is infused with strong elements of confessional patriotism, the effect of the new act is multicultural though selectively so (for instance, indigenous religions and African religion are not covered). This is because confessionalism is modified by the presence of "new Britons" from Pakistan, India, West Indies and so forth. We can say that the situations in Britain, Sweden and Russia are converging, because one effect or manifestation of globalism is the presence of diverse populations in the major cities of the world and especially of the Western world.

An important part of the Anglo-Welsh paper is the section on psychological factors. There is another ingredient in education than anything we have discussed hitherto. That is the development dimension: the psychological dimension (particularly the work of Ronald Goldman and Kay). But this should not be taken to obscure the link between school education up to 18 and higher education. Mathematics is not essentially different in school and university: why should the study of religion be? Still, in schools we need to be mindful of what can and cannot be grasped.

Though maybe we should think more of this regarding adults. As I like to quip: the only difference between children and adults is that adults never grow up!

Finally, let me comment on the three papers together. I think that there are three aspects of religious studies in schools: first, general knowledge about religions and more generally world views in terms of world history; second, the exploration of world views to sensitize students to the understanding and evaluation of differing ideas and practices; third, the exploration of living questions.

We should also note that we may learn in Western Europe from the Russian experience. For my money the supreme theologians and phenomenologist of the Russian tradition are Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Bulgakov, and other great literary figures. They can be used to give life and pulse to phenomenology. In any case there is much that we await in new initiatives coming from Russia. The special problems there will spark new creativities.

# **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROAD**

**- some personal reflections on recent development and current trends in Great Britain, Russia and Sweden as reported in the PPIs of the PETER-project.**

**Professor Berit Askling  
Linköpings universitet, Sweden**

## **1. The inventories**

The three inventories offer rich (but for me not familiar) information on how religious education has been subjected to changes in goals and objectives, in selection of content, teaching methods and materials and how these changes have been proposed, discussed and decided upon within the framework of changing political norms and values (in Great Britain and Sweden) and systems (in Russia) under influence from a variety of political, cultural, ethic and other pressure groups.

Despite different national contexts, there is one striking similarity in the PPIs: the identified tension nowadays in religious education between the formerly self-evident linkage to Church and confessionality and the increasing respectfulness to democratic values of pluralism in the modern society. This tension reflects the political dilemma in democratic societies in attempting to keep the society as an entity and the parallel efforts to respect the individual rights of every citizen. When it comes to religious education this tension causes not just curriculum dilemmas but apparently also a kind of identity crisis of the school subject.

The tension is evident in all inventories. So far, in Great Britain and Sweden solutions have been worked out by the political system in close interaction with the Church and the educational system. There seems to have been a general movement from a clerically-based religious educa-

tion towards a more philosophical/theological based one, which is easier to accept in a democratic society with its respect for pluralism. However, there are also differences, reflecting dissimilarities in general educational policy and structure of the educational system (the Swedish uniformity of the school system implies that pluralism has to be dealt with within the school system and not by voluntariness, a fact that in Sweden probably has underlined the notion of individualism in education).

In Russia, the preconditions for establishing a common religious education within the framework of a comprehensive state school system seems to be extremely complicated at least for two reasons: the Orthodox Church has for many decades acted apart from the state system, and there is no tradition of a gradual and step-by-step development away from a mono-ideological society (either religious or political) to a pluralistic one.

Another kind of tension is also evident in the papers, which is not political but pedagogical/didactic in character. When knowledge is viewed as a social and personal construction, teaching methods have to shift from instruction of fact to stimulation of thoughts. This has been a challenge for all school subjects in Western societies and has inspired to experiments with new teaching and study methods, but has also made the tasks of teaching more abstract and, thus, also more demanding.

The three inventories offer good descriptions of the so called macro-level of religious education but, due to restrictions in time for preparation, are more scanty in informing about conditions on the micro-level. We are informed about the official representation of religious education in terms of goals and objectives and structural and organisational conditions and the measures undertaken by official actors and interest groups, but (as is typically the case when school subjects are studied and not restricted to the PPIs) we know less about the spirit and mode of teachers, the motivation and interest among the students, the support for the subject among the general public and the position and "prestige" of their subject compared to other subjects in comprehensive school. Such factors exert a heavy pressure on what is actually taught and learnt in the classrooms.

My impression is that the PPIs clearly demonstrate that not just in Russia but also in the established contexts of British and Swedish educational systems, *religious education is at a crossroad with regard to goals, content and teaching methods.*

In the inventories, it is possible to identify two separate but interrelated aspects of religious education: the *policy* aspect concerning norms and values and the *context* aspect, concerning the power and influence structures in which religious education works. The inventories give rise to questions on to what extent the official systems of norms and values and intentions held by the dominating groups of actors, also are represented among teachers and students in their everyday life on the micro level in multi-cultural classrooms.

I will try to use these two aspects in my comments on the PPIs and also as a framework for suggesting further studies on what happens when goals and objectives are to be transformed into teaching and learning in three national contexts.

## **2. A typology for classifying educational norms and values**

*The policy aspect* concerns goals and aims, content and methods of a subject, and expresses the arguments for the subject to be a school subject. The policy reflects the systems of norms and values that guide the formulation of goals and objectives, the selection of content and the choice of methods. For every school subject at a particular time, the policy may more or less be in harmony with or in opposition to the general goals of the educational system or to the norms of what is desirable didactics/pedagogics.

Experiences from many reform evaluations have clearly demonstrated that it is necessary to make a distinction between the *formulation* of a policy and the *realisation* of a policy. A reform is not implemented although goals are written and decisions are taken. There is a long way to go from visions to realities, not the least in educational systems and settings. Expressed in another way, realities in classrooms do not always reflect the written policy, neither with regard to general educational goals nor particular subject goals.

In order to make a simplification of the very rich materials in the PPIs, the changes in policy can be said to have occurred along two distinct dimensions, the one concerning the overall educational goals and the other concerning ideals and norms for teaching.

1) The political/ideological dimension

This dimension of policy reflects the development away from a homogeneous society with one dominating ideology to a democratic society with allowed spaces of action for a variety of political/ideological values and belief systems to operate.

Honourable key words in the formulation of educational goals today are democracy, objectivity, pluralism.

A honourable key word in religious education today is non-confessionalism.

2) The didactic/pedagogical/methodological dimension

This dimension reflects the development away from authoritarian teaching of classes (the collective) to the ideals of the progressive school with a sensitivity to the needs of the individual student, and from a static view of knowledge to a view on knowledge as an internal individual construction.

Honourable key words today are individuality, integrity, maturity, personal knowledge.

In order to make a further simplification, each dimension will be treated as consisting of just two categories (representing the extreme values of each dimension). By cross tabulation, four different categories of policy of religious education can be identified, reflecting different overall trends in the macro- and micro-levels of religious education policy in this century.

Such a typology might be useful in a comparison of the three countries and also for examining in what particular respects the preconditions for

religious education in Russia in similar to or in opposition to corresponding conditions in Sweden and Great Britain. Such a typology might also be useful for examining to what extent religious education (in policy and in practice) follows the mainstream development in the educational system or to what extent it is in opposition to or apart from the mainstream development.

*A typology of policy of religious education*

	Collective knowledge	Individual knowledge
Confession	I	II
Non-confession	III	IV

- Type I      Religious instruction of the dominant confession aiming at a collective adoption of the "right " ideology.  
Instruction on rituals, procedures and texts in order to establish a sense of belonging to (a membership) the community.
- Type II      Religious instruction with almost the same aim as in type I, but with respect paid to the ideas of the progressive school movement and experiences from researchers and teachers.  
Context and methods have to be adjusted to the developmental stage of the students and related to students own frames of reference, and aiming at reflection.
- Type III      Non-confessional education in terms of objective and neutral instruction and information about several religions, aiming at offering a base for individual choice

(sometimes complemented by out-of-school confessional education).

Type IV Non-confessional education aiming at reflection on life questions. Inspiration is derived from general theology and philosophy.

(It is important to underline that these four categories represent general trends in the overall policy, which does not mean that they represent the policy to be the acceptable one for the teaching in every grade of primary and secondary school.)

Before we use this classification scheme for discussing similarities and differences, let's look at the contextual aspects of religious education.

### **3. The political and cultural context of policy formulation and policy realisation**

The official policy of a particular school subject at a particular time is shaped under the influence of a variety of formal and informal governing and steering factors, expressing opinions and considerations among dominating and powerful actors and interest groups. Such patterns of influencing factors form the political, cultural and historical *context* of the subject on the public arenas of policy formulation.

But, what actually defines the working curriculum of a school subject in one particular country at one particular time is determined not just by what is stipulated publicly in acts and laws and decisions. In successive steps, overall statements and governmental decisions are formulated, interpreted and finally transformed into intentions guiding teachers and affecting students in the classrooms. In addition to actors exerting (having the power to exert) influence on the arenas of policy formulation other less prestigious and more informal contextual actors operate on the arena of realisation. They might exert a substantial, but sometimes overlooked, impact in a non-visible and thus uncontrollable way.

Sometimes there is great dissonance between what is the official policy of a subject and what is the working policy in the classroom. Some sub-

jects may need "protection" from an official policy if they lack face validity in the eyes of the students or their parents, while other subjects have a face validity of their own.

The context just described has had a pattern of development analogous to the policy described in the previous section: towards more heterogeneity and variation in influence. Nowadays, more varied interest groups are claiming respect for their norms and values and for their particular interpretations of educational goals and objectives. Honourable key words in modern society are: democracy, decentralisation, participation. With regard to education honourable key words are pluralism, objectivity, student influence.

#### **4. Similarities and differences in policy and context**

Now, using the two aspects, *policy* and *context*, and the typology of policy, what can be said about the three countries with regard to earlier and current policy formulation and contextual conditions for policy realisation?

In the beginning of this century, Swedish religious education strongly and self-evidently reflected a policy of type I, in formulation as well as in realisation. The State and the Church exerted an almost shared governance and control of compulsory school. There is in Sweden no tradition of opposition between the church on the one hand and the state/municipals on the other hand - at least when it comes to schools.

In Great Britain, the very fact that there was a dual system might have implied a looser connection between the State and the Church, thus making the hegemony of Christianity in religious education slightly less self-evident.

In Russia, links between the State and the Church came to an end during the revolution when religion was replaced by Marxism, which was treated in accordance with the type I model.

Under influences from modern Western political and cultural ideas both Great Britain and Sweden have moved towards type II and type III with

regard to general and religious education. At the same time, in Sweden, the State gradually took over many former duties and obligations of the Church when forming the welfare programme, which at least partly may explain the rapid secularisation in the Swedish society and the Church's loss of its powerful influence.

Sweden has also moved further to type IV, at least with regard to value-loaded subjects like religious education. This development was necessary as a way of handling the simultaneous political demands on obligatory, objectivity and uniformity. A uniform school system that restricts the options for students (and parents) of selecting school and subjects within the school, has to scrutinise (and is also subjected to close examinations of ) its curriculum very carefully. Of course, religious education was subjected to a very careful scrutiny.

Nowadays, religious education in Sweden is argued for as a mean (tool) for achieving important overall goals (i.e. reasoning, ethical and moral values) and is therefore accepted (get its *raison d'être*) in the curriculum. Its mission is to contribute to the fulfilment of general aims as well as to offer specific knowledge. In this process, the Church did not take an active role. On the contrary, the solution to the double demands on a) objectivity and b) student-centred individuality in religious education was mainly offered by academics in the Faculties of Theology and Humanities and not from the Church.

However, goals and objectives reflecting a Type IV policy puts strong demands on teachers' interdisciplinary theoretical knowledge base and didactic talents and skills and, thus, also on teacher education. In addition, a school subject that is not subjected to national assessments or offers marks which gives credit points in application to further studies, has to rely totally on its own worth to be accepted by students as relevant and important, circumstances that makes the subject very dependent on the talents and skills of the individual teacher. Thus, the formulation of a type IV policy does not automatically implies the realisation of this policy.

Type IV might be a desirable solution for religious education in the three countries, as it meets many of the officially declared aims and efforts of a modern society: pluralism, objectivity, freedom and a respect paid for

the individuality of the student. But the three countries represent three different contexts for an approach to type IV. The support from prestigious agents and from the general public differ.

My impression is that the main difference between Sweden and Great Britain on the one hand and Russia on the other hand lies in the interplay of actors (internal and external) taking an active part in the formulation and realisation of a policy of religious education. For a development towards a formulation of a type IV policy, it is necessary to get academics from many disciplines engaged in curriculum work, not just representatives from Church and from the educational system. For such a policy to be realised in a positive climate, these groups must take an active part in development work in didactics and in teacher education and in-service training.

## **5. Suggestions for the future**

The urgent and instrumental main goal of the PETER-project is to assist the Herzen University in St Petersburg in establishing a teacher education programme on non-confessional religious education.

In my comments, I use two aspects (policy and context) for structuring the rich information from the PPIs. I use them in an attempt to compare religious education in the three countries and I have come up to the same standpoint as was declared in the outline of the PPIs: When policy and context are taken into account, the point of departure for Russia when elaborating a teacher education programme for religious studies differs from both Great Britain and Sweden so much that there are no solutions or models just to copy.

The two aspects might also be useful in a further study of religious education in the three countries. In such a study the "micro level", that is the everyday life of teaching and schooling, ought to be scrutinised. The three PPIs give good base materials for such a study of the realisation of policy into practice.

# **BRITISH COMMENT ON THE SWEDISH PPI**

**Dr William K Kay**  
**Trinity College, Carmarthen, Wales**

## **Similarities**

There are important similarities between Britain and Sweden. Both have, historically, been Protestant countries, though with long-standing Catholic and Jewish minorities; in both the church has had a keen interest in education (though this was expressed differently), both have been royalist democracies for many years, both have enjoyed considerable social stability, both are seafaring nations (or have been) and both have moved from a selective system of education to a non-selective, comprehensive system.

The PPIs show that both countries, too, have welcomed immigrants in recent years and have reformed their educational systems in line with larger social changes. In Britain, it comes as no surprise that the major educational Act for many years was passed in 1944. In Sweden it comes as no surprise that a report in 1946 by the School Commission led to major reforms. The parallels between the two countries continue in the timing of the expansion of upper secondary education. In both countries this took place in the 1990s.

More surprisingly, perhaps, the role of educational research, or social research with an educational dimension, has also been a stimulus to change. In Britain the work of Goldman in the 1960s was important. In Sweden the National Board of Education initiated surveys published in 1969 and 1971 and followed this by studies on primary school pupils (summarised by Hartman). On the other hand, not so surprising, is the way education has been included within the agenda of political parties. The Christian Democrats in Sweden had no direct equivalent on the British political scene, but the politicisation of educational debate in both

countries, and the implication of religious education within this debate, is functionally similar: education is seen as a means of carrying forward a vision of society and religious education is expected to contribute to this vision. In Britain the Labour party saw comprehensive schools as being likely to produce a more equitable society and religious education as being likely to produce tolerance between different ethnic and religious groups. It is true that these are generalisations and it would have been easy to find members of political parties who did not think in these terms, but in outline this opinion seems valid.

What, then, of the differences?

### **Legal and structural differences**

British eyes looking at religious education in Sweden immediately notice two things. The first concerns the lack of a right for parents to withdraw their children from religious education on grounds of conscience. The second concerns the lack of large numbers of schools owned by the churches and governed by their trust deeds but incorporated within the national educational system.

Since there is no recognised right of withdrawal from religious education in Swedish public schools, it is necessary for these schools to provide a form of religious education which 'all parents trust'. It is clear that such an aim, in effect, seeks to secure the widest possible support within Swedish culture for the type of religious education which is offered. Anything which might offend large numbers of people must be avoided in order to allow the system to function smoothly.

The absence of Swedish church schools within the main state system of education ensures that the system is much more uniform than is the case in Britain; there are fewer categories of school from which parents may choose their children's education and there is a smaller number of variations within the country as a whole. This factor has a similar effect to that relating to the lack of a right to withdraw from religious education: it ensures that religious education must be acceptable to the vast majority of parents and children.

## Educational differences

The bending of religious education to the overall objectives of the Swedish comprehensive school also points to another major distinction between religious education in Sweden and in Britain. In Britain the assumption was that each timetabled subject would and could be justified by educational criteria; it could 'stand on its own feet' in any philosophical debate on the curriculum. The strength of the Swedish system, from an outsiders' perspective, is that the total provision of education within the classroom has an integrated focus. The weakness, again from an outsiders' perspective, is that religious education is being made to do a job which it may not find is appropriate to its content. Another way of looking at this is to suggest that Swedish religious education's subsequent development of *life themes* and *life questions* follows very naturally from the presumption that religious education has an educational role stemming from widely-held social values.

The Swedish concepts of 'livsåskådning' (views of life) and 'livsfråga' (questions of life) are exciting and interesting. They make religious education much more obviously relevant to the life-world of pupils. They make religious education something which could lead to the formation of an individual ethical system or, alternatively, lead to a personal exploration of religion. They also lead to an understanding of the basis for social harmony and co-operation in the sense that shared values arise from shared answers to the life questions appropriate to particular historical circumstances and epochs. No doubt the best of British religious education would claim to help pupils form their own opinions and come to their own conclusions, but the Swedish emphasis, in this aspect, is much stronger and more deliberate. It takes us beyond the 'problem approach' to religious education advocated by Harold Loukes which, in the 1960s, was the most explicit British parallel.

The whole problem of whether education ought to start from the subject matter or the pupil is one which has troubled education since the days of Comenius. It appears that the Swedish approach has been to attempt, in some way, to integrate both parts of the dilemma so that the subject matter is made appropriate to the needs of pupils. It is certainly interesting to see that the National Board of Education's 1969 Survey was

used as the basis for reflecting on the way religious education should develop.

The Swedish approach to the concept of knowledge is, in some respects, 'softer' than was the case in Britain in the 1970s. Knowledge appears to be seen as an internal mental construction related to external reality even though the internal construction is not necessarily a true reflection of reality. In other words knowledge is relativised by this approach. This is fortunate in the sense that it might avoid conflict in the arena of religious education. It is unfortunate in the sense that the truth claims of religion are removed or effectively undermined. How can the uniqueness of Christ or the ultimacy of the scriptures be understood in a context where knowledge itself is so individualistic and provisional?

This particular difficulty spills over into the teaching of non-Christian religions and as the PPI notes, religious education should 'concentrate on those elements in the religious traditions that could be of special interest to Swedish adolescents today'. The religious tradition is in effect made in the image of the Swedish adolescent. It is not allowed to speak for itself, to make its demands for commitment or its troublesome claims to exclusive truth. Religious adherents might rightfully claim that the religion being presented in Swedish schools was not one they recognised as their own.

The approach to Christianity is, as the PPI recognises, 'not uncontroversial, since it is contrary to the interpretation many Swedes make of their own Christian faith'. The danger, then, recognised by the PPI and inevitable in the light of the earlier constraints upon religious education, is that religion becomes a domestic animal, tamed, losing its wild and rich contradictions and passions, something that makes it less radical, less able to form the foundation of a social critique and, therefore, perhaps less likely to allow religion to flourish within Swedish culture. After all, inoculation works by giving you a mild version of the disease so that you can fight off the major versions should they confront you.

## Conclusion

Yet the Swedish PPI suggests all kinds of interesting explorations and applications which could be made within the religious education of other European countries. The possibilities which arise from a rich hermeneutical tradition and the deliberate connections that may be drawn between religion and the conflicts and problems in the minds of teenagers must surely be admired from the standpoint of other school systems. Religion is useful. Religion has been along this path before. Religion is a real record of the wrestlings and hopes and fears of previous generations. Religion is a cultural phenomenon but it is the best of cultural phenomena. It is not simply a historical curiosity, a sociological oddity or a source of artistic and symbolic creations. It has a contemporary relevance that speaks to the individual and to society. Indeed it may help the individual not only to face death, bereavement, suffering and alienation but also, at the same time, help the individual live within a cohesive social group. That appears to be the basis of the Swedish position and it must give us encouragement to look again at the British solution which, by comparison, is undeveloped in its personal applications and its social implications.

# **BRITISH COMMENT ON THE RUSSIAN PPI**

**Dr William K Kay**  
**Trinity College Carmarthen, Wales**

## **Similarities**

Russia and Britain share a Christian heritage. Both countries have a long and rich Christian history which has manifested itself through art, literature and architecture. In both countries the ruling authority, in one case the monarch and the other the Tsar, have been Christian. In Britain the monarch has been the temporal head of the Church of England; in Russia the Tsar has been 'the Lord's anointed', the one who expresses the will of God. The Christian tradition of both countries has been expressed not only through the official organs of the state but also through churches within parishes. The church has been identified as the natural provider of education, particularly in rural areas. The priest has been the educated man within the village and the school has been one where his word was law.

In higher education, too, Christianity has been important within both countries. In Russia the provision of theology departments after 1848 within the student milieu made all the educated classes of Russia conscious of their Christian heritage. In theory, the same obtained within Britain. Both Oxford and Cambridge only admitted Anglicans during the nineteenth century and all degrees were conferred in the name of the Trinity. The educated classes of both countries were imbued with some form of Christian teaching though, in both cases, much of this was nominal and without fervour or passion.

Primary education was so much within the provision and control of the church that schools were built and run in fairly similar ways in both countries. In Russia missionaries established schools in Alaska and the teaching of arithmetic and catechism was motivated by missionary fer-

vous. The voluntary principle, the principle that individual initiative and individual zeal and self-sacrifice should be encouraged was followed in both locations. In Britain the churches made enormous efforts to establish their schools without support from the state; in Russia the same kind of thing occurred. By 1910 more than one and a half million pupils attended church-parish schools. This number is not dissimilar from the number of pupils at these sorts of schools within Britain.

But here the more obvious similarities end.

### **Differences**

The differences between Britain and Russia lie, at first, within the differences in scale between the two countries. Russia is vast and Britain is small. Russia has always had a huge population while Britain has been relatively small. Russia has concentrated upon the countries on its borders, while Britain has used its navy to reach distant shores and foreign climates.

Moreover, there are differences in the way in which Christianity has been interpreted and lived out in both countries. Britain was torn by the Reformation and knew the pain of civil war and, as a consequence, valued religious toleration and freedom. Russia, by contrast, was free from such internal ructions and used religion as a means for unifying its vast territories. Whereas the Reformation brought about a desire to read the Bible and therefore for literacy, the Reformation which took place in Russia was, in many respects, not a religious one but a political and cultural one. The reforms of Peter the Great, as is well known attempted to drag Russia into the modern age by importing the best of European thought and culture to its great cities. Yet it made these changes within the framework of a feudalistic system which had long been buried within Britain's historical ethos.

Most striking, most violent and most thorough was the introduction of communism or Marxist-Leninism within Russia. There is no comparable event within Britain. Here in Russia we have the imposition of a coherent and complete world view on the political, economic and cultural life of a people. There has been little in the history of the world to com-

pare with such a radical change. The churches, of course, were caught up and suppressed within these terrible years and the Russian church-parish schools which had educated so many children disappeared during this process.

Moreover, religion was cancelled out and explained in a way which suggested that communism was scientific and religion belonged inevitably to a past which could never return. The suppression of religion was, therefore, thorough and thoroughly related to the cultural forms of religion. Again, nothing like this had been seen within British society, when civil war had taken place in Britain the two sides had both been 'Christian'. But, in Russia when the civil war of the 1920s took place one side was white and 'Christian' and the other side was red and atheistic. It is this remarkable and bloody page of history which has left its mark upon the school system within Russia today.

### **Modern Developments**

Yet, despite the differences, there are similarities within the post-war period. The force of communism began to burn out and weaken in the 1960s and, as a consequence, some form of religious renaissance began to occur. Communism began to try to provide for its people the market place of consumer goods long enjoyed in the increasingly affluent West. The Renaissance of Russian Christian life in the post-war period was partly matched by a Renaissance in the life of the church in Britain in the same period. In Britain the Evangelical and charismatic movements from the 1960s onward enlivened a church which had become modernistic or ritualistic depending on its prior theological tendencies.

So the post-war period was curiously parallel in both countries. But, with the coming of *perestroika* and *glasnost* and the eventual defeat of the communist party at the polls, a new era in Russian life dawned. The new Constitution of the Russian Federation allows religion to be an entirely private matter and ensures that teaching within schools is conducted without reference to religion. In theory, then, Russia and Britain are now somewhat similar. Both have seen a resurgence of religious life and both allow freedom of conscience for the individual. Yet the differences are still within the infra-structure. There are no church

schools within Russia and the teaching of religious education within Russia is not expected to occur.

Against this background, however, there are also curious similarities. This is because the role of religion is tied to the identity of ethnic groups. In both countries ethnic minorities, as well as the ethnic majority, seek to express and to safeguard their religious tradition in order to strengthen and express their cultural identity. This means that religion has a role within society which is naturally politicised. Religion becomes a vehicle by which culture is protected and, at the same time, a means by which culture is expressed.

In this respect, religion within Russian schools may be paralleled by certain aspects of the situation within Britain. Within Britain certain religious groups seek a far greater control over the religious education of their children than is currently allowed through agreed syllabuses. There are new Christian schools and there are schools which are run by the Moslem community which seek the support of the state. Both these groups wish to express their identity against the prevailing secular, though weakly secular, culture. In Russia the same process is played out on a much larger scale. Whereas there are religious communities within the large cities of Britain, in Russia there are religious communities within independent states or quasi-autonomous regions. The result is that, whereas in Britain, we may see religion used simply to allow Moslem or Hindu children to feel they have an identity additional to their British identity in Russia it may be the case that ethnic groups seek eventually their own form of government against the central government of Moscow.

The situation in Russia is such that there is a natural right-wing tendency to look for national unity through the rituals and resources of Orthodoxy. But the danger for the schools is that they simply exchange the tenets and doctrines of Marxist-Leninism for the tenets and doctrines of Russian Orthodoxy. The schools become a channel through which another substance flows. Such a position for the schools would be unsatisfactory and it is for this reason that it is important that the schools establish their own right to play a part within the cultural process, an *educational* part, which transforms Russian culture, both religious and secular, as well as transmitting it.

# SOME SECOND THOUGHTS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN GREAT BRITAIN, RUSSIA, AND SWEDEN

by Dr Edgar Almén and Dr Carl Axel Aurelius  
Linköpings universitet, Sweden

## Introduction

The PETER-project has given us many opportunities to reflect upon and reconsider what we have previously taken for granted or obvious. We have tried to search for perspectives which can help us to explain why thought patterns, self-evident for us in Sweden, were not so for our counterparts in Great Britain or in Russia, and vice versa. This search for explanations has accompanied us during the whole year, in our teaching here in Linköping but also in our other exchange programmes. We are now convinced that this kind of comparison between the problems of religious education in different social contexts is a very creative way to gain new knowledge not only about others but especially about ourselves and about the problems and the potential in our own religious education.

Let us here test three lines of argument:

- a) The conditions for religious education in Russia, Great Britain and Sweden are different because the visions of the "good school" are not the same. These visions are formed within various educational traditions and are supposed to function in different societies.
- b) The content of religious education in the three countries is different because the underlying concepts of religion vary. Perhaps we can learn a lot by paying even more attention to these often not openly declared fundamental presuppositions and to how these presuppositions influence how we pay specific attention to certain characteris-

tics in the history and actual social situation in our countries. We should then also strive to develop some kind of theory about the dimensions within which a concept of religion should be clarified.

- c) Both the vision of the "good school" and the presupposed concept of religion contribute to a vision of the "good pupil" and of how (s)he can profit from a non-confessional religious education. These visions seem to be somewhat different in the three countries, not least about the extent to which a non-confessional religious education should contribute to or question the way a pupil understands his/her own religious tradition and to which these questions should be reserved for confessional religious education. But perhaps these visions should also be tested against the expectations of the pupils. Is a certain kind of non-confessional religious education experienced as relevant and as a way of gaining tools which can help the pupils to deal with those questions they regard as the most urgent ones?

**a) The visions of the "good school"**

During this year some of us in Linköping have tried to use the concepts and perspectives of Alasdair MacIntyre as tools for understanding the Swedish society of today. Applying this perspective to the problem of religious education implies that school education in a certain society is a particular type of practice that provides an arena in which certain virtues for and expectations on those working in the schools are developed and expressed. These virtues and expectations form more or less distinct and commonly accepted views of what the "good teacher" and the "good pupil" should and should not do.

From a Swedish point of view it would be natural to expect from the British PPI an account of what conflicting views on the "good school" may have existed in debates on public schools or comprehensive schools and the relevance of these views for the discussion of religious education. If it is difficult to relate to a shared view on what a "good school" should be like, the discussion can perhaps be avoided by pragmatically concentrating on rules for local decisions and on systems of supervision. Perhaps this has been done in Britain during the last decades.

We get the impression that the discussion of the "good school" has had more urgency in relation to immigrant minorities, some of which during the last two decades have also showed interest in defining themselves religiously. This religious pluralism seems to have been much more far-reaching and urgent in Britain than it has been (at least up to now) in Sweden, and we have every reason to learn as much as we can from the British experiences and discussions. Some such minorities have formulated demands and expectations which seem to fundamentally challenge certain earlier undisputed traits in the British view of the "good school". These demands and expectations are perhaps an even greater challenge to well-established views in Sweden. Yet, perhaps these challenges must be dealt with in a different way in Sweden because of its educational history. While the British discussion of religious education may possibly be considered an important way of trying to come to grips with the question of the "good school", in Sweden all efforts to meet the new challenges must be related to all the old debates, agreements and compromises which make up what we define as the "good school". The different subjects are thought of as part of a system with a common vision. If this common vision is challenged by religious pluralism, this becomes a problem not only for religious education but also for other subjects and the whole system.

To us the vision of the "good school" in Russia seems to be even more problematic. In Russia today there seems to be a fundamental and partially inherited conflict in the expectations placed on education and schools. In the new vision it is important that the new educational system should neither be like the pre-Soviet "system of religious/ideological upbringing" nor like the Soviet "system of anti-religious upbringing". The new vision tries to strengthen democracy and encourage understanding across ethnic borders. Seen in this perspective, a non-confessional religious education could make a contribution. At the same time it seems to be possible to question the entire modern educational system - including the patriotic educational system of the tsarist regime and of course especially a more democratic and humanistic modern educational system - as a Western/European invention alien to the Russian tradition and culture shaped by the Russian Church. In this perspective, the school and especially non-confessional religious education is questionable from a religious point of view.

For us it will be interesting to follow the further development of the new Russian vision of the "good school" and how it relates to religious education. We have been impressed by the weight given in Russian teacher education programmes to courses on general cultural subjects. This weight seems to be greater in Russia than in Sweden (and in Britain). Underlying these courses, it seems to us, must be certain ideals and expectations of what the "good teacher" is, ideals which could be more clearly articulated and used in the discussions of the proper goals and content of religious education. Such an articulation could also become a challenge for the theory and practice of religious education in Sweden.

Perhaps these differences in the visions of the "good school" and in the histories of these visions would have been clearer and more explicit, if we had focused on social change more than we did in the PPI:s. Urbanisation and immigration did not follow the same course and did not accelerate at the same time in these three countries. Comparing the history of different countries can shed light on the importance of these factors for schools in general and more specifically for religious education.

The modern Swedish vision of the "good school" is influenced by certain characteristics of the pre-modern Swedish society and of the Swedish modernisation process.

Pre-modern Sweden has been called the world of the table of duties (*hustavlan*). The table of duties was the last part of the Small Catechism by Martin Luther, in which the duties of each citizen were formulated in three dimensions: in the church (as the one who preaches and teaches or the one who listens and learns), in the society (as the one who has an office of secular authority /*weltliche Obrichkeit*/ or the one who has to obey the laws and decisions of that secular authority as ordained by God) and in the household (as *husbonde* that is father and/or master responsible for all living in the same house and eating the same food, or as *husfolk*, that is those for whom the *husbonde* is responsible). Within this society there was an educational system parallel to the system of the universities and the gymnasiums. This second system was also the responsibility of the church, and it was the reason behind the very early Swedish parish registers of those living in the parish with records from the parish catechetical meetings. While this local educational system re-

flected a hierarchical view of society, it also had some egalitarian or "democratic" traits. The Lutheran tradition stressed the priesthood of all believers, and the educational system was designed to enable each person, not only the head of household but also every farm labourer and female servant to fulfil their duties independently and on their own responsibility. Their individual responsibilities could even include answering a question from the visiting bishop as to whether the vicar really preached the pure gospel (and did not mingle it with law).

This society (and educational system) broke down during the modernisation process, when the villages were split up, new industrial towns grew, and the old forms of social control (and social welfare) disappeared. This new society was to a large extent formed by the Swedish *folkrörelser* (popular movements), such as the revival movements within the Church of Sweden and movements forming free churches, the temperance movement and the labour movement. These movements also created new educational ideals as they started small libraries, associations for public lectures and for study circles in order to place the power of knowledge and education in the hands of "the people". These developments worked in opposition to the educational system used by an elite to distribute knowledge and power hierarchically. The educational ideals of these movements included education for all with the goal of active participation in and responsibility for the formation of a society where solidarity with fellow mankind was the key. In the debates during the 19th and 20th centuries up until the creation of the Swedish comprehensive school in the 1950s and 1960s these ideals slowly gained ground from the educational ideals of the (old) university and (old) gymnasium.

In Sweden the modern city is a relatively late phenomenon. Urbanisation is a process which accelerated after World War II. Earlier industrialisation was concentrated more to certain factory towns, and when the cities began to grow at last, the changes were dramatic. Before World War II 70 percent of the inhabitants of the cities and towns lived in the very centres. In the 1960s only 30 percent did so; 70 percent lived in the new districts or suburbs which were rapidly built. City planning was to a large extent formed by the concept of neighbourhood. The suburb was supposed to be a society with a rather independent infrastructure and with a suburban centre towards which most movements and con-

tacts were directed. The centre was to be surrounded by a green area for recreation. The traffic was to be directed towards roads around and between the neighbourhoods. In this suburban centre the school was perhaps the most important building. It was to be used as a kind of community centre, not only by pupils but also by associations, by study circles, by the parish, etc. (This was a continuation of the way the popular movements had worked since the 19th century). The school building was expected to be something quite different from an isolated world apart from society, and education was expected to prepare the pupils to become citizens taking part in the process of creating the new good society. This preparation presupposed that the school was a place for children of parents from all social strata and from all ideological, political and religious groups. These school ideals were found not only in the suburbs. The comprehensive school (*grundskolan*) was inaugurated in the 1960s after a long period of experiments in the 1950s and thorough committee investigations in the 1940s. In this situation no need was felt for alternative schools. The neighbourhood school was thought of as an integrating force, and this way of thinking was shared by all important political parties. The Church of Sweden was also an integrated part in the social planning for a new form of the good society, and new churches ("small churches") were built in these new suburbs. There had not been so many new churches built since the Middle Ages.

The immigration to Sweden started already in the 1950s. The new Swedes were mainly specially chosen, trained workers from other European countries (such as Italy). Their assimilation problems were relatively small. In the 1970s and 1980s immigration grew. At this time non-Europeans also came to Sweden in large numbers, and many were refugees. This was not experienced as a challenge to the educational ideals. In Sweden we acted as if the integration concept of the comprehensive school could be developed in such a way that the school could also integrate these new groups. The right to sustain and cultivate one's cultural heritage was stressed, and training in one's native language was guaranteed. We expected the new Swedes to share our fundamental (democratic/humanistic) values and to want to become integrated. There was no real discussion as to whether what was "foreign" or "alien" could possibly be a challenge to the ideas behind the Swedish comprehensive school.

Now in the 1990s much has changed, partly due to the economic crisis in Sweden, which, however, is not as dramatic as the Russian situation. The welfare state which succeeded the liberal state after World War II, has lost power. Meeting places and integrating institutions have been removed from the neighbourhoods in the city. Post offices, branch libraries, youth centres and other social institutions have closed for economic reasons. When schools are also closed, a situation of disorientation can occur. The school has often become a hub in the wheel of the neighbourhood. In this situation, when the neighbourhoods become impoverished, it becomes obvious to what extent this earlier vision of the good society has been self-evident for most people. Few things can engage as many people today as a threat to close their neighbourhood school. The recently created opportunity to start "free" (independent) schools is more often used to save this integrating neighbourhood institution than to create alternative, parallel schools in the same area.

The economic crisis has made the situation worse for the immigrants. Such benefits as "home language" training have been reduced. The schools are seen not so much as important tools in a system for creating a good society as as units responsible for their own economy. The danger is that segregation will grow.

In this situation there are good reasons to make new efforts to rethink the role of the school in general and the role of religious education in particular. The new vision must, as the earlier one, aim at integration, but it has to do so in relation to the new social conditions, which in many respects are different from those of the last decades. We have already seen that what we described in the PPI as the Swedish model for religious education was formed before the large immigration. It did not change with immigration and hence has not been influenced by the fact that many of the pupils now come from cultural backgrounds dominated by non-Christian religions. Perhaps we should have reconsidered the model one or two decades ago. The reasons to do that are even stronger now and are also derived from the model itself. The concept of pluralism as potential wealth (implicit in the model) must be thought through, not only in relation to the different traditions of the earlier Sweden, but also in relation to the different traditions of Sweden today. Religious education has to help pupils to relate to the traditions of all

other Swedes and to scrutinise and cultivate their own traditions also if these traditions are non-Christian.

### **b) The pre-supposed concepts of religion**

Non-confessional religious education seems to make the assumption that "religion" is conceived as something which always has the same characteristics but which can take different forms. The general characteristics may be described in different ways in different contexts. When you try to define the general concept (describe the general characteristics) within a certain context, you probably first try to identify those dimensions in your specific situation which you consider to be the most urgent and then to define the concept in such a way that the concept works adequately in as many of those dimensions as possible. We think that the PETER project gives some examples of how such concepts of religion can be constructed and of how they can differ.

When you want to argue that a certain amount of time should be reserved for religious education, a key question to answer is how and to what extent religious education can contribute to the realisation of the goals of the education as a whole, to the realisation of the "good school". This has already been dealt with, and this type of argument seems to have explicitly influenced the design of religious education more in Sweden than in the other countries. However, the way such arguments can be formulated and used seems to be dependent on which understanding of religion is most common in the cultural context and on which form of religion has traditionally dominated.

We think that it is most interesting to study this dependency in the Russian PPI and the Russian comments. Religious education in Russia is said to be aimed at the students' cultural development (as distinguished from forming the students' civil attitude). This corresponds to the design of the academic courses on religion "on the edge of semiotics and aesthetics" (Russian Comments). From a Swedish perspective this concept of culture, as something distinct from ethics and politics, may appear somewhat narrow. We realise, however, that even such a narrow concept might be problematic in a Russian context. If we have understood it correctly, it could be interpreted as a secularised concept

of religion which is fundamentally challenged by the self-understanding of that (Russian orthodox) faith which totally dominates the Russian context. Perhaps this is only another form of the observation made above that in Russia it seems to be possible to question the entire school and educational project as a Western invention which stands in opposition to Russian traditions and culture as formed under the influence of the Russian Church.

The relationship between what is expected from religious education in contributing to the "good school" and the traditional understanding of religion seem to be less problematic in Great Britain and in Sweden, but it is also true there that the understanding of religion and faith in the traditionally predominant churches influences the understanding of all religions. In an almost amusing way it is possible to follow how the concentration on dogmatics in the Lutheran tradition is reflected in the description of all religions (and life views) in Swedish religious education. On the other hand the British concentration on themes within all religions corresponds to the fact that the Church of England has been united not by dogma but by the Book of Common Prayer and its regulation of worship. Furthermore, what we choose to describe as important differences between religions corresponds to those differences which were most important in our own traditional (more homogenous) societies. In Sweden traditions of piety emerged in the 19th century which were different in various regions of the country. These traditions still influence people, reminding them of their roots even after the migration caused by the urbanisation. Perhaps this has also inspired Swedish descriptions of religion in India and Buddhism in the Far East as regional conglomerates of religion, culture and styles of life. And how much in British religious education reflects the colonial habit of describing the "foreign" with help of parallels to the "centre of the world"? Of course, we in Great Britain and in Sweden can try to overcome many of these forms of traditional narrow-mindedness, but when we do so, we are also restricted by our context. The only thing left to do is to try. In Sweden academic teachers from other universities often point out how we in Linköping are "exaggerated" in our attempts to understand Christian faith from a perspective of worship and liturgy...

When a society becomes more pluralistic, however, the traditional understanding of religion can be questioned through the ways in which re-

ligion is understood by new minorities. This seems to be especially evident in Great Britain, and to some extent it is now the case in Sweden. The school in general and religious education in particular must of course deal with this challenge, in order to be able to realise the expectations of the "good school", to be trusted by all parents, and to make it possible for all pupils to recognise themselves and their own environment in the descriptions in textbooks and in what teachers say. But such "new" understandings of religion are, of course, more or less obviously influenced by the traditional ones. These new understandings also need to assimilate the restrictions set by the logic of the school system, even if different minorities are more or less eager to realise and admit such influences and restrictions. This is one reason why Muslims in Great Britain can (and probably should) express their Muslim faith in another way than Muslims in Sweden or in Pakistan. Such developments may cause (sometimes creative, sometimes destructive) tensions between self-images of different groups of Muslims within the same country or region. We would like to know more about how textbooks and teachers in the religious education of different countries deal with typical interpretations of religion in general and the inherited religions within different minorities. But we would also like to know more about how they deal with these interpretative efforts in a new and often alien environment and the new tensions created by different reactions to the new conditions and expectations. This arises not only out of curiosity, but also out of a feeling that in Sweden we have not found constructive ways of handling these interpretative efforts within the religious groups.

With the design of the PPI:s we have stressed the differences between the social contexts more than the possibilities to reflect together on research results of common interest. Perhaps together we have started building a foundation for a theory about how religious education can and should relate to the social context and its various understandings of religion. It is, however, also possible that the designs of religious education stress different scientific perspectives on religion - or that the impression within the PETER project only reflects the fact that the three countries have been represented by persons with different research backgrounds. Does British religious education bear the stamp of phenomenologically oriented comparative religion in conjunction with pedagogically oriented psychology of religion, while Swedish religious edu-

cation has its disciplinary orientation in systematic theology, philosophy of religion and historically and/or anthropologically oriented history of religions? If so, are these orientations constructive in relation to the different contexts, or are they coincidences and limitations which need to be overcome? And what is correspondingly desirable and possible in Russia today?

One line of thought expressed here is that the concept of religion which determines the design of religious education has to be chosen and elaborated so that it contributes constructively to at least some of these desirable dimensions. Following this line of thought, it seems to be inevitable that all demands can never be met, and that in different situations there is more or less room for choices. Perhaps we could gain more insight and clarity if we talked less about the goals and more about what we experience as restrictions, difficulties or failures, about where we have to make compromises, and about where and how we search for new possibilities.

### **c) Religious education from the point of view of the pupils**

The goals and problems of religious education are probably not the same from the point of view of a pupil as from the point of view of a teacher or of a school administrator or a politician.

A pupil tries to respond to the expectations from the school (and from the society) to be a "good pupil" in order to be able to become a "good citizen". As a mature individual this "good citizen" should be able to take responsibility both for him-/herself, for his/her family, his/her friends and for the whole society, contributing within the democratic structures. The expectations implicit in religious education are related both to the maturity of the individual and to the co-responsibility for the society. As a "good citizen" you are expected to be able, not only to interpret and scrutinise the social effects of religious phenomena and convictions, but also to form an opinion on what should be encouraged and what should be restricted by political decisions concerning religious groups. All this should promote that vision of the "good society" which is the lodestar of the society and its educational system.

But the pupil is not only a pupil. The child or youth must also respond to expectations from its parents (and relatives). Those who want to be accepted in a religious community have to respond to the expectations of what is a "good Christian" or a "good Muslim", according to a more general or to a more specific definition. Many pupils are expected to develop many identities - a national identity, an ethnic identity and/or a regional identity, a family identity. At the same time the individual may develop identities as a believer in a world religion, in a denomination, in a tradition of piety and/or in a certain theological tradition (more or less closely linked to a national, ethnic and/or regional identity). How are these identities related, not only to each other, but also to the "public virtues" of the school? To what extent should and can religious education in public schools offer the pupil tools for scrutinising and dealing with such questions? If religious education offer tools for these questions, how then should those conflicts be treated in which religious education will be involved?

There is a risk that religious education becomes so occupied by the social problems and the problems of the "religions" that it becomes unable to help the pupils to deal with these challenges. The PPI:s may also be read to search for hints about such an inability and about how it possibly could be attacked and overcome.

Behind the PPI-idea also lies the conviction that it is possible to learn to discern, formulate and analyse your own situation much better by comparing problems with similar ones in quite another situation. During the PETER project the Linköping group has had the opportunity to study how new religious education has been developed in Malawi. European experiences and models have there been used in order to create something which could build and strengthen relations between different groups and unify the nation. The old kind of religious education inherited from the Christian mission schools has not been able to cope with the fact that about 20 percent of the population are Muslims and again as many neither Christians nor Muslims. Perhaps their use of our models can teach us something about the limitations and implicit assumptions in them.

The Malawian project starts in the statement that there are three religions in Malawi - Christianity, Islam and Malawian Traditional Reli-

gion. From this statement they must be described as three separate phenomena. When Islam is described, the description will probably fit "pure" Islam (independent of the "cultural tints" of Islam in different parts of the world), and this "pure" Islam will probably be Middle Eastern Islam with a slightly academic touch. Christianity will also be described abstractly and allegedly without "cultural tints", in practice probably Western mainstream churches with a distinct academic touch. Malawian Traditional Religion is described as incompatible with both Christianity and Islam. The result is that neither youths from Christian churches nor Muslim youths can recognise what is described in school as a fair description of their own faith. And they are not offered any tools which help them to understand and contribute to the inculturation of their religious traditions in Malawi. From interviews we have gotten the impression that this is what they ponder most upon; they are also abandoned by the new religious education.<sup>9</sup>

In Sweden, too, "religions" are often described quite abstractly, as something independent of geographical and cultural distances and historical change, often as individual projects quite independent from supporting communities. Perhaps Christianity (and other "religions") should be described more as piles of somewhat different traditions of piety and as groups of people engaged in a constant scrutinising and cultivating of traditions, trying to remain true to tradition by expressing their faith in new ways. Perhaps that could give the pupils some tools they currently do not get.

In Great Britain it is perhaps more important to question the strong position representatives for religious communities are given. From our point of view they seem to have a power of veto over unwanted interpretations of their traditions. But is it not an urgent problem for many pupils to try to relate to the different alternatives within the same tradition, especially the different ways of understanding and approaching what is thought of as "British"? Are also they abandoned?

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jessica Olausson, *Christianity, Islam, Malawian Traditional Religion and the Malawian Culture. Possible Implications of the New Primary School Syllabus in Religious Education in Malawi*, University of Linköping, Institute of Tema, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 1996.

Analogously (non-confessional) religious education in Russia perhaps should give up the attempts to authoritatively define and delimit orthodox tradition and to try to disseminate an appreciation of different interpretations of this tradition and the backgrounds and reasons behind these interpretations!? Religious education could then illustrate, for example, how the interpretation of Orthodoxy was at stake and was influenced, both when what is Russian was contrasted with what is European during the late tsarist regime, and when "religion" was denied and combated during the Soviet era. Illustrating this and how similar questions are interpreted and treated in other countries, religious education would make the concept of religion more problematic and challenge those claiming to know the right interpretation. But it would also offer the pupils some tools for reflection on the problems that seem to occupy them, that is how religion can be understood in the post-Soviet era.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Helen Elofson, Karin Eriksson, Pernilla Gustafsson, Karolina Johansson & Karin Öster, *Cabbage and Caviar. Views on Life, Mankind and Religion among Young People in St. Petersburg - a City of Contradiction*, University of Linköping, Institute of Tema, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, 1996.

# **RUSSIAN COMMENTS ON THE BRITISH AND SWEDISH PPIs**

**by**

**Dr Vladislav Arzhanoukhin,  
Alexander I Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia,  
St Petersburg and**

**Dr Elena Kitaeva,  
St Petersburg University**

It is well-known that the non-confessional religious educational systems of Britain and Sweden are among the most developed and interesting in the world. As an integral part of state educational programmes in Great Britain and Sweden, religious education is a powerful factor in the development of the general outlook and civil attitudes of children. For Russian specialists it is important to remember that in these countries religious education is based both on a strong democratic tradition and upon distinctive schools of academic thought. A glance at the list of British and Swedish acts of parliament which over decades have regulated religious education in state schools is enough to show the progress which schools in these countries have made, and both nations themselves, towards the creation of harmonious relations between religion and society.

It might have seemed only natural to introduce this theoretical and methodological wealth into Russian religious education. It is impossible however fully to exploit this experience in Russia, since social, cultural and religious practice in Russia is very different from that in Western Europe, and both areas differ in the level of secularisation. Moreover the nature of religious education is such that it is impossible to reduce it to educational technologies in isolation from the social, historical and cultural environment.

From the perspective of a Russian University Lecturer, the following consideration is important: the system of religious education cannot be evaluated in terms either of evolutionism or of scientism. The state of religious education in different countries does not represent the result of the progressive development of mind, morale and science. The level of social secularisation and the religious forms of society primarily determine this state. We can suppose that the higher the level of secularisation (that is, the level of independence of religion from the Church), and the more lively the ideas about religion in secular society, the more developed will be the educational system with regard to religion in that society. Consequently, the vices and virtues of various types of non-confessional religious education depend only on whether it corresponds to the level of social secularisation.

Nevertheless, by investigating the British and Swedish experience, Russian education has the opportunity to define its place in European religious education. It is only natural that we should set up comparisons as part of this investigation. But by doing so, we do not intend to discredit other systems nor do we use it as a form of apologetics either for our own system or the systems of our partners. All this comparison reveals is our aspiration and desire to understand ourselves since it is we who are characterised first and foremost in the evaluation of our partners.

It is striking that the history of religious education in both Britain and Sweden can be clearly traced in the modern structure and methodology of the subject. Being both the result and cause of the secularisation process, British and Swedish religious education presupposes the partial importance of confessional religious experience, and focuses rather on the moral and world-view contents of religion as such. In Russia, on the other hand, there exists a unique attraction to cult and the ritual forms of religious life. The reduction of what is confessional to conventional historical and cultural forms is viewed as being a decay of religion. But Russia, too, shows the signs of the recent secularisation. At schools and universities, for instance, interest in cult and religion is generally confined to educational processes rather than religious ones. The cultural and educational background places the university teaching of liturgy on the level of aesthetics and semiotics. The liturgical and ritual aspects of

religion are considered to be a kind of intellectual and emotional lingua franca, a set of symbols and images which allow those who belong to Russian culture to express themselves in literature, art and philosophy. However, it is necessary to point out that in modern Russian writings close to the Church the educational and cultural approaches to the investigation of religious history harmonises with the criticism of mass culture, which is expressed as a diagnosis of the modern period. They oppose secular mass culture or, in the terms of cosmopolitanism, elitist culture to the national and confessional one.

Different approaches to the problem of cults reveal fundamental differences in our understanding of the goals of religious education. In Russia education of this kind aims at the students' cultural development; it seeks to cultivate their apprehension of belonging to a particular spiritual tradition. In Western Europe however, religious education is an important element of civilisation; it forms students' civil attitudes rather than their cultural ones. In the West European structure of religious education the problem of confessional experience does not touch the essence of religion and its metaphysics. Here the central place belongs to ethics, the latter replacing the cult, and thus turning the system of cult, as an important element in religion, into some conventional form with purely earthly and not divine roots. In the West such an attitude is proved by the pluralistic approach to religion, which means to say that the believers, or unbelievers, act according to their opinions (Christian, non-Christian, atheistic), which show the historical character of their origin. The interpretation of a confessional religion as an ethnic and historical form, which conceals its divine essence, fully corresponds to the conception of 'inner' Christianity. It seems that God become a phenomenon over and above any faith. Thus in Russian and West European cultures we find different ideas about the boundary between objective Christianity and subjective religiosity.

There is a tradition in Russian religious education which defines ritual as being the most important part of religion. Originally, this tradition ran the risk of turning into neopaganism, when mythic appeal to archaic layers in the cult could actually replace Christian motivations; we have already seen this in Russian history. The representatives of this tradition, however, claim that religion is a form of life, a form of man's experience (both cognitive and emotional) rather than an outlook; and

such forms of life can simply be said to exist. They do not need to seek support in any moral theories or opinions.

Nevertheless, it is absolutely clear that the West European tradition only faces some problems with respect to the system of cult, since religion and religious metaphysics are independent. The position of the moral imperative does not conceal the perspectives of religious experience. The considerable experience of the Swedes in humanistically and existentially orientated religious education presents an obvious interest for specialists. What is surprising is that the Swedish school of thought has managed to escape the tendency towards primitivism in religious education, which has happened so often in Russia. The representatives of this tendency interpret religion as a kind of admonition, tending towards a shallow asceticism, which repudiates human instincts. In this case, religion which has been turned into a means to an end and its value is thereby reduced. We find it interesting that this humanistic approach has transformed the very subject of religious education. Life itself, with man at the crossroads at its centre, becomes the subject of study rather than religion.

In Russia the origin of such a humanistic interpretation of religion in general and Christianity in particular belongs to the 1960s. It is interesting to note that such an approach was generated by a secular society, with the Church taking no part in it. It was the time when the Soviets began to legalise religion, and a mood of Existentialism began to spread. It was then that religion in Russia began to exist in a secular cultural context. This inevitably led to a depreciation of the mystical experience of the Church and to the humanisation of the divine. At the present time it seems that the humanistic approach to religion dominates in the system of Russian non-confessional religious education. Russian and West European models may seem to share humanistic and existential orientations, but in reality Existentialism is realised in Russia and the West with entirely different levels of secularisation. Compared with West Europe, Russia is at an early stage of secularisation, since private morality has not yet lost its confessional characteristics. It is a period when people bear only theoretical collective responsibility but have not yet developed personal responsibility. This ontological gap has transformed an interest in existential problems. Traditionally Russian culture has been

characterised by the existential searchings and decisions of individuals, including for instance Dostoevsky and Berdyaev creative activity. In the situation of post-communist society however such existential problems have been reinterpreted. As a result, we have a situation in which this problem is being settled by a 'historical community' rather than by an individual. Such a social and cultural situation does not lead to Dostoevsky and Berdyaev but to the nationalistic and revolutionary interpretation of existentially coloured self-consciousness and self-definition. The Church is only too glad to see that by now the existential problems are still on the periphery of Russian confessional life. Accordingly, Church life has very little influence on the development and spread of nationalistic and revolutionary states of mind.

In spite of this danger, the humanistic and existential approach to the interpretation of religion seems to be absolutely necessary in the teaching of literature and art history in Russian schools. In this context religious education becomes the basis for students which helps them to develop their personal attitude to the world and society. Swedish school experience fully proves this proposition. The acquaintance with the history and problems of the development of religious education in Sweden and Great Britain shows us that despite the different cultural and national traditions, the Russian system of religious education is passing through the same stages in its evolution and has to solve the same problems which European education has faced. In this respect participation in the international project enables us to predict general tendencies in the development of religious education in Russia.

## ABSTRACT

*Religious Education in Great Britain, Sweden and Russia. Presentations, Problem Inventories and Commentaries - Texts from the PETER Project*, Edgar Almén & Hans Christian Øster (editors), (Linköping Studies in Religion and Religious Education ; No 1.), Linköping University Electronic Press, Linköping 2000, 145 pp, ISBN 91-7219-641-6 (print), ISSN 1404-3971 (print), ISSN 1404-4269 (on-line), [www.ep.liu.se/ea/rel/2000/001/](http://www.ep.liu.se/ea/rel/2000/001/) (WWW)

The Alexander I. Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St. Petersburg, was asked by the Russian Ministry of Education to prepare for a non-confessional religious education within Russian post-perestroika schools, and its scholars asked colleagues from University of Wales, Lampeter, and Linköpings universitet for assistance. Within the Tempus Tacis Pre-JEP project PETER (Promoting and Establishing a Teacher Education programme on non-confessional Religious studies) they 1995/96 gave their contributions the form of PPIs (Presentations and Problem Inventories) in which they not only described non-confessional religious education in Britain and Sweden but also clarified those problems this education is supposed to solve and the historico-cultural background of these problems. In relations to these PPIs the Russian contributors described those problems in the contemporary Russian situation which a new Russian non-confessional religious education should address.

The main contributors to the PPIs are Dr William K Kay, Dr Edgar Almén, and Dr Vladislav Arzhanoukhin. These PPIs are commented by Professor Ninian Smart, then at University of California, Santa Barbara, and by Professor Berit Askling, then at Linköpings universitet. Mutual comments between the PPI-groups complete this book.

Key words:

religious education, non-confessional religious education, Great Britain, Sweden, Russia, Tempus Tacis.

**Linköping Studies in Religion and Religious Education**

*Series editor: Edgar Almén*

1. Almén, Edgar & Øster, Hans Christian (editors), *Religious Education in Great Britain, Sweden and Russia. Presentations, Problem Inventories and Commentaries - Texts from the PETER Project*, 2000
2. Capps, Walter H. & Lejon, Kjell O. (editors) *Anders Nygren's Religious Apriori with an Introduction by Walter H. Capps*, 2000