Discerning the Spirit

Teaching Spirituality in the Religious Education Classroom

Andrew Wright
King's College, London

Contents

1. Introduction...............p.1

2. The Nature of Spirituality...............p.4

Towards an Educational Consensus...............p.4

The Contours of Spirituality...............p.6

Spiritual Education...............p.9

3. Religion and Spirituality...............p.13

Declining Religion, Persistent Spirituality...............p.13

Religion: Expression of Spiritual Experience...............p.15

Religion Serving Spiritual Education...............p.19

4. Revising the Consensus...............p.23

The Limits of Romanticism...............p.23

Case Study: A Christian Alternative...............p.25

Spirituality and Truth...............p.28

5. The Task of Spiritual Education...............p.32

Spirituality Redefined...............p.32

Spiritual Education as Nurture...............p.35

Spiritual Education as Critique...............p.38

6. Some Classroom Implications...............p.42

Mapping Ultimate Reality...............p.42

A Model of Spiritual Education...............p.45

Stage 1: The horizon of the child...............p.45

Stage 2: The horizons of alternative spiritual stories...............p.46

Stage 3: The emergence of spiritual literacy...............p.47

Bibliography...............p.50

1. Introduction

There can be little doubt that the legacy of years of secularism significantly influenced the contours of religious education in the latter half of the twentieth century. The belief that religion was little more than primitive superstition, and that religious language was unverifiable by any strict scientific criteria and hence essentially meaningless, gained a firm hold on the minds of many children. True, they may not have used such language in articulating their presumptions, and presumably the majority had never heard of logical positivism, but nevertheless the agenda they brought into the classroom was clear. This emergent suspicion of the religious domain in turn influenced the task of teachers: how could they draw their pupils towards an appreciation of the value many people continued to find in religion?

Times change, fashions come and go. In our present post-modern age the debate about the meaningfulness of religion is now seldom heard. Religion, in all its esoteric diversity, is currently enjoying a renaissance. Spirituality is alive and kicking: street-wise, confident and at the heart of the action. The challenge for the present generation of pupils is no longer the discernment of meaning amidst the rubble of obsolete religion, but rather to solve the problem of choice: how to select from the rich diversity of spiritual goods on offer on the shelves of the post-modern supermarket.

For once education has caught the spirit of the times, though possibly more by accident than design. The 1988 Education Reform Act allocated to schools responsibility for promoting the spiritual development not merely of the pupils under their care, but of society as a whole. Few then would have predicted the outpouring of interest in the spiritual dimension of education that was to appear in the last decade of the millennium. The flood of policy documents and schemes of work, of conferences and journals, of text-books and resource materials continues to pour forth. With inspection of the spiritual dimension of education firmly on the agenda of OFSTED, classroom

teachers in general, and religious education teachers in particular, ignore the issue at their peril.

In 1997 I completed a research project sponsored by the All Saints Educational Trust, into the growth and development of spiritual education. The published report, *Spiritual Pedagogy. A Survey, Critique and Reconstruction of Contemporary Spiritual Education in England and Wales* (Wright, 1998) was necessarily a rather dry academic piece of writing. Consequently, when the All Saints Trustees invited me to produce a shorter, more accessible and more specifically teacher-oriented version of the report I was delighted to accept the challenge. This slim volume is the result.

My aim is to address the issue of spiritual education specifically as it relates to classroom religious education, and to do so in a manner which avoids on the one hand academic obscurity and on the other a simplistic quick-fix guide for teachers. My hope is that this volume will stimulate teachers to develop further the professional task of critical reflection on their practice, in the belief that it is in the classroom that much of the important and innovative work in religious education actually takes place.

I begin by outlining what I believe to be a prevailing consensus regarding the nature of spirituality in education (*Part One*), and then explore the relationship between this consensus and religion in general and religious education in particular (*Part Two*). I then offer a critique of this status quo, in the process developing a revised definition of spirituality and identifying a number of different types of spirituality prevalent in contemporary society (*Part Three*). This leads me onto more practical concerns. A model of spiritual education as a simultaneous process of nurturing children's inherent spirituality and enhancing their capacity for critical thinking is outlined (*Part Four*). Finally some implications of this model for classroom practice are teased out (*Part Five*).

This project would not have been possible without the financial help of All Saints Educational Trust. Alfred Bush, Peter Hartley and Eric Tinker supported the process throughout with their interest, encouragement, enthusiasm and level-headed advice. The guidance offered by John Gay, together with the editorial assistance of Jan Greenough at Culham College Institute was indispensable. The School of Education at King’s College London has always provided a stimulating and sensitive environment to work

in and particular thanks on this occasion must be extended to three colleagues: Andrew Walker, for his sympathetic oversight; Ann-Marie Brandom for putting a healthy brake on the worst excesses of my numerous flights of fantasy; and Meg Maguire for encouraging me to relate my thinking across the whole of the curriculum. My sincere thanks and deep appreciation are extended to all involved, though of course should readers find themselves flinging the book down in exasperation then the responsibility must be mine alone.

2. The Nature of Spirituality

Towards an Educational Consensus

In a speech delivered at Ruskin College in October 1976 Prime Minister James Callaghan invited the nation to address the issue of the fundamental nature and purpose of our public education system (Callaghan, 1976). In doing so he stimulated a rigorous and multi-faceted debate that was to culminate in the 1988 Education Reform Act and its introduction of a National Curriculum.

Members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), the body then responsible for overseeing standards in schools, offered their distinctive contribution to the discussion in their 1977 discussion paper *Curriculum 11–16* (DES/HMI, 1977a). Heavily influenced by the educational philosopher Paul Hirst, HMI suggested that education should be primarily concerned with inducting children into eight essential areas of human knowledge and experience: aesthetic and creative, ethical, linguistic, mathematical, physical, scientific, social and political, and spiritual.

When pushed to clarify what they meant by the 'spiritual' domain, HMI responded with a single-page supplement to the original document offering two distinct and contrasting definitions (DES/HMI, 1977b). The first was narrow, limiting and clearly theological in tone:

> The spiritual area is concerned with … a sense of God … spirituality is a meaningless adjective for the atheist and of dubious use to the agnostic.

The second definition was broader, more encompassing, and rooted in an anthropological perspective:

> The spiritual area is concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs; they … throw light … on the purpose and meaning of life … [and] are concerned with matters at the heart and root of existence.

It was clear from the outset that HMI's preference was for this latter all-embracing understanding.

In contributing to the debate HMI achieved two things: first, they established spirituality as a key issue in educational debate; and secondly they encouraged a universal perspective significant for all, one not weighed down by any particular religious tradition or exclusive truth claim. When the 1988 Education Reform Act legislated for a broad and balanced curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils', the proposals of HMI, in spirit if not in form, finally came to form part of the national education system (HMSO, 1988, Pt.1, Ch. 1.1.2).

Legislation is one thing, but the effective implementation of legislation is entirely different. This is a reality religious educators have long been aware of: for years the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship demanded by the 1944 Education Act was simply brushed aside and ignored by countless schools. The new factor in the 1988 legislation was that of accountability. Through OFSTED inspection schools were to be called to demonstrate their conformity to the legislation, and as soon as it became apparent that OFSTED inspectors were asking questions about the spiritual dimension of education, schools were forced to draw up policy and implement strategy. Spirituality, it appeared, was here to stay.

Without a doubt the most important and formative document guiding schools in their formulation of policy was the 1993 National Curriculum Council publication *Spiritual and Moral Development*. It quickly became a best-seller, and was subsequently republished by SCAA (SCAA, 1995). The document adopts and develops HMI's earlier anthropological approach to spirituality. It understands spirituality as fundamental to the human condition, transcending ordinary everyday experience, and concerned with the search for identity and meaning in response to death, suffering, beauty and evil. Spiritual development is approached in terms of eight key aspects: beliefs; the sense of awe, wonder and mystery; feelings of transcendence; the search for

meaning and purpose; self-knowledge; relationships; creativity; and feelings and emotions. The promotion of spirituality, the document suggests, requires the nurturing of curiosity, imagination, insight and intuition through the ethos, collective worship and explicit curriculum of the school.

The document clearly saw the spiritual dimension as permeating the entire life of the school community. There is no suggestion that it is in any way the exclusive preserve of the religious education specialist. Nevertheless our immediate concern here is precisely with the specific area of religious education.

The Contours of Spirituality

How have contemporary religious educators picked up and developed the lead given by *Spiritual and Moral Development*? What do they mean when they refer to 'spirituality', the 'spiritual dimension' and 'spiritual sensibility'? Despite the repeated claim that the spiritual is by its very nature a mystery beyond definition, a survey of the literature reveals a surprisingly clear and consistent picture, so much so that it is appropriate to speak of a ‘contemporary consensus’. It is this consensus that we must now attempt to sketch.

It has been said that the path from childhood to adulthood is one of progressive disenchantment with ourselves and with the world we indwell. As we grow older our primal sense of the wonder, mystery and magic inherent in reality is displaced by the tyranny of reason, convention and a universe of brute fact. Teachers themselves are expected to contribute to this process: driven by the demands of syllabuses and attainment targets they must quantify, order and control. Pupils stare out of their classroom windows at an adult world that is alienating, cold and repressive.

However, an authentic spiritual education need not be like this. For Raymond Holley, one of the first and most significant contributors to the debate, it should ‘sensitise children to the mysteries of life and enable them to view the cosmos, and their place in it, in spiritual terms’ (Holley, 1978, p.65). For John Webster it must nurture the intensity of childhood experience by provoking insight and triggering the imagination. Spiritual experience is essentially experience of mystery: an awareness of the wonder, awe, elusiveness and

glory of life (Webster, 1982). The recovery of this primal sense of mystery, the re-enchantment of a disenchanted universe, is seen as the prime task of spiritual education.

Most of the time, however, our lives are ordinary, mundane and uneventful. Spiritual experience is an elusive entity, and our encounter with that which is ultimate and transcendent is always fleeting and fragile. This is why, from a religious perspective, prayer and contemplation require intense discipline if believers are to achieve the heightened awareness of God they seek, and why aesthetic appreciation of art and music often demands high levels of concentration and a willingness to move beyond initial impressions. For David Hay an understanding of the essential mystery of our spiritual being proceeds through the exploration of the 'inner space' of our minds and requires just such a heightening of awareness and attentiveness (Hay, 1982a). Our potential for spiritual experience, though threatened by the ravages of secularism and modernity, has not been entirely eclipsed (Hay, 1985). Hay insists, in the face of criticism, that such spiritual awareness is not simply subjective self-awareness, but an objective encounter with ultimate reality: 'There are grounds for some confidence in the objective reality of the states of awareness achieved in contemplative practice' (Hay, 1982b, p.49; cf. Thatcher, 1991, Wright, 1996). Hence he refers to this heightened spiritual sensibility as 'relational consciousness' (Hay & Nye, 1998).

The question of the meaning and purpose of our lives is rooted in such relational consciousness. We cannot possibly make sense of our hopes, fears, aspirations and sense of meaning, purpose and identity without first asking how we relate to ourselves, to others, to our environment and to the ultimate question of the being or non-being of God. All too often such relationships are unexplored, distorted, confused and lacking in authenticity. It is only through a heightened spiritual awareness that we can genuinely begin to make sense of the mystery of our lives. Only with a developed and mature spiritual sensibility can we hope to move beyond the petty and limited in our search for the transcendent and ultimate. 'To attempt to educate the spirit is to attempt to affect what a person is and what he or she might become, not just what they can do or might know' (Priestley, 1985, p.115).

For Michael Grimmitt spiritual awareness is an intuitive path to knowledge, one that takes us beyond mere intellectual or emotional responses to life.

> In speaking of human spirituality, therefore, I am referring to a human capacity for a certain type of awareness … the activation of the human capacity for self-transcendence and movement towards a state of consciousness in which the limitations of human finite identity are challenged by the exercise of the creative imagination (Grimmitt, 1987, p.125).

Spirituality is thus a way of knowing, experiencing and understanding reality that brings us face to face with ultimate questions of life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, security and anxiety, meaning and despair.

In a previous age it was the priest who bridged the gap between the sacred and profane and opened up the possibility of a path to salvation. Our modern age has flirted with replacing the priest with the doctor, scientist and politician, or even the dietician, fitness instructor and media personality. Those who are spiritually aware will prefer to turn to the spiritual visionary, the poet, the artist, the musician, or the moral seer. Individuals who embody, encapsulate and exude spiritual awareness stimulate our own potential to rise above the ordinary and become extra-ordinary spiritual beings.

Spirituality, according to this contemporary consensus, is essentially mysterious, involving a heightened level of awareness that illuminates the purpose and meaning of life. One final point needs to be made before drawing this brief survey to a close. Reading the literature leaves one in little doubt that this is not just another story being told, not just another way of coming to terms with the human predicament to be placed alongside other possibilities. On the contrary, with a brash confidence the literature presents its particular understanding of the reality of the spiritual domain as ultimate, universal and fundamental. David Hay is perhaps clearest on this point: the empirical evidence of the recurrence, persistence and common universal structure of spiritual experience is unambiguous. Our spiritual nature is not something we construct socially, but an objective state of affairs at the heart of our humanity; an anthropological fact; or even, Hay ventures to suggest, a biological reality (Hay & Nye, 1988).

Spiritual Education

Given this common understanding of the contours of spirituality, we must now explore the way in which teachers have responded to the challenge of teaching spirituality in the religious education classroom.

Once again David Hay provides us with our starting point. In 1985 he published a paper that was to prove seminal: *Suspicion of the Spiritual: Teaching Religion in a World of Secular Experience* (Hay, 1985). There he argues that in our modern secular world a range of forces combine to neutralise and undermine our experience of the spiritual realm that constitutes the very heart of our humanity. Grimmitt argues along similar lines in suggesting that ‘traditional cultures of spirituality … are marginalised and silenced by the contemporary combination of bureaucracy, industry and the consciousness-creating media’ (Grimmitt, 1987, p.120). For Hay this erosion of our potential for spiritual experience cannot be ignored; on the contrary, it must be actively and aggressively resisted. The radical nature of Hay's proposals has not always been given due recognition. This is no conservative and traditionalist education concerned with inducting children into the moral norms of society, but a pedagogy of resistance, seeking to challenge, undermine and emancipate pupils from the cultural status quo. For Hay, spiritual education must deconstruct the accepted norms of society, open up to pupils a sense of the spiritual dimension eclipsed by modernity, and make available to them the possibility of encounter with transcendent reality.

Hay’s proposals were related directly to the classroom in the popular volume *New Methods in RE Teaching* (Hammond, Hay, *et al.,* 1990). Recently he has clarified and consolidated his practical advice to teachers. At the heart of all good spiritual education stands the teacher. Spiritual educators must be intimately and pro-actively committed to advocating the spiritual life. The creation of an objective distance in the classroom, or adoption of a working neutrality, is misplaced and inappropriate. Such evangelical advocacy does not, however, constitute indoctrination, since it is ‘concerned with nurturing a human predisposition rather than any specific religious (or secular) system of belief’ (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.162).

> The task of nourishing spirituality is one of releasing, not constricting children's understanding and imagination. It is to help children to emancipate themselves from the grip of historically created social pressures which damage the wholeness of their personalities (p.163).

Hay suggests that teachers have four main tasks when advocating spirituality in the classroom.

To help children keep an open mind.
Spiritual education 'begins by gently encouraging or re-awakening children's natural disposition to spiritual awareness' (p.163). However, this cannot happen so long as children are enslaved by the anti-spiritual cultural norms of a crass commercial and media-driven consumer society. Children should be encouraged to question the pathological values of a culture in spiritual crisis, and so emancipate themselves from the shackles and restrictions of modernity. Hay here turns the modernist suspicion of the spiritual domain on its head. Teachers must nurture in children an authentic hermeneutic of suspicion, one directed against those forces which constrain and suffocate genuine spirituality, and which prefer closed minds to free spirits.

To enable children to explore different ways of seeing.
Here Hay adopts as an explanatory model images which are capable of being interpreted in a diversity of ways. What to a Western mind may appear to be a line-drawing of a three-dimensional cube may appear to an Amazonian tribe as a flat two-dimensional depiction of an insect. Hay identifies the danger of a dogmatic 'cultural sedimentation' of a single perspective, a pitfall he holds to be especially prevalent in contemporary Western culture. The recognition that not merely visual images but the world itself can be viewed from alternative perspectives achieves two things. First, it emancipates children from the tyranny of believing that the way the world is approached in their immediate social context is necessarily correct; secondly, it opens up imaginative possibilities of new and better ways of seeing the world, ways in which spiritual sensibility can flourish and grow.

To encourage children's personal awareness.
The task here is 'to give permission for spiritual awareness to continue to flourish by pointing to it in the children themselves and relating it to its cultural expressions in the great ethical and religious traditions of humanity' (p.168). Hay here refers the reader back to the specific proposals outlined and given substance *in New Methods in RE Teaching*.

To nurture children's awareness of the social and political dimensions of spirituality.

As we observed above, Hay's use of the term 'inner space' has drawn the criticism that his notion of spirituality is limited to a subjective, interiorised self-exploration which fails to take account of the external world. His anthropology has been viewed as individualistic and isolationist, failing to take account of the relational nature of our selfhood. Hay clearly wishes to be disassociated from such interpretations of his work. Spirituality, he suggests, has to do with self-transcendence. ‘It requires us to go beyond egocentricity to take account of our relatedness to other people, the environment and, for religious believers, God’ (p.172). As such, authentic spiritual education must encourage pupils to recognise the social, cultural and political contexts within which spirituality is manifested.

There is, then, a relatively clear consensus regarding the nature of spirituality as a means of encountering the mystery of our existence, linked with an educational strategy that seeks to enhance the child’s capacity for spiritual sensibility in the face of opposition from the spiritually moribund culture of modernity.

3. Religion and Spirituality

Declining Religion, Persistent Spirituality

We have seen how the recent history of spirituality in education has been almost unanimous in insisting on a universal anthropological notion of spirituality which transcends any specific religious belief system. This conveniently allows many teachers simply to bracket out the question of the relationship between spirituality and religion. However, this is not an option for the religious educator, for whom the question of the relationship between religious belief and spiritual experience is inevitably central.

John Webster raises precisely this issue: how should the religious educator deal with theological approaches to spirituality 'stamped by the decision of faith'? (Webster, 1993, p.134). 'At the centre of Christian spirituality', he continues, 'lies that insight into God which is revealed by Jesus Christ and which is interpreted by the Holy Spirit' (p.134). Similarly Jerome Berryman notes that traditionally 'the child's spirituality is assumed to be a comprehensive relationship with God that involves the whole person in an ultimate way' (Berryman, 1985, p.120). Clearly we are entering here a very different realm from that of the universal anthropological spirituality which, as we have seen, dominates current debate. How do contemporary religious educators approach the relationship between spirituality and religion? Once again, a review of the literature reveals a surprisingly clear consensus.

Grace Davie subtitled her sociological study of religion in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century 'believing without belonging' (Davie, 1994). As a nation, she suggests, we are becoming increasingly detached from institutionalised forms of religion. 'Relatively few people either belong to a church or attend religious services with any regularity' (p.68f.). For the majority of the population an expectation of weekly worship became

attendance only at important annual festivals, which in turn was reduced to participation in rites of passage reflecting the life-cycle of birth, marriage and death. Nevertheless outright hostility to religion is rare and 'secularism – at least in any developed sense – remains the creed of a relatively small minority' (p.69). Between the relatively unpopular extremes of committed religious practice and secular atheistic opposition stands the dominant reality of unattached belief, of 'believing without belonging'. As Davie points out, at the start of the 1990s a clear majority of the population believed in God, chose to define themselves as religious people, and admitted their need for moments of prayer. 'Most, if not all, of the British retain some sort of religious belief even if they do not see the need to attend their churches on a regular basis' (p.69).

This suggestion, that religious believing is a persistent reality in contemporary society despite the marked decline in religious belonging, is, at face value at least, a little surprising to those familiar with the secular thesis that religion constitutes a primitive superstition in terminal decline. A partial explanation has been provided by research into children's religious and spiritual experience, suggesting as it does that spirituality is no mere social construction, but rather an essential component of our human nature.

In his 1965 Gifford Lectures the zoologist Alister Hardy suggested that religious experience, or spiritual awareness, was natural to the human condition (Hardy, 1966). The *Religious Experience Research Unit,* established in Oxford under the directorship of Hardy himself and subsequently his successor Edward Robinson, collected over five thousand accounts of reported spiritual experience. Many of the respondents pointed to key spiritual events and encounters in their childhood as formative in their personal development. Significantly the researchers, faced with the evidence before them, found it inappropriate to link such experience with any one religious system, or even with the notion of religion in general. 'Spiritual awareness could even be signified, and perhaps would be bound to be signified, in secular and even anti-religious language amongst those who for historical reasons are alienated from religious culture' (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.11).

The research of Hardy and Robinson has been taken up and developed in terms of a specific focus on children's spirituality by two major research projects. The first is the Children's Spirituality Project at the University of

Nottingham, under the leadership of David Hay; the second is the Children and Worldviews Project, located at Chichester Institute of Higher Education, under the directorship of Clive Erricker. Recent reports on the work of both projects are readily available (Erricker *et al.,* 1997, Hay & Nye, 1998; cf. Hay, Nye & Murphy, 1996). Both projects have in common a recognition of the central importance of generic spiritual experience in childhood; experience disconnected from any necessary relationship with institutional religion. In recognising the persistence of spiritual experience despite the decline of religious practice, the research serves to supplement and partly explain Davie's sociological conclusions. Religion may be in sharp decline in the Western world, but the psychological make-up of humanity ensures that the spiritual domain continues stubbornly and doggedly to flourish.

Religion: Expression of Spiritual Experience

Generic spirituality thus precedes religion, at least according to the consensus argument: spiritual experience is the origin and source of religious belief. Hay argues that in advocating the primacy of spiritual experience he simply presents 'religion as what it claims to be, the response of human beings to what they experience as the sacred', and goes on to assert that this view 'of course is a totally orthodox and traditional way of looking at it' (Hay, 1982b, p.48). Hay is right, if only to a degree: the notion of the priority of spiritual experience over religious belief and practice does indeed enjoy a long and noble ancestry. However, he is wrong in suggesting that it can be traced back further than the beginning of the modern era.

At the start of the period known as the Enlightenment, in the eighteenth century, the received wisdom was that religious creeds made objective truth claims about the nature of reality. That is to say, religious language was taken to be essentially propositional, offering descriptions of the world. When Christians described Jesus of Nazareth as 'God incarnate' they meant just that: not merely a prophet or religious visionary but in some objective and real way actually God in human form. The source of this truth claim was not Christian spiritual experience, but the revelation of God in the events of history. Christian worship evoked the spiritual experience that enabled the believer to respond in a proper manner to the truth of that particular Christological dogma. In other words, at the beginning of the modern era it

was religious belief grounded in revelation that was assumed to have priority over spiritual experience, and not vice versa.

However, such an assumption was not allowed to go unchallenged in the emergent culture of modernity. The dominant intellectual event of the Enlightenment was the emergence of modern natural science. It was soon recognised that the world described by this new science was at odds with the mythological world view of the Bible. There was no place in the natural order for miracle or prophecy, the two foundations upon which popular Christian apologetics had come to rely. Educated Christians were faced increasingly with a choice of heroic proportions: either accept the insights of rational science and abandon the Christian faith, or step aside from the intellectual mainstream and hold fast to the apparently irrational superstition of Christian myth (Byrne, 1996).

It was the Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) who offered the believer a path beyond this dilemma. He was influenced by two distinct, though interrelated, cultural movements. The first was his upbringing in the Moravian Brethren, a pietistic Protestant group that stressed the importance of emotion and feeling in any authentic Christian faith. The second was the broad Romantic movement which, reacting against the dry dogmatic sterility of modern scientific rationalism, sought to recover the dimension of feeling and immediate experience – as evoked by poet, artist and musician – as the foundation of our authentic being in the world.

Against this background Schleiermacher proposed a solution to the dilemma facing the religious believer (Schleiermacher, 1958). What if religious language does not operate by giving us descriptions of the world in a quasi-scientific manner? What if religious language is rather a means of expressing our inner religious feelings and experiences? In a single movement the authenticity of religious language is reinstated: on the one hand religious language no longer conflicts with science, since it is not attempting to describe the world; on the other hand, it reflects the core of our inner spiritual being, bringing to expression that spiritual experience that is at the very heart of our existence.

It is this shift in our understanding the nature of religious language that earned for Schleiermacher the epitaph ‘founder of modern theology’. Religious cultural expression, through symbol, myth, story and liturgy, pointed

not outwards to the world, but inwards towards our internal spiritual experience. This became known as the experiential–expressive model of religion: religious culture as a secondary expression of primary spiritual experience.

The model proved itself extremely serviceable in the long run. It was first embraced by liberal Christians as a means of retaining faith with both their religious heritage and the insights of the contemporary world. It soon came to provide a way of responding to the challenge posed by religious pluralism. If religious language is descriptive of reality, then the various religious traditions are drawn into inevitable conflict: Christianity, Islam and Judaism, for example, possess conflicting truth claims about the person of Jesus. Put simply, he cannot be a false Messiah, God incarnate and a prophet of Allah at one and the same time. The only way forward here seemed to be the imperialistic and distinctly illiberal affirmation that one of these religious traditions is superior to the others.

However, if we follow Schleiermacher, then the apparent contradictions between them can be read in a new light. The language systems adopted by Judaism, Christianity and Islam are not offering conflicting descriptions of reality, but rather local and culturally bound expressions of a common universal religious experience. The traditions may, following the best liberal tradition, be welcomed as equally valid and mutually enhancing versions of a single universal religious truth (Hick, 1977).

Schleiermacher's work naturally brought with it an increased level of interest in religious experience. It is possible to trace a fairly consistent line from Schleiermacher, through Rudolph Otto's classic phenomenological study *The Idea of the Holy* (Otto, 1931) and William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (James, 1960) right up to the recent research of Hardy, Robinson, Hay and Erricker referred to above. They have in common an acceptance of the primacy of spiritual experience, and of the source of religious doctrine being rooted not in any natural or revealed theology, but in the immediate human experience of the sacred, transcendent and holy.

The experiential–expressive model of religion offered a clear and accessible picture through which the primacy of spiritual experience over religious expression could be asserted. It is difficult to overstate its influence on contemporary spiritual and religious education.

Religion Serving Spiritual Education

It is this specifically modern understanding of the primacy of spiritual experience over religious doctrine that has dominated religious education's recent approach to spiritual education. The distinction, prevalent in many newer Agreed Syllabuses, between 'learning from' and 'learning about' religion directly reflects this fact. It is generally accepted that it is not enough simply to inform pupils about the external husk of religious cultural expression. If religion is to have any authentic spiritual meaning for pupils then the teacher must guide them beyond its external trappings into the inner spiritual core. As Nicola Slee puts it, religious education must ‘move beyond an objective study of religions to an exploration of inwardness, a grappling with existential questions, a search for spiritual identity, an encounter with mystery and transcendence’ (Slee, 1992, p.42). Only by sensitising pupils to an awareness of the experiential core of religious expression can any genuine depth of religious understanding become possible.

Indeed, if the external core of dogma is ‘misinterpreted’ as making explicit realistic truth claims about the nature of reality, then the religious educator is faced with at least two insurmountable problems. Firstly, religion will be regarded by pupils as superstitious pseudo-science rather than a profound wrestling with the mysteries of existence. Secondly, sectarian defences of the exclusive truth claims of any specific tradition will encourage children to engage with illiberal, totalitarian, divisive and repressive forms of a sub-spiritual religiosity. Pupils must be stimulated to see beyond the outward appearance, to dig down to the hidden spiritual treasure at the core of religion. Good teaching must allow children’s own spiritual sensibilities to resonate with that authentic spiritual experience reflected, however fleetingly, in external religious culture. Learning about religion is not an end in itself, but merely a means to learning from religion.

Hay is clear and unambiguous here. It is necessary, he argues, to see ‘the historical faiths as the cultural expression of personal religious experience’ (Hay, 1982b, p.48). Hay does not consider theological objections to the experiential–expressive model, and ignores those orthodox believers who place the objective primacy of divine revelation before the experiential response of human beings to such revelation. His reading of theological

history is thus a distinctively liberal one. Further, his claim that the experiential–expressive model is a ‘traditional’ way of interpreting religion is based not on any direct investigation of pre-modern religion, but on a reading of Michael Buckley’s recent account of the religious history of the Enlightenment (Hay & Nye, 1998, pp.28ff; cf. Buckley, 1987). A glance at, for example, the writings of the early Church Fathers would quickly reveal that they consciously and deliberately derive their doctrinal teaching not from any inner religious experience, but from what they believe to be God’s historical revelation attested in Holy Scripture.

One result of the assumed primacy of spiritual experience over religious expression is the instrumental use of religious tradition as a means of stimulating children's own spiritual insights. Religion is not taught as an end in itself, but as an extrinsic means to a more basic and intrinsic spiritual end. Religious culture becomes, so to speak, the raw material used to stimulate children's own spiritual insights.

Brenda Lealman, for example, argues that, though the importance of religious traditions must be recognised, their investigation must not be seen as an end in itself: ‘It is necessary to develop the ability to pinpoint the insights and religious experience the traditions indicate and to use these in the process of identifying and interpreting personal religious experience’ (Lealman, 1982, p.77). Similarly Priestley argues that if there is ‘a balance to be struck between knowing and understanding the experiences of others and using that knowledge to know and understand ourselves’, it nevertheless remains true that ‘the great purpose of education should be to give people a greater reliance on the validity of their own inward and private experience’ (Priestley, 1992, p.35). For Lealman the child must be encouraged to grasp ‘the place of creative imagination, both in finding new symbols and in giving *new interpretations* to the old symbols’ (Lealman, 1986, p.66, my italics). ‘Let there’, she exclaims, ‘be a shaping of a symbol to represent *what for you* is the reality with which religion is concerned’ (Lealman, 1982, p.75, my italics).

As the experiential–expressive model of religion subordinates religious doctrine to spiritual experience, so this pattern is repeated in the religious education classroom. The role of the teacher is to cultivate in children open minds regarding religion, enabling them to explore new ways of seeing religious culture that break out of the captivity of pseudo-scientific language. Penetrating the inner experiential core of religion will, it is held, thereby

encourage the development of children's personal spiritual awareness, and their awareness of their own place within the social, cultural and political reality of late-twentieth-century Western capitalism. The understanding of religion becomes not an end in itself, but a means to a more basic spiritual end.

It is relatively easy to recognise the ways in which the experiential–expressive model of religion allows the religious educator to treat religion within the basic contours of spirituality outlined above. Spirituality is taken as a primary level of awareness through which we best understand the depths and mystery of existence. Religion can indeed contribute to our spiritual insight, provided we are willing to leave first impressions aside and explore a little beneath the surface. If religious language possesses any level of authenticity in the religious education classroom it lies in its ability to evoke spiritual experience rather than describe a state of affairs in the world. Questions of religious truth are eclipsed by a longing for the immediate gratification of spiritual experience. This, I suggest, constitutes the prevailing consensus regarding the place of spirituality in modern religious education. Though it is certainly not without its merits, it is, I contend, not a secure basis for spiritual education in the religious education classroom. There are significant flaws in the fabric of this consensus, and it is to a consideration of these flaws that we must devote the next section of this study.

4. Revising the Consensus

The Limits of Romanticism

The contemporary consensus regarding the nature of spirituality and the task of spiritual education is, I will argue in this section, untenable and in urgent need of revision. It imposes a single monolithic story upon a richly diverse range of contrasting and often conflicting spiritual traditions. It pays only lip-service to the richness of religious pluralism, imposing on religious diversity a specific Western liberal meta-narrative. Three basic suggestions will be made: (i) the notion of spirituality outlined above does not have the universal status suggested by Hay and others, but is rather a specifically modern way of looking at things; (ii) the major religious traditions possess their own particular spiritual understandings that are inevitably distorted when viewed from the perspective of the modern contemporary consensus; (iii) we need in our teaching to take much greater account of the relationship between spiritual experience and the way things actually are in the world – that is to say, with the question of 'truth'.

Perhaps the most important figure in the development of modern culture was the French philosopher Ren■ Descartes (1596-1650). His work was based on a 'hermeneutic of suspicion': a strategy for understanding the world rooted in a sceptical questioning of the world-views we receive from tradition, of external authority and of our immediate sense experience. It is possible, he suggests, that the world-view we are brought up in is simply wrong, and that consequently we are threatened by the genuine possibility of illusion. If we are to make sense of the world we must have the courage to turn inwards and trust our own reason. This is the basis of the famous *cogito ergo sum*: 'I think, therefore I am'. It was contemporary science, above all, that guided and gave a focus to this modern project of rational thinking.

Despite its great success, the modern tradition of scientific rationalism failed to solve many of the basic problems faced by humanity. Technology, as modern culture quickly discovered, created as many problems as it solved. Consequently the search began for alternative ways of making sense of the world. The modern commitment to rationalistic scientific criticism was itself put under the scrutiny of Descartes' hermeneutic of suspicion. A broad cultural movement grew up which had in common with Descartes an acceptance of the responsibility of individuals to turn inwards and take responsibility for their own lives, but at the same time sought to undermine his reliance on cold, blind, insensitive rationality.

The Romantic Movement argued that it is our emotional, moral, religious and aesthetic inner experience that should form the basis of our understanding of the world. By addressing our immediate apprehension of goodness, beauty and divinity we could both retain the individual starting point central to modernity and at the same time avoid falling into a stagnant rationalism that side-stepped the fundamental issues at the heart of human existence. The Romantics claimed to be able to 'discover heights and depths of the human spirit that the older philosophy had hardly dared dream of' (Chambers, 1932, p.163).

The connection between Romanticism and the contemporary spiritual consensus in education is plain: both advocate that we turn inwards and trust our own depth of spiritual experience, in order to encounter the heart of human existence. Indeed, Priestley and Hay have both sought to demonstrate the intimate links between the two, Hay arguing explicitly that 'the Romantic movement … helped to ensure that spirituality was never truly submerged by rationalism' (Hay & Nye, p.34; cf. Priestley, 1992).

Where I must part company with Priestley and Hay is in our respective assessments of Romanticism. Hay, as we have seen above, suggests that the Romantic recovery of spirituality constitutes a retrieval of structures fundamental to the biological nature of humanity, structures which can be empirically observed recurring across all human society. I remain unconvinced by this, preferring to follow instead the philosopher Gadamer's suggestion that Romanticism constitutes a specifically modern way of looking at the world, one that arose in reaction to modern rationalism, and actually constitutes its mirror-image (Gadamer, 1979). Gadamer contends that the modern world as a whole is marked by an image of the individual turning

inwards in order to discover truth: the scientific wing of modernity did this by relying on reason, the romantic wing of modernity by relying on feeling. They thus represent two sides of the same coin.

Hay fails to attempt to trace the history of Romanticism back beyond its emergence in the modern West. I will argue below that traditional religious communities possessed a diverse range of spiritualities, which do not necessarily bear any relationship to the Romantic way of looking at things. In other words, I am claiming that the Romanticism upon which contemporary approaches to spiritual education are based is not the universal foundation of all authentic human experience, but rather merely a local, modern, Western response to the crisis thrown up by the Enlightenment's misplaced trust in scientific reason. If I am correct, then Romanticism is but one of a range of contrasting spiritual traditions, and as such not a sufficiently secure foundation upon which to ground an entire educational programme, particularly one that prides itself on its sensitivity to cultural pluralism and a commitment to the right of minority voices to be heard.

Case Study: A Christian Alternative

The suggestion that Romanticism has not discovered the universal structures of our being in the world, but merely reflects one particular and local way of approaching spirituality, requires substantiating. I will do so through a case study of one particular religious tradition, suggesting that mainstream orthodox Christianity has historically worked with a very different understanding of spirituality, one incompatible with the picture painted by Romanticism.

It would be foolish to suggest that Romanticism has had no influence on contemporary Christianity. On the contrary it has shaped much liberal Christian theology, and had a significant influence on the theologically more conservative Evangelical and Charismatic traditions. Turn inwards, suspend your faith in reason, nurture your capacity for spiritual feeling and you will encounter God; at least, this is what Romantic versions of the Christianity story claim. But this is not the story told by the Bible, by the early Church, by medieval Catholicism, by Eastern Orthodoxy and by mainstream Protestantism. Committed to the doctrine of original sin, the Christian tradition consistently teaches that the process of turning inwards and trusting inner

feelings and experience leads not to God, but to an encounter with the fallen nature of humanity. The trusting of inner feelings represents a reliance not on divinity but on human corruption and sin.

Traditionally Christians used the language of 'spirit' to refer not to any basic aspect of human nature, but to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Christian spirituality begins and ends with theology, not anthropology. Christians know God because he reveals himself in the world: it is the call and challenge of God through historical revelation witnessed in scripture and tradition that forms the basis of our theological knowledge, not any inner contemplation. The appeal of God to humanity takes place in the context of historical events and publicly available revelation. Christianity grounds itself not on a moment of romantic self-illumination, but on the historical interruption of divine reality within fallen creation. The Holy Spirit is presented in the Bible not as sentimentalised inner human emotion, but as a personal being external to human nature at work within creation to bring about the fulfilment of God's will and purpose: ‘that the whole creation itself might be freed from the slavery of corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom of the children of God’ (Romans, Ch.8, v.21).

Thus the foundation and starting point of Christianity is the direct opposite to that proposed by Romanticism and implied in contemporary spiritual education. Knowledge of God, for Christianity, is not rooted in a universal human capacity for imagination, experience and sensibility. The Christian God may be universal, but his revelation is local, and comes to human beings from outside. The possibility of knowledge of God flows from God to humanity, not from humanity to God: it is theology from above, not theology from below. If the doctrine of the Fall is taken seriously, then human attempts to discover God on the basis of inner experience result only in a reversal of the biblical account of creation: God is then created by humanity in its own image, rather than humanity being created in the image of God.

This is not, of course, to deny a place for human spirituality in the Christian story, but such spirituality constitutes not the primary source of Christian knowledge of God, but the secondary response of redeemed humanity to the prior divine revelation. It is not that we give expression to our spiritual experience, but that God's self-expression in revelation draws an experiential spiritual *response* from us. The primacy of God's expression over our experience was made clear during the Second Vatican Council: the Christian

life, Christian spirituality, is a striving for holiness in response to divine revelation, a life that must be

> cultivated by all who act under God's Spirit and, obeying the Father's voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and truth, follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory (quoted in Aumann, 1980, p.15).

Christian spirituality – as the liturgical, devotional, personal, social and political living-out of the Christian life under the direction of the Holy Spirit, within the church as the body of Christ, in response to the revelation of the Trinitarian God – takes on many forms. We may identify Protestant and Catholic, Lutheran and Evangelical, African and Asian, Patristic and Scholastic, Benedictine and Franciscan, feminist and gay styles of Christian spirituality, and of course, many, many more. Despite this diversity they have in common a spirituality rooted in response to Christian revelation that sets them apart from the spiritual model provided by Romanticism.

Spirituality and Truth

I have suggested above that the prevailing educational consensus regarding spirituality has not achieved the universal perspective it claims. On the contrary, it is based on a local and specifically modern form of Romantic spirituality. The traditional picture of spirituality presented by orthodox forms of Christianity, to take but one example, is distinct and incompatible. We have then at least two contradictory accounts of the spiritual domain. This inevitably raises the question of religious and secular truth. What is the relationship between spirituality and the way things actually are in the world?

It is immediately clear when reviewing the literature that, within the broad framework of the current consensus, various educators are operating with different concepts of truth. It is possible to identify four broad trajectories here.

i) A cluster of approaches to spirituality linked with the truth claims of *specific religious traditions*. Thus, for example, Adrian Thatcher pulls no punches when he defines spirituality as

> the practice of the human love of God and of neighbour: theology is the study of that practice to enable the followers of Jesus to practise their love of god and their neighbour in informed, direct and appropriate ways (Thatcher, 1996, p.119).

Alongside this specifically Christian account may be placed accounts given by representatives of many other significant religious traditions.

ii) A more *universal pluralistic theological perspective*, linked closely with the experiential–expressive model. Here spirituality apprehends a common universal truth through a diversity of contrasting religious traditions. It is not the truth claims of any specific traditions that matter, but their combined ability to focus attention on a common human experience of the transcendent. Thus Hay argues that spiritual experience is not to be reduced to mere human experience, nor confined to any one religious tradition, but is rather common universal experience of an actual objective transcendent divine reality. Of the four clusters identified here, it is this one that perhaps best represents the dominant view of mainstream spiritual educators.

iii) Mike Newby has championed the truth of an *anti-theological secular spirituality*. He identifies

> a shared spirituality abroad in our secular culture … in which traditional religious belief is superficial or local, and often both … this secular spirituality must not be seen as a rich land to be reclaimed by the church: it is a post-religious spirituality of agapaistic love rising out of the ashes of dead orthodoxy (Newby, 1994, p.17).

Spiritual education for Newby should have nothing to do with religion and theology, but seek rather to advance ‘spiritual development through secular traditions of knowledge and understanding’ (p.19).

iv) The fourth cluster of truth claims regarding the reality behind spiritual experience is to be found in the context of *post-modern spirituality*. Post-modernity proclaims the 'truth' that there is no truth. Throughout history, it suggests, human beings have told a plurality of different, contrasting and normally conflicting stories. We are now aware that we are not in a position to adjudicate between them: we simply have no way of telling which, if any, of the various stories on offer constitutes the most accurate and most truthful

account of reality. However, this situation should not be a cause for concern: because we have no access to ultimate truth we are actually free to play amongst the diversity of stories available in the post-modern playground, free to pick and mix between stories and create, tear down and reconstruct at will our own personal accounts of reality, based purely on preference and desire. Clive Erricker has come closest to advocating a post-modern form of spiritual education (Erricker, 1993). Spirituality here has to do with nurturing the child's freedom to take part in the game of reality creation.

> Through metaphor we generate meaning and order reality for ourselves in pursuit of mental and spiritual health … it is not a matter of distinguishing between religious and non-religious world views nor of determining the ultimate worth of any metaphorical reality but arriving at an appreciation of the metaphorical realities we all hold (p.138).

I have distinguished four clusters of spiritual stories, each presenting alternative pictures of reality and contrasting truth claims. Despite this, when we search the literature of contemporary spiritual education we are faced with a striking assumption: the question of truth is not important. Rather, what really matters is the authenticity of our own inner experience: it is not what we believe that is the issue at stake, but the integrity and sensitivity of the ways in which we believe. That false belief may lead to a life of mistaken and illusionary relationship with the world is not considered problematic. Disturbingly, contemporary spiritual education seems to be willing to prefer the possibility of an easily digestible cosmetic falsehood to a messy but sincere struggle for truth.

There is here something of a paternalistic streak running through the heart of the contemporary consensus:

- it adopts a local romantic model of spirituality and claims it is universal;
- it ignores the specific spiritualities of non-romantic traditions;
- it acknowledges, but then sets on one side, the fundamental question of truth.

Together these three factors, I contend, undermine the possibility of our acceptance of the adequacy of the prevailing consensus: it is better to be a discontented philosopher than a contented pig.

5. The Task of Spiritual Education

Spirituality Redefined

What then is the nature of the task facing the teacher of spiritual education? Above all, as has been suggested above, teachers need to take greater account of the rich diversity of contrasting spiritual traditions rather than allow them to become dissolved into some all-embracing notion of a common spiritual experience. This is especially so when spirituality is taught in the context of religious education, since questions of religious truth clearly connect directly with distinct spiritual traditions. More specifically, spiritual education through religious education needs to pay closer to account to the four broad clusters of spirituality identified in the previous section:

- the spirituality of individual religious traditions;
- the spirituality of a universal pluralistic religiosity;
- the spirituality of secular atheism;
- the spirituality of post-modern agnosticism.

In order to achieve such a shift in emphasis it is important to adopt an understanding of spirituality that moves beyond the limiting notion of spirituality as mere heightened inner experience. If Hay's notion of 'relational consciousness' is a step in the right direction, then the following definition seeks to draw us still further down the road.

> **Spirituality is the developing relationship of the individual, within community and tradition, to that which is – or is perceived to be – of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth.**

We may look more closely at the terms of this definition to explore its implications.

The notion of spirituality as a dynamic process of *development* is fairly standard across the literature. It is not, however, being suggested that such development equates necessarily with an evolving and automatically positive forward progress: it is possible for a child's spiritual development to become stagnant and negative.

The notion of spirituality as *relationship* is stressed since it is now generally accepted that the modern notion of the isolated autonomous individual, freed from all constraints and responsibilities, is an inadequate description of our humanity. True, we are in part the people we are as a result of the way we relate internally to ourselves, but spirituality cannot be reduced to a mere exploration of our inner space. Our identity is also formed through our ongoing relationship with others in society and with our environment. Further, and crucially, it is formed by the presence or absence in our lives of the reality or fiction of God: whether we accept faith or atheism, and whether our choice accords with reality or not, will inevitably have a significant impact on our spiritual lives.

The reference to the *individual within community* seeks to take the notion of relationship a stage further. Anyone who has attended a major sporting event, celebrated the birthday of a close friend, or listened to the collective silence following the public screening of certain films, will be aware that spirituality can be, and often is, an intensely collective experience. The current trend towards forms of spiritual autism certainly needs challenging. However, this need not imply any lack of either recognition or respect for personal forms of spirituality. Similarly it does not assume that communal spirituality is always and necessarily a positive thing: the twentieth century provides rich evidence of the dangers inherent in the spirituality of the mob.

We are all formed by a variety of cultural *traditions*, both the primary traditions we are nurtured into at home and school, and the secondary traditions we encounter through leisure, work and the wider world. These can be immensely complex affairs, involving a range of stories and truth claims, symbols and artefacts, assumptions and prejudices. Often we find ourselves existing in the borderlands between contrasting traditions, forced to adopt multiple ways of making sense of the world. We cannot escape from them, and we deny their influence on our spiritual lives at our peril. To understand

fully our spiritual nature we need to recognise, articulate, attend to and explore the various traditions we already indwell.

The term *perception* is introduced in order to underline an earlier distinction drawn between, on the one hand, relating to the world as it actually is, and on the other, relating to the world as we perceive it to be. It is possible that our perceptions of the world are mistaken and that our lives are grounded in illusion, but it is also entirely possible that we perceive the world correctly, and that our relationship with reality is authentic and appropriate. Perhaps most of us oscillate between the two, struggling to hold fast to reality without losing the plot: indeed, unfashionable as it sounds, I would contend that such a wrestling for truth stands at the very heart of our spiritual lives.

The notion of *ultimate concern* is central to spirituality. Our concerns may be local: Should I have sugar in my coffee? What are the chances of Spurs getting a result against that other North London soccer club? They may also be ultimate ones: Should I follow that career? Do I marry that person? Do I hold fast to my religious belief? Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? What is it all about? Perhaps, especially if we enjoy the luxury of living in the affluent West, we are too often able to blank out such major issues, but there are times when they simply force themselves upon us. A mark of spiritual maturity is our ability to recognise and react reasonably and responsibly to such ultimate questions.

The notion of *ultimate value* flows from our concerns. The extent to which and the manner in which we value ourselves and those around us is closely linked with the nature of our ultimate concerns. It is not a matter of first establishing a morality and then enjoying the luxury of asking ultimate questions, as if this latter step were simply icing on the cake of life. In our ordinary lives our ultimate concerns and the ultimate value we place on ourselves and others will shape our attitudes, behaviour and character.

Similarly, our ultimate concerns and values cannot be separated from the question of *ultimate truth*. Do our attitudes fit with the way the world is? Are they truthful ones? It is not enough for our values and concerns simply to fit with our own inner world: a value and concern that is true for us may not be true to the rest of reality. Both atheist and theist cannot be right: if God exists then the spirituality of the atheist must be flawed in some way, and if God

does not exist it is difficult to see how the spiritual integrity of the believer can be upheld.

This revised definition of spirituality moves beyond the poverty of a spirituality limited to mere heightened personal experience, towards a relational spirituality in which our spiritual lives develop in intimate relationship with those around us, our environment and the being or non-being of God. It offers, it is suggested, a more secure basis for the task of teaching spirituality in schools.

Spiritual Education as Nurture

'Of all men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education' (Locke, 1968, p.114). John Locke (1632–1704) believed that education had enormous power: it could form and mould character by inculcating and transmitting cultural tradition and public morality. This laid on the teacher the enormous responsibility of ensuring that the next generation was properly prepared to take its proper place in a stable and healthy society. This classic *traditionalist* model of education, which through the English public and grammar school systems deeply influenced British education, was challenged by the *progressive* child-centred model of education advocated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). He was suspicious of the naive faith placed upon education as induction into social norms by traditionalist educators, believing that society was often corrupt, and that immersing children into such traditions simply served to perpetuate the ills of society. He believed that children were naturally good, and advocated a negative education, in which children were protected from the ills of society and given the freedom to develop according to their own inner potential. The task of the teacher lay 'not in teaching virtue or truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and from the spirit of error' (Rousseau, 1986, p.57).

Rousseau's progressive ideals helped shape the child-centred education that prevailed in English and Welsh schools during the 1960s. Children were not to be taught any specific values, but were rather to be given the freedom to discover their own inner value systems for themselves. Since then, successive governments, both Labour and Conservative, have sought to challenge this progressive outlook. The refusal to pass on values to children,

it is argued, simply leaves them in a moral vacuum in which they are prey to manipulation by a variety of often unsavoury social forces. Education must bite the bullet and be prepared to teach children the difference between right and wrong, between acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour.

Education, according to the current ascendancy of Locke's traditionalism, has fundamentally to do with inducting and nurturing the child into the cultural, intellectual and moral norms of society. This seems to represent a valid starting-point. We are more aware now than we have been for a long time of the importance of social transmission in the forming of character. Further, we no longer trust implicitly the myth of the natural goodness of children espoused by Rousseau. We are who we are, and will become the people we will become, to some extent at least through the influence of the people and culture surrounding us. Even Rousseau's negative education imposes on children by default a specific romantic ideology.

It is impossible to escape the reality that schools will transmit cultural norms and expectations to children; it is naive in the extreme to believe that they will not be formed and moulded by their response to the culture they indwell. Children will be shaped and formed simply by walking through the school gates: through the ethos of the school; through the whole curriculum; through collective worship; through the example and influence of individual teachers and pupils; through whole school policies; through the way in which the school as an institution celebrates its successes and responds to its failures.

In this situation the educational imperative is clear: given that cultural transmission will inevitably form a significant part of the child's education, then schools have a duty to ensure that the culture transmitted, and the moral norms passed on, are of the very best order. This, however, brings us face to face with the fact of cultural pluralism. In reality society, despite its apparent ability to agree on a minimalist framework of values, embodies an enormous diversity of world-views and spiritual outlooks. However, this need not be a major problem. Recent educational policy has passed a significant level of autonomy to schools, and it is at the local level that individual school communities can, and indeed must, take responsibility for the values, world-views and spirituality they choose to ground themselves on and consequently transmit to children.

A liberal secular humanistic school, for example, will certainly embody and transmit significantly different spiritual values than a state-supported Islamic school. Given that central government insists on passing autonomy in such matters directly on to schools, whilst at the same time reserving the right to check and report on quality, there would seem to be no great danger of schools electing to transmit values abhorrent and unacceptable to society as a whole. In a pluralistic society we should welcome and embrace an educational system which itself embodies and reflects cultural diversity. Thus individual schools should learn to own, with openness and sincerity, their own distinctive communal values. A healthy school will have set up procedures for allowing teachers, governors, parents, children and the local community to articulate, clarify and bring into the open the cultural, moral and spiritual values on which the school is founded.

Education will inevitably nurture children into a particular world view, will inevitably transmit a set of values and ultimate spiritual commitments. The question is not whether this will happen, but how: a hesitant, apologetic transmission ought to be replaced with a confident celebration of the spiritual outlook of the school community as a whole. This is not to imply conformity within schools: all members of the school community will need to work out their own relationship with their school's fundamental values. The adoption of core values need not rule out healthy dissent within the community; indeed, such dissent may well form the catalyst for further spiritual growth within the community. A primary task of spiritual education will thus be to ensure that the spiritual tradition owned by the school community and passed on to children is appropriate, and that the process of nurture is effective.

Spiritual Education as Critique

This vision of education as a fundamentally conservative transmission of the spiritual values owned by the school community can represent only part of the story. It is unfortunate that many contemporary educators, including some who wield significant political power, give the impression that simply to rehabilitate a hermeneutic of nurture is all that is required in order to rejuvenate our education system, and through it our society. In reality education as nurture alone creates a range of fundamental problems.

Limiting spiritual education to mere nurture leads to the *repression of alternative spiritual perspectives and possibilities* through the ideological transmission of the school's own spiritual world-view. At best the school becomes guilty of a benign paternalism, at worst of manipulative indoctrination. It is important to note that such a criticism applies equally to schools transmitting a specifically religious ideology, whether Christian, Islamic or Jewish, as to secular schools transmitting an ideology of liberal pluralism.

Spiritual education limited to mere nurture leads also to *the denial of the freedom and autonomy of the child*. We have already seen that in our contemporary world a rich diversity of world-views and spiritual options exist. If the school operates with one of these, yet denies children the right to explore alternatives, then it immediately closes down a range of possibilities and options that ought to be available to children in a modern democratic pluralistic society. An atheistic child in a secular school should have the opportunity to grapple with the Christian world-view, just as a Christian child in an Anglican school should have the opportunity to encounter critically the possibility of atheism. The irony is that children will inevitably encounter such alternatives for themselves as part of their everyday social interactions, but such informal encounters can be no substitute for the opportunity for the guided educational exploration provided by schools.

Education as nurture alone also undermines an *educational commitment to wisdom and learning*. The Roman Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan has argued that human understanding must be driven by the precepts of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility (Lonergan, 1973, p.53). Human understanding must transcend mere induction into cultural norms: authentic understanding has to do with 'seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, formulating, reflecting, marshalling and weighing the evidence, judging, deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing' (p.6). This seems to be a reasonable option for, and one which demands, a pedagogy that moves beyond the limitations of mere nurture.

Mere nurture also undermines *an educational commitment to the search for truth*. Take three schools committed to education as nurture: one transmits Anglican Christianity, another an Islamic world-view, the third the dogma of liberal humanism. All three make, whether implicitly or explicitly, conflicting

claims to truth. If Islam is true, for example, then the Christians and liberal humanists are inducting children into world-views that are false and illusionary. The process of grappling with the thorny issue of truth, of the way things actually are in the world, is a fundamentally important activity, part of the very marrow of the human condition. An educational nurture that papers over serious divisions and conflicts in society in favour of a quick-fix solution offering the appearance of social harmony builds on foundations of sand. When such conflicts emerge in later life, as inevitably they will, children nurtured but not educated will be ill-equipped to deal appropriately with them.

For these reasons education as nurture must be supplemented and enhanced by a parallel process of education as critique. The hermeneutic of nurture and faith must be balanced by a hermeneutic of wisdom and suspicion. The spiritual issues of ultimate value and ultimate truth are too precious to be allowed to be pre-packaged and pre-selected by schools committed merely to nurture. An education for spiritual wisdom, embracing teaching directed towards spiritual literacy, must have the courage to allow children to grapple for themselves with the conflicting and contrasting accounts of ultimate spiritual truth and value available in our pluralistic society.

To teach something is not necessarily to advocate it: such an obvious statement is too often ignored in contemporary educational debate. That children should be taught about the Holocaust is self evident. To gloss over that particular moment of depravity in human history, and of the complex social, religious and political history that made the Shoah not merely a possibility but a reality, is an insult to the victims and sets an extremely dangerous precedent. Yet nobody, at least nobody in their right mind, confuses teaching about the Holocaust with the advocacy of genocide. Yet we retain a mind-set in our present educational climate which assumes that to teach a particular spiritual world-view is at the same time to advocate it. Consequently as teachers we waste countless hours debating which particular spiritual tradition we should induct children into, rather than seeking ways of enabling them to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible – which is to say, spiritually literate – amidst the diversity of spiritual options.

Education as nurture ensures that children will be brought up in a atmosphere of security with a clear view of right and wrong, and a clear

spiritual vision. However, this same process of nurture will also instil in children a sense of their own responsibility to take control of their own lives and their own spiritual value systems. Nurture prepares the ground and makes possible the conditions for a genuinely critical spiritual education. Such education may well throw up tensions between the school's adopted world-view and the emergent world-view of the child. All well and good, provided this is dealt with in an educated way: children will simply be learning how to understand and live with their own spiritual outlook in a pluralistic context, in which contrasting alternatives exist as genuine options

The dialectic of education as nurture and education as critique will enable future generations of adults to wrestle with ultimate spiritual values and truth in an informed, educated and above all wise manner. A healthy spiritual education will proceed from a common starting-point in the commitment of the school to nurture children within a specific value system. Part of this value system will itself embrace a commitment to learning, and such learning will inevitably raise the issue of alternative value systems. Authentic spiritual education is grounded in the possibility of children taking responsibility, through the guidance of good teaching, for their own spiritual commitments in a world of contrasting spiritual possibilities.

6. Some Classroom Implications

Mapping Ultimate Spiritual Reality

This final section will try to apply some of the abstract ideas and arguments outlined above to the concrete reality of the religious education classroom. First some key issues need recapitulating.

- Spirituality has been defined as the developing relationship of the individual, within community and tradition, to that which is – or is perceived to be – of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth.

- It has been suggested that there are four major clusters of accounts of spiritual truth prevalent in contemporary society: the exclusive truth claims of specific religious traditions; the truth claims of a universal pluralistic religiosity; the truth claims of secular atheistic humanism; and the truth claims of an agnostic and relativistic post-modernism.

- An education strategy was advocated embodying a dialectical tension between *education as nurture*, in which the school celebrates and transmits its own specific spiritual allegiance, *and education as critique*, in which the school demands that children critically engage with alternative spiritual truth claims on the basis of an educational commitment to attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility.

In terms of specific classroom teaching it seems that the burden of responsibility for critical spiritual education rests with the religious education teacher. This is not to deny that other subject areas have significant and important roles to play, nor to suggest that religious education should be concerned only with critical rather than nurturing education. However, the

security of operating within a value system owned by the whole school frees the religious education teacher to attend to the critical question of conflicting spiritual truths, and it is to precisely this issue that the world's religious traditions point.

Often in the religious education classroom we operate with too limited a view of the range and scope of language. Two popular approaches have dominated religious education teaching. The first is an empirical process of naming and listing religious phenomena. The ability to identify, for example, the major features encountered in a Hindu temple is allowed to pass as a substitute for genuine religious literacy. The second is a romantic process in which language functions as the expression of inner spiritual experience. The imaginative game of moulding words to express our inner feelings is similarly allowed to pass muster as an adequate means of achieving religious literacy. These two approaches clearly need supplementing with a third, that of language as narrative. One of the most important ways in which we make sense of the world is by telling stories, by weaving narratives of reality. Typically such stories will revolve around four major issues: of identity, conflict, resolution and hope. This framework can be applied to each of the four spiritual clusters identified previously.

- Christianity (as an example of a specific religious tradition): *identity* – created in the image of God; *conflict* – human sin and disobedience; *resolution* – incarnation, redemption and sanctification; *hope* – an eternal relationship with God in heaven.

- Universal religiosity: *identity* – spiritual creatures in a material world; *conflict* – loss of spiritual sensibility and insight; *resolution* – restoration of our potential for spiritual insight; *hope* – final unity with transcendent reality.

- Liberal humanism: *identity* – the product of natural evolution; *conflict* – ignorance and the abuse of power; *resolution* – education and justice; *hope* – a fair, free and just society.

- Post-modernism: *identity* – impossible to know for sure; *conflict* – fruitless search for truth and meaning; *resolution* – recovery of the ability to celebrate life; *hope* – the maximisation of individual freedom without cruelty to others.

Of course, this is to present no more than a series of inadequate thumb-nail sketches. As such they are clearly open to sustained criticism. However, the reason for setting them out is to suggest that it is on this macro-level, which attempts to look at the whole picture, that the distinctiveness and diversity of each cluster of spiritual traditions becomes transparent. Such a starting-point differs from much contemporary practice on two levels. First, much religious education begins on the micro-level, despite the fact that, for example, knowledge of Buddhist festivals or Hindu scriptures does not necessarily enable pupils to grasp the spiritual significance of the whole picture offered by such traditions. More importantly, much contemporary religious education confines itself to the telling of only one story, that of universal religiosity (Cooling, 1994). Many teachers have resisted the presentation of the stories of specific religions on the moral ground that to do so highlights tension rather than encourages toleration. Similarly both secular and post-modern world-views have by tradition rarely been acknowledged in the classroom as genuine possibilities. By recounting world-view narratives the religious education teacher can provide both a broader and a more sharply focused panoramic picture of spiritual diversity. How might this starting-point be put to the attempt by religious education teachers to teach spirituality?

A Model of Spiritual Education

Stage 1: The horizon of the child

All good education springs from the child's own perspective. In the past religious education has been slow to recognise this, and even slower to do anything about it. Thus in the 1960s religious educators tended to look upon children as displaced potential Christians, who if they can only be taught to see the world aright will come to faith. Phenomenological religious education often asked children to suspend their prejudices, and put them on one side in the search for objective understanding. Similarly, some current approaches to spiritual education have started with an assumption that children's capacity for spiritual insight has been undermined and deadened by the prevailing

norms of secularism. In all three cases the religious educator is asked to begin with a negative evaluation of the understanding and commitment that children bring with them to the classroom.

The philosopher Gadamer has argued that all understanding is dependent on our prior prejudices and preconceptions. These are both important and inevitable. When we try to understand something new we always approach the topic with an expectation ofwhat we might find, and of its potential value. An agnostic child may well approach Christianity with the assumption that it will be boring and irrelevant. A Muslim may approach the study of secularism with the assumption that it represents a dangerous challenge to his or her religious commitment. These are important issues which mark the starting-point of the child's understanding and the foundation of an already developing spirituality. If we deny children the right to be honest about their preconceptions we deny them the right to be open and honest in their learning.

The starting-point of good spiritual education must then be to allow children to identify and articulate their already held spiritual values, commitment and world-views. How do they answer the fundamental questions of identity, conflict, resolution and hope in their lives? Important research is currently being carried out in this area by Clive Erricker and Robert Jackson (Erricker *et al.,* 1997; Jackson, 1997, pp. 95ff). The picture that is emerging is instructive. Often children have highly sophisticated and developed world views; often they manage to hold together conflicting perspectives and multiple versions of reality; often they are conscious of the tensions between their emergent world-views and the world-views of school, religious community and home.

By creating the space and time, and teaching the necessary skills and methods, teachers can empower children to identify and articulate their own world-views. As a result 'learning from religion' becomes not just another piece of educational rhetoric, but the central plank in the religious and spiritual education enterprise. From the start children are expected to identify, own and take responsibility for the development of their own world-view narratives.

This ought not to be confused with an unwarranted intrusion into the child's right to privacy. Good education is never coercive, and it is quite possible to

allow children to articulate their world-views in a relatively secure and objective manner. Clearly there needs to be sensitivity on the part of the teacher. The experience of Erricker and others suggests that children are only too happy to be asked, quick to respond and difficult to silence!

Stage 2: The horizons of alternative spiritual stories

It is important to stress that the identification and articulation of the child's emergent and often embryonic world-view is only the first stage in the journey towards spiritual literacy. Erricker at times appears to come close to suggesting that this initial stage is all that is required. His advocacy of a thorough-going post-modern relativism leads him to the conclusion that since the truth and authenticity of a world-view can be judged only by the child, and never by an external observer, the child's world-view is always by definition correct and therefore not open to investigation and revision. However, despite the dangers of inappropriate and premature judgement, common sense would suggest that it is entirely possible to hold more or less adequate world-views: some are simply wrong, some confused, some morally dangerous, some spiritually blind. A responsible educator must encourage children to engage critically with the process of clarifying and refining their spiritual commitments.

In articulating their world-view children will immediately be faced with two clusters of questions.

- Are their views internally coherent? Do their stories actually make sense?
- How do they relate to alternative world views – both the world-view of the school within which they are being nurtured, and the world-views on offer within broader society?

If children's spiritual insight is to develop they must be confronted with alternative horizons to their own. They need to be taught about the diversity of spiritual possibilities: of specific religious systems, of universal pluralistic theology, of secular atheism, of post-modern relativism. They will already have encountered, at least implicitly, these various possibilities in their everyday lives. The task of the teacher is now to introduce these explicitly, formally and in an ordered and structured educational manner.

Stage 3: The emergence of spiritual literacy

Once the horizon of the child has been identified and articulated, and alternative horizons similarly recognised and described, then the process of conversation between and across the various horizons can begin to take place. It is through the quality of this conversation, and through the ability of the teacher to equip children with the skills to take part in the dialogue for themselves, that genuine spiritual literacy will begin to emerge.

A first step in the process is for children to identify their own spiritual story within the framework of the four clusters of alternative spiritual stories they have been introduced to. This may seem basic, but for many children it will be an intensely liberating experience, as they begin to recognise how their own world-view relates to others and hence embark on the process of mapping their own spiritual geography.

Now the serious work can begin. The aim is not to impose one view over another, or to attempt to encourage the child to shift allegiance. Rather it is a process of digging deeper into the spiritual world-view of the child, whilst simultaneously examining in greater depth the various spiritual alternatives on offer. Such conversation is not mere idle chatter. On the contrary, the various linguistic and hermeneutical tools needed for the investigation have been developed over many years by the disciplines of history, anthropology, theology, philosophy and phenomenology, to name but the most obvious.

At the heart of the process is the ability to use language effectively in exploring the terrain of spirituality, and thereby to embark on progressively more articulate, informed and literate conversations. The process refuses to ground spiritual understanding in any heightened spiritual experience, deliberately foregoing the luxury of the glitter of immediate gratification. The integrity of spiritual education asks far more of children than mere enhanced sensibility. It seeks, through deferred gratification, a spiritual literacy grounded in academically sound, aesthetically informed, morally responsible and spiritually sensitive discourse.

The emergence of such spiritual literacy will be of direct service to society. If there is indeed a spiritual crisis in our society then it certainly runs far deeper than a mere absence of shared values. The problem is more fundamental. We belong to a society in which the ultimate questions of spiritual truth remain burning issues, but in which we remain educationally disenfranchised,

unable to embark on the conversations of exploration through which we might possibly make better sense of our world because our generation was never taught how to do it. The future spiritual health of the nation will be best served not by attending to the quick fix of adopted shared values, but by encouraging the emergence of a spiritually informed and literate population. We cannot continue to pre-package solutions for children, nor afford to continue with the fiction that such questions are too difficult for them to grapple with for themselves. In a liberal democracy the integrity of society and of the cultural and political process is dependent on the active participation of a nation's citizens. We cannot expect children to play future roles in taking forward the spiritual wellbeing of the nation if our education system offers only to patronise them. All the evidence points to the fact that the vast majority of children have already embarked on their own spiritual journeys. The task of spiritual education is not to jump-start the process, but to catch our children up and support their jouney towards spiritual literacy.

One final point. Many readers will have recognised that all I have been doing in the limited space available to me is attempting to describe a vision of quality religious education. The spiritual element is not something tacked on as an afterthought. All good education will draw children into a process of wrestling with ultimate questions. That is to say, all good education is by definition spiritual education. Religion, and religious controversy, draws us to the very heart of our spiritual being. If religious education fails to draw children into an encounter with ultimate questions then it is not bad spiritual education, but simply bad education. We ought not to mystify spiritual education, and should refuse to provide it with its own specific time and space in the curriculum: all good education is spiritual education. If it is central to the human condition to search for spiritual truth, then it should be central to all education to equip children with the knowledge, skills and insights to enable the quest to become a wise, informed and spiritually literate process.

Bibliography

Astley, J, and Francis, L.J. (eds.) (1996) *Christian Theology and Religious Education: Connections and Contradictions*, London: SPCK.

Aumann, J. (1980) *Spiritual Theology*, London: Sheed & Ward.

Berryman, J.W. (1985) 'Children's Spirituality and Religious Language', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 7:3, pp. 120–127.

Best, R. (ed.) *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, London: Cassell.

Buckley, M. (1987) *The Roots of Modern Atheism*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Byrne, J. (1996) *Glory, Jest and Riddle: Religious Thought in the Enlightenment*, London: SCM.

Callaghan, J. (1976) 'Towards a National Debate', *Education*, 148:17, pp. 132–133.

Chambers, F.P. (1932) *A History of Taste*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Cooling, T. (1994) *A Christian Vision for State Education*, London: SPCK.

Davie, G. (1994) *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*, Oxford: Blackwell.

DES/HMI (1977a) *Curriculum 11-16*, London: HMSO.

DES/HMI (1977b) *Supplement to Curriculum 11-16*, London: HMSO.

Erricker, C. (1993) 'The Iconic Quality of the Mind' in Starkings, D. (ed.) *Religion and the Arts in Education: Dimensions of Spirituality*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 138–147.

Erricker, C., Erricker, J., Ota, C., Sullivan, D., and Fletcher, M. (1997) *The Education of the Whole Child*, London: Cassell.

Francis, L.J., Kay, W.K., and Campbell, W.S. (eds.) (1996) *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster: Gracewing.

Francis, L.J. and Lankshear, D.W. (eds.) (1993) *Christian Perspectives on Church Schools: A Reader*, Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing/Fowler Wright.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1979) *Truth and Method*, London: Sheed & Ward.

Grimmitt, M. (1987) *Religious Education and Human Development. The Relationship Between Studying Religions and Personal, Social and Moral Education*, Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmon.

Hammond, J., Hay, D., *et al*. (1990) *New Methods in RE Teaching*, Harlow: Oliver & Boyd.

Hardy, A. (1996) *The Divine Flame*, Oxford: Manchester College.

Hay, D. (1982a) *Exploring Inner Space. Is God Still Possible in the Twentieth Century?* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Hay, D. (1982b) 'Teaching the Science of the Spirit' in. Priestley, J.G. (ed.) *Religion, Spirituality and Schools. Perspectives 9*, Exeter: School of Education, University of Exeter, pp. 37–53.

Hay, D. (1985) 'Suspicion of the Spiritual: Teaching Religion in a World of Secular Experience', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 7:3, pp. 140–147.

Hay, D. with Nye, R. (1998) *The Spirit of the Child*, London: Fount.

Hay, D., Nye, R. and Murphy, R. (1996) 'Thinking about Childhood Spirituality: Review of Research and Current Directions' in Francis, L.J., Kay, W.K., and Campbell, W.S. (eds.) *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster: Gracewing, pp. 47–71.

Hick, J. (1977) *God and the Universe of Faiths*, London: Collins/Fount.

Holley, R. (1978) *Religious Education and Religious Understanding. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religious Education*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

HMSO (1988) *Education Reform Act*, London: HMSO.

Jackson, R. (1997) *Religious Education: An Interpretative Approach*, London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Lealman, B. (1982) 'Blue Wind and Broken Image' in Webster, D.H. and Tickner, M.F. (eds.) *Religious Education and the Imagination. Aspects of Education 28*, Hull: University of Hull Institute of Education, pp. 74–84.

Locke, J. (1968) *The Educational Writings of John Locke*, ed. J.L. Axtell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lonergan, B. (1973) *Method in Theology*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Newby, M. (1994) 'The Spiritual Development of Children in a Secular Context: Reflections on Some Aspects of Theory and Practice', *SPES*, 1, pp. 17–20.

Otto, R. (1931) *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priestley, J.G. (ed.) (1982) *Religion, Spirituality and Schools. Perspectives 9*, Exeter: School of Education, University of Exeter.

Priestley, J.G. (1985) 'Towards Finding the Hidden Curriculum: A Consideration of the Spiritual Dimension of Experience in Curriculum Planning', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 7:3, pp. 112–119.

Priestley, J.G. (1992) ‘Whitehead Revisited – Religion and Education: An Organic Whole’ in Watson, B. (ed.) *Priorities in Religious Education. A Model for the 1990s and Beyond*, London: Falmer Press, pp. 26–37.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1986) *Emile*, London: Dent.

SCAA (1995) *Spiritual and Moral Development. SCAA Discussion Papers. No. 3*, London: SCAA.

Schleiermacher, F.D.E. (1958) *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, New York: Harper & Row.

Slee, N. (1992) ‘”Heaven in Ordinarie”: The Imagination, Spirituality and the Arts in Religious Education’ in Watson, B. (ed.) *Priorities in Religious Education. A Model for the 1990s and Beyond*, London: Falmer Press, pp. 38–57.

Starkings, D. (ed.) (1993) *Religion and the Arts in Education: Dimensions of Spirituality*, London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Thatcher, A. (1991) ‘A Critique of Inwardness in Religious Education’, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 14:1, pp. 22–27.

Thatcher, A. (1996) ‘”Policing the Sublime”: A Wholly (Holy?) Ironic Approach to the Spiritual Development of Children’ in Astley, J., and Francis, L.J. (eds.) *Christian Theology and Religious Education: Connections and Contradictions*, London: SPCK, pp. 117–139.

Watson, B. (ed.) (1992) *Priorities in Religious Education. A Model for the 1990s and Beyond*, London: Falmer Press.

Webster, D.H. (1982) ‘Awe in the Curriculum’ in Priestley, J.G. (ed.) *Religion, Spirituality and Schools. Perspectives 9*, Exeter: School of Education, University of Exeter, pp. 67–84.

Webster, D.H. (1993) ‘Being Aflame: Spirituality in County and Church Schools’, in Francis, L.J. and Lankshear, D.W. (eds.) *Christian*

Perspectives on Church Schools: A Reader, Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing/Fowler Wright, pp. 245–259.

Webster, D.H. and Tickner, M.F. (eds.) (1982) *Religious Education and the Imagination. Aspects of Education 28*, Hull: University of Hull Institute of Education.

Wright, A. (1996) 'The Child in Relationship: Towards a Communal Model of Spirituality' in Best, R. (ed.) *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, London: Cassell, pp. 139–149.

Wright, A. (1998) *Spiritual Pedagogy. A Survey, Critique and Reconstruction of Contemporary Spiritual Education in England and Wales,* Abingdon: Culham College Institute.