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Changes in religious understanding and attitudes between year 7 and year 9

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CHANGES IN
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AND ATTITUDES
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CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING
AND ATTITUDES BETWEEN YEAR 7 AND YEAR 9

by
SUSAN E. LOMAN
of
UNIVERSITY OF WALES, BANGOR

A dissertation submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Wales

January 2003



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PREFACE

I would like to express my thanks to all the young people who took the time and trouble to complete my questionnaire, without which this research would not have been possible. I am very grateful to the Headteachers, Heads of Religious Education departments and their staff for aiding in the completion of the questionnaires.

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I am very grateful to Dr Mandy Robbins and Dr Mike Fearn, of the Welsh National Centre for Religious Education, for their help and support. I would like to thank my husband for his support and encouragement throughout the production of this dissertation.

I declare that this dissertation is not, in whole or part, substantially the same as any that I have submitted for a degree or other qualification at any other university and that it is the result of my own research.

SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the problem of rejection of the biblical message by pupils within Key Stage 3. A survey of 3,412 pupils was undertaken in order to gain their responses to biblical interpretation, their attitude to religious education and religious issues, and to establish a profile of the pupil cohort.

Chapter one discusses the aims of religious education and considers how they have developed since the 1944 Education Act. Chapter two considers the research undertaken within the field of 'Understanding' and particularly cognitive stage development, and its links to religious education. Chapter three assesses the research concerned with 'Attitude' and how it is applied within religious education. Chapter four discusses research dealing with symbolic understanding, thus providing the supporting material for this present research. Chapter five links the previous research with the present study, and presents empirical data in support of a profile of the pupils. Chapters six and seven present empirical data obtained from pupils in eighteen secondary schools in Warwickshire and Shropshire. Chapter six is concerned with the changes that take place in pupils' interpretation of biblical passages during Key Stage 3. Chapter seven is concerned with changes that take place in pupils' attitudes to religious education and religious issues between Year 7 and Year 9. The implications of the data are then discussed.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the changes that occur in pupils' religious understanding and attitudes, between Year 7 and Year 9, in maintained secondary schools. Of particular concern are the changes that take place with regard to biblical interpretation. The problem is that many pupils in Key Stage 3 hold a negative view of religious issues and religious education, and that as pupils become older, so they turn from a literal interpretation of the Bible to a rejection of it. This present research investigates the possibility of a third option, being taken up by pupils, that of a symbolic interpretation of the Bible.

Young people of today may be too alienated from biblical knowledge to be able to understand and accept the story of Jesus. This is a problem caused by 'the how and the when' of presentation of biblical material. Much information is presented as absolute fact, which is temporarily accepted by the young mind, only to be rejected just as totally at a later stage as being untrue. This disbelief in aspects of Christianity leads the young person to class the whole of Christianity in this category and so reject the whole religion as 'made up'. An alternative view is that primary school pupils should be presented with full Christian teaching. The point is made by Rankin (1991), who encourages primary school teachers

"to present Jesus as having greater status than simply a man, otherwise it is not faithful to the central tradition. For example, the notion of Jesus' resurrection is quite essential to the main thrust of Christian doctrine, however interpreted, and it should not be, so to speak, 'kept for later'." (1991:49,50).

Unfortunately, the information offered to the pupils is sometimes of a basic nature, for example that Jesus rose from the dead, without any real discussion of how this might be interpreted both then and today. Indeed, perhaps such concepts may be too involved for the primary school pupil to deal with. There may be better methods, though, than offering basic simplistic versions of events and trusting that these will

evolve into a rounded conceptual form 'in the fullness of time'.

In order to address the problem, of Key Stage 3 pupils rejecting religious education and religious issues, research is undertaken in key areas. These areas are: the aims of religious education, the understanding of religious issues by pupils, the attitudes held by pupils toward religious issues and religious education, and symbolic understanding of religious issues. The contribution of the research to each key area is considered.

Chapter one considers the aims of religious education. The teaching of religious education in Britain prior to the 1970s and its domination by Christianity is explored. There had been a desire for such teaching to be concerned with the development of the whole person rather than purely knowledge based. The extent to which this actually happened in the classroom is debatable. Pupils appear to enter their secondary schooling already having rejected much of the Christian teaching. It is, therefore, considered important to study the aims of religious education within a changing environment. In part, British society has turned from religion, but it has also embraced other religions in addition to Christianity, thus making it both more secular and more pluralistic at the same time. During the 1970s, although the teaching of Christianity was still dominant, a recognition of the importance of teaching about world religions and consideration of the influence of other factors such as the home emerged. The 1993 Education Act maintained the centrality of Christianity within the religious education curriculum.

An important aspect for consideration within this chapter is that of objectivity within religious education. Possibly this would lead to a recognition of religious education as being truly educational. However, some might feel that this would only be possible when a shared basis was agreed by all theological persuasions. There is consideration of the formation of the system of regional Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) which work independently of each other to agree a religious

syllabus suitable for their own local area, based on the desires and needs of the communities within that area.

As the realms of world religions were embraced, so this meant that a new approach to religious understanding was required. As nobody would be an adherent of all religions so a respectful, insightful response was sought to a variety of religions. An examination of the phenomenological approach is undertaken, within this approach religions were considered objectively, but it also encouraged pupils to try to understand such religions from a believer's perspective. Obviously, this would be difficult for those who had no personal religious faith. This approach might tend to lead to an emphasis on knowledge, as it is more easily administered and measured. Consideration of a different approach also needed to be undertaken, that of the experiential approach. This encouraged a learning from the pupils' own experience, not merely a recognition of such experience, but a deep consideration and understanding of it. This understanding of the self could then be developed into an understanding of others, their outlooks and cultures. Empathy too could be developed, by beginning with a recognition of one's own reaction and feelings in a given situation, and then linking to situations which had evoked similar emotions. Building from known personal emotion to appreciate something of the emotions involved in a new situation.

The chapter continues with an assessment of the inclusion of the 'spiritual', which has generally been encouraged by the theorists, and the 1988 Educational Reform Act attempted to return to the idea that the spiritual should be incorporated throughout the curriculum. The place of the spiritual element is difficult to gauge, not least because of its vague nature within the educational setting. Grimmitt (1994) maintained that a core of common spiritual values could aid pupils to appreciate other religions while remaining true to their own beliefs.

The various developments afore mentioned show the diversity of research concerned with the aims of religious education. There have been a great many changes in the aims and in the delivery of religious education since the early twentieth century. The aims of religious education incorporate both the objective factors of learning about religions, and the more subjective factors of learning from religion. The question is to what extent does the fundamental problem remain? That is, to what extent do pupils continue to hold negative views of religious issues and religious education? The changes and development within religious education have encouraged a plethora of diverse research, solving some problems but still being unable to attack at the heart of the matter. Although the aims have evolved so too has society with opposition to outward public worship such as church-going, and many regarding religious issues to be essentially personal and private.

Chapter two is concerned with religious understanding, recognition of how pupils develop cognitively enables educators to produce appropriate teaching and learning strategies which will encourage pupils to make informed decisions. The apparent negative view of religious education held by pupils might be linked to an inappropriate curriculum. By studying the research on cognitive development so a structure could be established, by which religious education could be administered to pupils, at an appropriate time and in appropriate depth.

The chapter proceeds to show that a great variety of research had been carried out to try to assess how the understanding of religious issues developed and the factors which influenced that understanding. In the early part of the twentieth century Piaget formulated a cognitive stage theory which suggested that pupils moved through three main stages of development. Moving through the intuitive level, to the concrete, and on to the abstract level of thinking. Although in the main, pupils would progress through the stages in parallel with their chronological age, Piaget did concede that there could be regression in the sense that pupils might not always operate at their

highest ability level. He also pointed out that pupils needed to interact with their social environment in order to build a more complex level of understanding. Stage theory has been used by other researchers, such as Harms (1944) and Goldman (1964), in their assessment of pupils' understanding of religion. Research has also been concerned with emotional influences, and the importance of experience, as well as the links between mental age and religious thinking. The researchers have used their own independent methods of research, therefore the extent to which the findings can be compared is uncertain. Possibly this might inhibit the development of a robust research structure which would help in the assessment of religious understanding.

The chapter explores the pioneer work of Piaget and shows how it influenced religious education. In the mid 1960s Ronald Goldman used Piaget's stage theory in his research on the nature of children's religious thinking. This research gained great prominence within the world of religious education. Goldman presented a variety of ideas, some of which were supported by his research findings. Goldman (1964) decided to use clinical interviews in conducting his research in the hope that these would enable a more in-depth investigation. His sample of 200 pupils covered a wide age range. The importance given to Goldman's research demands a closer inspection as his research technique may have important implications for the research within this present work. Stories and pictures were used as a basis of discussion, the responses to five of the questions were assessed for operational thought levels. Goldman maintained that his research showed that Piaget's three major stages of cognitive thinking could be applied to the development of religious thinking. Piaget had held that the formal operational stage began at about the age of eleven, which would be at the beginning of Key Stage 3, but Goldman maintained that it was later. This would have important implications for the religious education curriculum, especially for the eleven to fourteen age group.

Goldman indicated that pupils needed structured tuition to help them move from the

concrete stage to that of formal operational thinking. The findings of this present research may indicate that pupils lack knowledge and understanding, in connection with biblical symbolism, which may be overcome with structured tuition. Not everyone though was in agreement with the findings of Goldman's research, but his influence was far reaching. Despite its flaws the ideas generated by the research caused a resurgence of activity within the field of religious education. Some researchers adapted Goldman's research method, such as Peatling in the 1970s (cited by Kay and Francis, 2000), who used the three Bible stories that Goldman had used and developed his own test, he found that formal operational thinking occurred later than Goldman had suggested. There has been some agreement with Goldman that children's views of God changed over time, and the possibility that pupils became less positive towards religion as they grew older. There are differing opinions as to when such scepticism begins, ranging from about the age of eight, through to the age of fourteen.

There appears to be some confusion as to what exactly formal operational thinking entails. The meaning children give to religious concepts might be different according to age, with more abstract thinking occurring between the ages of eleven and fourteen. It is possible that although children might be aware of their religious identity, they are actually "thinking of something quite different than the adult" (Elkind 1964:36). Perhaps experience and the application of such experience, as well as the ability to form rational judgements, means that adults display a different formal operational level of thinking than do adolescents. The importance of life experiences lies in the belief that they are considered necessary in order to activate development.

The early research of Piaget suggested that social factors would have an important influence on how young people would develop cognitively. This had been reinforced by Goldman, who agreed that social factors could play an important part in the development of religious thinking. An important area for consideration is that of

social interaction where individuals gain experience, not only of situations, but of relationships too. It is possible that a wide range of experience needs to be established before cognitive development of religious thinking can take place. Supporting this is the importance given to emotional development which includes an awareness of wonder and awe.

The research, on the development of understanding, is necessary not only to establish the developmental aspects of pupil learning, but also to discover how the understanding of concepts are gradually assimilated, and how such understanding links with experience. As Wardekker and Miedema (2001) maintain, society today is more dysfunctional and unstable in the sense that we no longer can take a single culture as a foundation for life. The intense changes brought about by increased knowledge and communication demand flexibility and continuous learning. The world is no longer viewed as being in harmony but rather the “world is experienced as fragmentary and contradictory.” (2001:77). The constant onslaught, of different life-styles, and conflicting values and views leads to problems of identification. This is a complex area where understanding is made up of a number of important elements such as knowledge, empathy, experience both of the views, actions and cultures of others and the pupil’s own culture, actions and views. Where these latter points, in particular, do not remain in a fixed state but continually change according to individuals and conditions.

Chapter three, in addressing the problem of pupils rejecting religious issues and religious education, considers the importance of research undertaken in the field of ‘attitudes’. Often, religious education lessons are regarded by pupils as being of little importance, not relevant to a career and therefore not pursued as a GCSE option. Those responsible for passing on knowledge, or reinforcing religious commitment and understanding, still retain some influence on the attitudes of pupils. Attitudes are formulated by grouping together a number of individual opinions on an issue, and

thus developing a more broadly based view. There has been much research carried out in the area of religious education and attitudes, but because of the diverse methodology and emphasis, a coherent picture has been difficult to establish. It is important to assess the amount of agreement in the following research areas: collection of data, size of sample, age of sample, use of stimuli, and assessment analysis. The question which needs to be asked is whether the attitude of pupils to religion has remained the same as it was in the 1940s, when Glassey (1945) reported that older pupils held less favourable attitudes than younger pupils, and boys held less favourable attitudes than did girls. The research carried out by Francis showed that there was a decline in attitude towards religion and religious education (1987b), and towards Christianity (Kay, Francis and Gibson, 1996) as pupils grew older. Evidence to link 'change in attitude to Christianity' to a move into formal operational thinking is still elusive. Late childhood appears to provide a period of transition with respect to religion

This chapter also considers the influence of the church and of church schools. Church attendance and church schools might reasonably be thought to encourage a positive attitude to religion. In order to clarify the influence held by church schools they are considered in relation to their pupils' attitude to religion. It might be assumed that pupils in private church schools were more positive toward religion, and that the school ethos would have a strong influence on the attitude to religion held by pupils, therefore both of these factors need to be examined.

A pupil's attitude to religious issues is not gained from a single opinion or from a single source, rather it is an evolving collaboration of factors. As the pupils build up knowledge and experience so they can apply them to new situations. Thus a pupil's background and upbringing, their personality and the knowledge base they are exposed to, all bring influence to bear on the attitude held to religious issues. The extent to which the attitude of the adults in a community, especially the parents,

influences pupils in contact with them also needs consideration.

The attitude of pupils to religious education has in some respects remained the same since Lewis' research in 1913, which showed religious education as being the least preferred subject. The research has to be examined as to whether there are gender differences, in attitude to religious education, and whether that attitude became less positive with age. Personality may be a factor influencing attitude with the more anxious, tender-minded, conformist pupil holding a different perspective on religious education. Pupils with a high level of interest in science may also hold a different attitude to religious education. Content and methodology are obviously major factors influencing attitudes, and a consideration of whether the material taught should link with pupil centred life themes, needs to be undertaken. Alongside this the teaching of world religions, either through a systematic or a thematic approach, requires some attention. Research may reinforce the idea that there could be a link between a more positive attitude to religious education and higher levels of achievement. Another important area of concern is the status of religious education within the school.

Chapter four addresses the role of symbolism. The rejection of the Christian message by pupils may be evidence of ignorance, rather than it being evidence of an informed decision, based on a structured educational programme. Christian symbolism had been intended to help believers understand and express difficult religious concepts, but through a lack of understanding this symbolism has become an obstacle. A major part of this present research is concerned with interpretation of biblical passages as shown through the selection of literal, symbolic or rejection responses by pupils. Previous research carried out in this area is of benefit in indicating the perceived importance of this field of study and possibly highlighting weaknesses.

This chapter considers biblical interpretation in particular, with the Bible being interpreted in various ways; literally, symbolically or rejected. It is possible that

individuals who select symbolic interpretations tend to be more imaginative in their thinking. The terms 'symbolic', 'metaphorical' and 'mythological' are all used to mean a non-literal interpretation, which allows for a range of explanations to be used to simplify ideas which would otherwise be very difficult to express. The development of vocabulary and the use of story could possibly help pupils develop a range of factors such as religious language, mental ability, concepts, and their inner self. There is some debate as to whether metaphorical religious thinking could take place before the formal operational stage of cognitive thinking. Possibly, in order to take part fully in metaphorical thinking, then the pupils need to have fully gained the formal operational level. The link between formal operational thinking and factual knowledge provides a dilemma. If full understanding of metaphor can only take place within a firmly established formal operational level, then there is a problem in that, as pupils move into formal operational thinking then factual preference supplants metaphorical thinking.

The chapter explores the work of Richard Hunt on religious interpretation. In the 1970s Hunt devised the LAM Scales, these were an attempt to allow respondents to answer questionnaires more honestly, in the sense of expressing their beliefs more clearly. Hunt, prior to the LAM Scales, maintained that respondents could only answer 'yes' or 'no' to questions of religion. Hunt (1972a) attempted to offer a third dimension, that of symbolic interpretation of religious issues. Hunt readily agreed that this Scale would not elicit the full picture, and he hoped that others would go on to develop this area of research. Hunt thought that there might be a link between cognitive function and the preference for the symbolic interpretation, he also felt that personality and culture would be important influences. His sample was 168 undergraduates, and he attempted to show that these students preferred the symbolic interpretations rather than accepting literal interpretations or rejecting the statements.

Hunt's findings, in that there was a distinct religious group which was non-literal and

pro-religious, might be supported by the research of others. Such research might well draw forth comment, as to the symbolic interpretation offered not being one with which the respondent agreed, or that there should be a stronger link with the transcendental through the Scale responses. Possibly respondents holding different religious sympathies or interpretations would score differently when measured against other factors such as intelligence, authoritarianism and racial prejudice. A consideration of the research may be able to establish if a higher metaphorical score on the LAM Scales equated with higher imaginative thinking. Differences between literal and metaphorical respondents, in their ability or aptitude in linking religious meanings to a situation, may also be apparent. Cognitive function of the two types of respondents may also differ, with the literal group preferring single responses related to low cognitive flexibility, and the metaphorical group possibly preferring multi-responses linked to a more flexible cognitive structure.

Consideration of whether individual responses to religion changed over time was of fundamental importance within the present research. It might be that literal interpretation changed from high when respondents were younger, to lower as they became older; and symbolic interpretation might be expected to change from low when respondents were younger, to higher as they became older. Cognitive theories possibly do not account entirely for how pupils react to religious education, perhaps the case for linear non-regressional development is not proven.

Chapter five addresses the development of a measurement instrument and consideration of data from such an instrument which provides a profile of the pupils taking part in the survey. In order to build on previous research and work towards solving the problem, as to why Key Stage 3 pupils hold a negative view of religious education and religious issues, a questionnaire was devised. The first section of the questionnaire was intended to measure how pupils in Year 7 and Year 9 interpreted biblical passages, whether they selected literal or symbolic interpretations or whether

they rejected the passages. The overall aim was to measure differences between the year groups, and also to measure differences between the responses of boys and girls. This analysis would indicate whether there was any change in the way pupils interpreted biblical passages when measured at different ages, that is, at the beginning and at the end of Key Stage 3. Research maintains that as pupils become older so they move from a literal interpretation of religion and are more able to think in an abstract manner (Goldman, 1964). However, research has also shown that as pupils become older they are also more likely to reject religion (McGrady, 1994a). This present research hopes to clarify the extent to which pupils interpret biblical passages either literally, symbolically or by rejecting them; it will also measure any gender differences as shown in the responses.

The chapter goes on to assess the second section of the questionnaire, which was to establish pupil attitude to religious issues, namely: Religious Education; Content of Religious Education; Religious Education Teachers; Assembly and Festivals; Christianity, Church and Bible; Faith and Affiliation; Prayer; and Forgiveness. The purpose of this section is to ascertain the current position of religious education, to see if pupils have a positive or negative attitude to religion and religious education. The third section of the questionnaire was devised in order to establish a profile of the pupils through: Pupils' Church Attendance; Guardians' Church Attendance; Religious Affiliation; Prayer and Reading the Bible; Concept of God; and Jesus' Teaching.

Chapter six presents the data indicating how pupils interpret biblical passages. Data are examined which show the responses of all pupils, that is, the data indicates the percentage of pupils who select literal, symbolic or rejection interpretations of biblical passages. Data are also presented which show how responses differ by gender, and those that differ by age. The aim being to indicate what changes there are over the Key Stage.

Chapter seven deals with data linked to the second section of the questionnaire, that of pupil attitudes to religious education and religious issues. The percentage of all pupils' responses are examined, data are also presented showing how responses differ by gender and age. It is hoped that the responses will show pupils' attitudes to religious issues, particularly religious education. The data might indicate that they hold an unfavourable attitude toward religious education and religious issues. If this is shown to be the case, then possibly a new strategy should be established, to counteract such developments.

The conclusion briefly reiterates the problem which forms the basis of this thesis, that pupils in Key Stage 3 hold a negative view of religious issues and religious education, and that they are unaware of a symbolic interpretation of biblical passages. The chapter proceeds to summarise the main conclusions of the study. It concludes with some speculative thoughts for the future.

CHAPTER ONE

AIMS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Summary

History

Objectivity

Confessional approach

Phenomenological approach

Experiential approach

Implicit and explicit approaches

Spiritual dimension

Moral dimension

Multi-faith approach

Control

Conclusion

Summary

In the past there seems to have been very little agreement as to the aims of religious education within the classroom, beyond that of passing on information about Christianity. Not only has the content of the subject been disputed but also the methodological approach and emphasis has caused disagreement. The question of where control of the subject should be held, has led to further debate too. To a large degree this ongoing problem is due to the shifting social situation within the country. People have consistently moved away from formal Christianity, some towards a secular society and others toward a more personal spirituality; and running alongside this has been the increasing influx of non-Christian religious groups into the country.

After the Second World War there was general support for a religious education which maintained mainstream Christianity, the country was in a mood for strong stable moral principles based on traditional established religion. The most influential advocates of religious education had at first been those within Christianity and it seemed natural to these individuals that the main religion of the country be the central and most important mainstay of religious education. This was inevitably to change as other religions, agnosticism and atheism became more acceptable within British society.

Before the 1944 Education Act, the confessional approach to religious education was common and in varying degrees this remained the case right through to the 1960s and even beyond. It was not until the mid 1990s that the confessional approach was finally considered as being unacceptable in secular state maintained schools. Whereas the confessional approach deemed it acceptable and desirable to nurture the pupil within the

Christian faith, the non-confessional aims did not. As Astley, Francis, Wilcox and Burton (2000) pointed out these aims were to develop an empathic understanding of religions; to understand the influence of religions, beliefs and values on people and cultures; and to evaluate religions along with religious and moral issues. These explicit aims were inter-mingled with implicit aims, which included the encouragement of pupils to reflect on meaning and value of life and the development of spiritual and moral attitudes and beliefs, including a positive attitude to people of faiths other than Christianity. Astley, Francis, Wilcox and Burton (2000) explained that the balance of these explicit and implicit aims have varied over the years, but generally the explicit dominated with human experiences being used as preliminaries to understanding religious experiences.

History

Prior to the 1870 Education Act, education was generally provided by religious organisations, but with the 1870 Education Act, state schools joined church schools in providing education. Sadler's study (1985) of William Temple's work showed that in the early 1900s Temple campaigned for an improved education system, he felt church schools did not serve the public well. He later changed this view and granted them a special importance, after he had been appointed Bishop of Manchester. Temple wanted to improve education for the majority by raising the school leaving age, extending education until the age of eighteen and encouraging adult education. Linking this with the later work of Piaget and Goldman, it would appear that by remaining at school or undertaking adult classes individuals were more likely to progress through the cognitive stages and therefore achieve a fuller and deeper understanding of the issues dealt with within religious education. Education allowed the individual to develop, he felt that

education would help people gain their individual dignity. For Temple the aim of education was to give value to all, because through education people are valued by others, and people can gain self-value through education as a tool to gain freedom and independence. Thus, as self-value develops so an appreciation and respect for education increases. As secondary education developed through the 1930s, Temple worked for the protection of religious education on the timetable, and the 1944 Education Act ensured this protection.

Bates (1992) showed that as the state education system in England and Wales was expanding during the 1920s and 1930s, so the roles of church schools and religious education were under discussion. With the expansion of secular control the ecumenical leaders identified four aims of education. First, the reform of education in missionary schools; second, clarification of the relationship between Christianity and education. Third, that all education should have a religious basis, and fourth, the improvement of religious teaching. Bates cited volume two of the Jerusalem Council Report of 1928 as being concerned with religious education,

“Modern education ... is primarily about the development of persons, not the imparting of knowledge or training in skills. Education must begin with the needs, problems, interests and experience of pupils although it cannot be solely determined by these; children and young people have to relate to a given reality - the natural world, human society and God - and to accepted values.” (1992:135).

This clearly showed that leading educationalists saw the importance of encouraging interest in religious education and thus moving pupils toward a more positive attitude. The Council's reference to the 'development of persons' rather than a sole concern with knowledge and skills, showed that the development of understanding was important. Thus, the Jerusalem Council Report was a Christian community advocating an

educational model based on Christian living, worship and teaching. This model formed the basis for education through the 1940s and 1950s. However, such ideals did little to improve the pupils' attitude to religious education and it continued among the least preferred school subjects. A point to be considered here is that although the leading educationalists advocated a number of relevant aims, these may not have permeated through to the classroom. Perhaps a stronger framework was required to ensure that teachers were well trained and following a co-ordinated curriculum linked with sound classroom methodology. Glassey (1945) maintained that the attitude towards religion was more negative among boys than girls, and became worse as pupils grew older. Glassey refers to 'religion' but in the context of the school, thus it can be assumed that this would in the main mean religious education. This in the mid 1940s would be a study of Christianity.

The 1944 Education Act made religious instruction and daily worship compulsory in county and voluntary schools. It was also a requirement that all Local Education Authorities adopt an Agreed Syllabus of religious instruction. As Bates (1996) explained, during the 1940s and 1950s these Agreed Syllabuses were strongly biblical and the general aim was to counter fascism and communism by supporting the Christian faith and morality. There appears to be a social-political agenda which perhaps would not be fully appreciated by young people in the classroom. Such an approach might discourage open debate and perhaps leave pupils feeling 'preached at' rather than involved. This in turn would not encourage a positive attitude, however, academic biblical understanding has been shown to influence personal religious belief (Astley and Francis, 1996). The school though, holds less influence with pupils than does their home; as shown by Argyle in the

late 1950s (cited by O'Keeffe, 1996). Thus, the attitude of the pupil cannot be totally shaped by the school environment and where home values disagree with the school's then the school may have no influence on the pupil at all.

The School Council Working Paper No. 36 of 1971 indicated three approaches to religious education; the confessional, the objective, and the empathic phenomenological. This last approach was supported by Ninian Smart and encouraged awareness of world religions through the believers' perspective. Christianity continued as the dominant religion but a clearer distinction of roles was considered between the school and the home and place of worship.

During the 1970s and 1980s a combination of the phenomenological and the experiential approaches was used, the extent and balance being in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabuses. The 1988 Education Reform Act maintained the centrality of Christianity, and this was upheld in the 1993 Education Act.

Objectivity

Hull (1975) held that religious education syllabuses between 1924 and 1964 were almost entirely knowledge based, and that they attempted to nurture a religious attitude within the pupil. Pupils might resent such an attempt at nurture, which could then result in a negative attitude to religious education developing.

Cooling (1986) stressed that objectivity moved religious education away from the confessional and encouraged an educational understanding of religion where a variety of

interpretations were considered. However, Cooling pointed out that not all researchers had the view that objectivity was desirable. Goldman had argued that pupils should be guided away from certain theological positions, by which he meant those which did not follow his own position. Cooling stated that religious education "... can only be truly objective when some basis can be found that is shared by those of all theological persuasions ..." (1986:149). Rossiter (1988) echoed Cooling's plea for objectivity and stressed that the pupil's own personal emotional response was not the direct concern of the lesson, but rather that pupils should think about a range of objective intellectual issues linked to the subject matter. This was reiterated by Crawford and Rossiter (1996) stressing that religious education should be critical and evaluative, that it should include analysis of information, interpretation of meaning, and consideration of implications.

Confessional

During the period between the 1944 Education Act and the 1980s, many religious education teachers upheld the confessional approach where teachers were to some extent preachers too. Greer (1985) showed how Edwin Cox subscribed to this view during the 1950s, where he referred to religious education as a scripture lesson with its aim being to evoke spiritual experience and encourage critical Bible study. Cox saw the ideal school as a Christian community with the ethos and relationships within the school influencing the teaching of religious education. Dorman's research (1997) in Australia echoes these ideals.

Cox felt religious education should be open ended in that teaching should present a religious view and then allow pupils to form their own beliefs. Thus, even in the 1960s

Cox was still thinking in terms of a confessional basis, as he felt that attitudes of the pupils could be trained or moulded. This may link with the findings of Hyde (1965) which indicated that pupils who were church attenders had a more positive attitude to religion. Although it is uncertain whether the church attendance encouraged interest, or whether pupils attend church because of an independent interest in religion. Cox advocated teaching the Bible in a way which built on the pupil's own experience, thus following a more child-centred approach. This linked with the ideas of Loukes (1962) and Hubery (1965) as well as Goldman's ideas on life-themes (1974). Cox thought that the teacher ought to be able to impart a positive religious outlook. However, religious education was regarded by pupils as being in the least interesting and least useful group of subjects taught in school (Williams and Finch, 1968). Such an attitude toward religious education would obviously not encourage serious debate and consideration of religion and its related issues.

Cox recognised a developing secular society during the 1960s and 1970s and he emphasised that religious education was to be educational. He felt that religious education should show the contribution religion had made to culture, and to show how beliefs influenced actions. The aim was to make people aware of the complexity of religion. This was obviously unsuccessful in improving its status as Ormerod (1975) showed that religious education remained one of the least preferred subjects on the curriculum.

Slee (1989) pointed out that the confessional approach encouraged the pupil to participate in the religious rites and beliefs, and it passed on religious and moral values. It strongly

advocated religious belief and commitment on the part of the teacher too. This view upheld the individual's right to religious freedom as well as the duty of the state to adhere to certain moral and religious values. Such a model was popular with politicians and religious leaders,

"Its aims were, first, the conversion and nurture of the individual pupil in the Christian faith; second, the creation of Christian community in the life of the school; third, the religious and moral reform of wider British society; its ultimate aim was 'the fundamental re-education of a whole civilization', nothing less than a preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven itself." (Slee, 1989:127).

However, with the move to a secular society so this model became regarded as inadequate and inappropriate.

Phenomenological Approach

Leech (1989) maintained that for many religious education teachers who moved away from the confessional approach, phenomenology offered a way of studying religions. She thought that too often a narrow approach to phenomenology was taken, in that it was reduced to the observable part of religion and therefore considered to be objective. Leech argued that the whole essence of phenomenology was lost if feelings, hopes and fears were ignored. In agreement, Kalve (1996) maintained that Ninian Smart's phenomenological approach to world religions intended for inclusion empathy and critical reflection. The phenomenological approach was when the religion was considered within a living context, both that of the religion and that of the pupil.

"Using the phenomenological method people are enabled empathically to enter the world of another and understand the sense their behaviour makes *to them* and on their terms." (Leech 1989:72).

Kalve pointed out that faith followers might find this approach difficult as it implied that all religions were to be treated equally, whereas faith followers saw their faith as the only

true religious faith.

Slee (1989) explained the phenomenological approach as encouraging the pupil to develop religious understanding through personal autonomy, not calling for belief or religious commitment on the part of the pupil or the teacher. The important factor being that religious education should transmit knowledge about social and cultural heritage, and an understanding of tolerance and openness. The phenomenological model aimed to provide a descriptive understanding of religions through a variety of traditions. Most of the Agreed Syllabuses during the 1980s adopted a broadly phenomenological approach, while also recognising the dominant role of Christianity in British culture. The main practical concern with the phenomenological approach was that too many religions and religious stances would be covered thus leading to confusion for the pupil. However, another concern was that this approach was originally conceived for adult students and might not be totally appropriate for younger pupils, in that it might be difficult for them to show relevant empathy or appreciate the various experiences of other cultures and beliefs. This would indicate that the phenomenological objective of encouraging the development of religious understanding was unlikely to be successful as the tools of empathy and awareness were required at too sophisticated a level, and the average teenager would not cope. This point will be considered more fully in the next chapter.

If the pupils were indeed wrestling with concepts beyond their experience capabilities then this may well be a factor contributing to the decline in pupil attitude to religious education, which becomes more marked as they get older (Francis, 1987b). However, if the phenomenological approach really was intended for older students, then it might be

expected that a more favourable attitude would begin to emerge as the pupils became older. Later research (Kay, Francis and Gibson, 1996) indicated though, that there was no change in pupils' attitudes to Christianity as they moved from the cognitive stage of concrete thinking to the formal operational stage. An obvious response to this might be that the overall attitude to religious education had been established in the pupils' psyche, and perhaps reinforced through either the school ethos or the school's established framework. This was reinforced by Orchard (1994) who felt that negative attitudes to religious education were encouraged by a lack of time allocated on the timetable, a lack of skilled teachers and that the status of the subject was held in low regard within the school.

In 1971 the Schools Council Working Paper 36 stated "A Christian child can be a Jew for a day or an hour by witnessing a sacred festival or by acting out a part in an imagined ritual occasion." (1971:26). Such statements, argued Slee, made without evidence or research seriously weaken the appeal of the phenomenological model. A great many religious leaders, teachers, parents and pupils would find such an approach offensive, the implication that a person could simply step into the role and 'know' what it meant to be a member of that religion is totally false. The importance and stature of that religion is brought into question by reducing it to such a simplistic level. Another argument is that in the attempt to present a neutral and objective study of religions, it actually resulted in pupils accepting no religion as viable, but instead encouraged agnosticism and atheism.

Experiential Approach

Hay (1990) explained the spiritual experience as being when a person had become aware

of a power or presence beyond themselves which has influenced them. It is different from everyday experience, and these experiences were often interpreted religiously. "The important common factor in these experiences is the establishment in the consciousness of the individual of a feeling of being valued, unconditionally cared for, of being deeply and essentially integrated into the universe." (1990:351). People who have had such an experience often explain its impact in terms of a moral effect, and a unifying of the self and the environment.

A number of researchers such as Goldman (1964), Madge (1971) and Hutsebaut (2000) have stressed the importance of experience in developing the pupils' understanding of religious education. Madge emphasised that without recognition of personal experience then a mature outlook would not develop.

Joplin (1985) maintained that experiential education could be recognized by a number of characteristics. Experiential education was child-centred, starting from where the pupil was, and moving at the pupil's pace. Personal growth and awareness of feelings and values were encouraged, thus independent learning through self-evaluation was developed. Working through the process was just as important as arriving at the 'right' answer, because pupils needed to be given the opportunity to consider complex situations. Pupils could also be encouraged to help devise the curriculum, which would help them develop their personal understanding based on experience. There was an emphasis on individual growth and the development of self-awareness, although awareness of the group and their own role in it was important. Hubery (1967) also thought of the experiential approach as seeking to involve the whole person through the mind,

personality and the relationship with others. He felt that by cultivating the imagination then the pupil's experience could develop. In the same way teachers need not necessarily have had to personally experience a situation but should be able to link subject matter with life situations.

Sakofs (1985) supported experiential education by maintaining that concrete interaction with the world was necessary at each cognitive stage in order to promote intellectual growth. So by continually referring back to the pupil's personal experience new developments could take place. Sakofs also pointed out that in many lessons pupils were expected to acquire new knowledge and understanding directly from teachers or text books; however according to Piaget many pupils were working below the formal operational level required for such activities. Thus an educational scheme based on concrete experiences, would be more closely linked to the pupil's cognitive capabilities.

Thatcher (1991) maintained that the experiential approach encouraged the idea that religious experience was solely an inner experience, and it overlooked the necessary community elements. He held that the experiential led to the acceptance of each individual's experiences as being valid, and reality being that which each individual takes to be true. In contradiction of the experiential approach Thatcher stressed that there was a need to assess "our beliefs in accordance with public standards and traditions" (1991:25) because relying on personal thoughts would simply reinforce individual prejudices.

Hay and Hammond (1992) disagreed with Thatcher, and maintained that the 'inwardness' involved in the experiential approach encouraged depth, and should not be seen as

withdrawing from the world of experience. Hay and Hammond said that

“The key to the process is taking seriously one’s own experience. A superficial glance is not enough. Deeper, more attentive reflection is needed. Experiential religious education is about using, and so valuing and exploring, one’s own experience as a way of knowing better others’ experience of religion.” (1992:145).

This appears to be supported by research carried out in secondary schools in Northern Ireland (Francis and Greer, 1993), here pupils were shown to have a better attitude to religion when they had acknowledged a personal religious experience. The work of Astley and Francis (1996) also showed that academic study of religion influenced that person’s religious beliefs. Hay and Hammond held that the experiential approach helped to encourage pupils to consider a range of possible responses, thus moving away from the single literal interpretation.

“Religious education is about observing differences and similarities in religious systems and noting recurring common themes. Experiential religious education emphasizes the relation of these to our own feelings and thoughts. In this, the subject gains its depth.” (1992:149).

Mott-Thornton (1996) also accused Thatcher of not recognizing the holistic nature of the experiential approach and of developing a dualism where the mental and physical were not inter-related and so the intention was not linked to the action. Wright (1996) maintained that although it was important to encourage pupils’ private experience, it needed to be a balanced approach which did not leave the pupils solely dependent upon their own resources. He felt that such a self dependency could be overcome by interaction with others. Experience needed to be interpreted and through the use of discussion to be understood. “The criteria for being religiously educated need to shift from that of an enhanced competency to feel to that of an informed ability to engage in religious dialogue.” (1996:175).

Astley (1994) discussed the role of empathy within religious education and showed that such a state enabled an understanding of others. He maintained that it was necessary to know what the experience felt like in order to understand it. When a person had experienced great sadness and they had access to their own personal response to this, then they were in a position to empathise with another. Astley considered “degrees of understanding” (1994:95) here he maintained that full understanding was only possible when the individuals had full participant experience for themselves. However, a degree of understanding was of course possible for those who held an observer’s experience, which would be enriched by personal participant experience of similar emotions.

Doble (1993) held that religious education should help develop skills, insights and knowledge which would encourage an empathic understanding of believers as well as a critical appreciation of beliefs and practices. He maintained that such aims should begin with considering those aspects which were common to Christians, such as the importance of Jesus in their belief system, and then considering the variety of interpretations held by different groups of Christians.

Implicit and Explicit Approaches

Bates (1992) pointed out that J.W.D. Smith’s great influence was that he advocated following both an ‘implicit’ and an ‘explicit’ approach to religious education, and that this was taken up in the Schools Council Working Paper 36 of 1971.

Brine (1985) emphasised that the exploration of religions needed to be recognised as being of value, rather than the religions themselves. Attfield had also emphasised both

the implicit and explicit, wanting religious teaching to go beyond factual knowledge. Attfield indicated that the purpose of education was “to teach the pupil commitments, values and appropriate behaviour.” (1996:79). However, he stressed that ‘learning from’ religion needed the foundations of the religious truth claims in order to allow pupils to develop, “...*learning from* appears to offer personal development stimulated by religious education but without the pupil needing to be religious.” (1996:78). Attfield held that the only way a pupil could establish his or her own truth criteria was by using such criteria as had been established by the religions.

Slee (1989) maintained that religious education should encourage self-identity which could then allow for an openness toward others and their beliefs and culture. She advocated a middle way between the confessional and the phenomenological approaches which echoed the Durham Report which stated “The aim of religious education should be to explore the place and significance of religion in human life and so make a distinctive contribution to each pupil’s search for a faith by which to live” (1972:103). After the Education Reform Act of 1988 the Agreed Syllabuses adopted this middle way, thus encouraging an understanding of religion and contributing to the development of the pupil’s beliefs and values.

Leicestershire’s Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (1992:13) stated that:

“The aim of Religious Education is to encourage and assist all pupils to explore and express their own response to the spiritual and religious approaches to life by enabling them:

- A. to acquire a basic knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices;
- B. to understand and respect how religious beliefs and values affect ways of living;

- C. to develop an increasingly reflective and caring approach to life;
 - D. to gain an awareness of the spiritual dimension of life.
- Christianity and the other principal religions must be referred to in every aspect of this Aim.”

Kalve (1996) also advocated a more rounded approach to the teaching of religious education which included a mixture of the phenomenological and the experiential. He maintained that the aims of religious education should be met through a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to understand the social significance of religion as well as promoting the pupil's sense of identity.

Crawford and Rossiter (1996) held that the descriptive approach to religions was preferable at Key Stages 2 and 3, leaving older pupils to undertake a more issues based study of contemporary world religions. Religious education had to be relevant to the pupil because of the personal and value laden character of the subject. They saw religious education as handing on religious traditions, identity and spirituality.

Spiritual Dimension

Sadler (1985) showed that Temple, in the 1920s, was concerned that knowledge would be seen as the most important part of education at the expense of the spiritual.

Bates presented the ideas of J.W.D. Smith expressed in the 1960s, and showed that he

“... advocated an approach to religious education in state schools which aimed to assist children and young people to achieve mature personal development through knowledge and experience of Christian love.” (1992:132).

Psychologists maintained that there were adjustments necessary in achieving maturity, and that these adjustments were challenges to a person's egocentricity encouraging a

move away from self-centred desire towards self-giving love. Bates indicated that Smith wanted pupils to feel secure and that this was dependent on them feeling loved, and that this love would provide a framework of conduct within which pupils could grow. Smith felt that all education was to be religious. Dorman (1997) stressed the importance of the school ethos on pupils' attitudes to religious education, maintaining that if the spirit of love and care which is central to Christianity, is not evident within the school then this encourages a negative attitude toward religious education. Vianello and Netti (cited by Vianello, Tamminen and Ratcliff, 1992) also report that a more positive attitude to religion linked to a desire for security and conformity.

Priestley (1985) suggested that there had been a significant change between 1944 and 1977, where the emphasis had moved from being concerned with education to being concerned with curriculum. In 1944 schools were invited to contribute, in 1977 schools were instructed to introduce pupils to such concepts as spirituality, and Priestley maintained that this had developed into a much more aggressive role. The point Priestley was making was that by 1977 'the spiritual' formed a separate part of the curriculum, but the intention in 1944 was that the spiritual element was to be found throughout the whole provision of education. However, the 1988 Education Reform Act envisaged the encouragement of spiritual and moral development from all areas of the curriculum. David Pascall (1992:7), chairman of the National Curriculum Council, said

"To me, spiritual development is essentially to do with the development of the inner self, with self-knowledge, relationships, questioning our place in the universe, the purpose of our lives, and our ultimate destiny. As spiritual beings we are marked by our capacity for wonder, and our sensitivity to the thrill of the infinite. In the end, spiritual maturity is perhaps the discovery of direction and purpose in life ..."

Spiritual development related to how pupils gained personal beliefs and values, particularly in relation to religious questions and personal and social behaviour. However, because of the lack of clarity in explaining exactly what constituted 'the spiritual' uncertainty and disagreement inevitably arose. Goldman had thought of the spiritual as being something unusual, but Hay (Nye and Hay, 1996) disagreed. Such confusion was even more probable as all subject areas were to be involved in enabling pupils to develop spiritually, and many of these subjects would find such a concept sitting uncomfortably with their subject specific aims and objectives and thus possibly resulting in a forced or unrealistic link.

Kay (1997) pointed out that research showed that belief in God declined between 1945 and 1993, and that as the materialistic world view became stronger so the experiential and phenomenological approaches would be difficult to use and understand. Kay felt that only those pupils holding a spiritual view would be able to engage with such approaches.

Grimmitt (1994) considered the difficulty in establishing an educational basis for the study of religions. The values of any one religion could not be promoted above others in a pluralist society, but equally believers of specific faiths would not accept the truth-claims of other religions as being of equal importance to their own. Grimmitt suggested that a core of common spiritual values could encourage groups to appreciate other cultural groups whilst remaining true to their own values and identity. This would result in an understanding of alternative interpretations of the values and being able to learn from such interpretations. Such values would include: "the value of human life and human beings; the value of a just society; the value of the individual's right to

self-fulfilment.” (1994:143).

Nye and Hay (1996) held that children have an innate spiritual capacity which may develop in a variety of ways. Such spirituality being expressed through three main areas; that of awareness, mystery sensing and through value sensing. Awareness was concerned with awareness of the present moment, of feeling ‘at one’ with nature, of achievement transcending the self, and of an innate spiritual knowledge often linked with the body. Mystery sensing covered such aspects as wonder and awe, and the imagination as central to religious education through metaphor, symbol and story. Value sensing showed the development of delight and despair from a personal emotional perspective to ultimate awareness. Ultimate goodness was able to develop from the understanding of parental protection. Value sensing was being aware of the holistic meaning where both the cognitive and the experiential were required.

Moral Dimension

Fry (1986) warned that should the pupil choose to adopt a racist stance then by not challenging such a position the teacher was acting irresponsibly. She suggested that the answer lay in developing moral awareness, she emphasised that religious education fell into two categories the factual and the search for meaning, values and purpose.

Meakin (1988) considered how religious education might contribute to Personal, Social and Moral education. He showed that the Schools Council Social Education Project of the mid 1970s considered the meaning of social education to be making pupils aware of their surroundings, to help them consider personal problems (their own and others), and

showing how people could work together for the good of the community. Pupils should be actively involved in the wider community and the school community. Personality might well prove to be an important factor. Those pupils who involve themselves in the wider community are developing their personal experience, knowledge and understanding. Personality factors may interlink, with the same personality factors being exhibited for the stimulation of interest in both community projects and religious education. Lewis and Francis (1996) show that it is the tender minded and conformist pupil who is most likely to develop a positive attitude to religious education, and just such attributes would encourage a concern for environmental or community issues. Piaget held that the development of the thinking process brought about a maturity of personality, although he conceded that social environment might also influence cognitive development. Personalities and social roles were inter-linked and a key factor which activated personality development was the ability to plan for change.

Meakin maintained that as religious education allowed pupils to formulate a belief system, so their understanding of themselves and others developed, but in addition this also offered pupils a dimension of life substantially different from the secular. Meakin emphasised that such "...beliefs could make a decisive difference to their judgments on social, political and moral issues." (1988:17).

Astley (1992) considered the position of the church school with regard to the teaching of Christianity. Given the diverse nature of Christianity for the different believers, Astley suggested that church schools might emphasise the teaching of Christian moral attitudes and values. Pascall (1992) also maintained that moral development supported the school

community and stabilized society. It involved knowledge of right and wrong, and respected the parameters of moral action as agreed by society or by law. Moral development resulted in being able to make moral judgements on ethical issues.

Multi-faith Approach

Some educationalists such as J.W.D. Smith (Bates, 1992) tended to be against the teaching of world religions, and preferred to emphasise Christianity instead. The Norwood Report of 1943 (cited by Bates 1996) held that secondary school pupils would not be able to understand world religions. The post 1944 Agreed Syllabuses generally presented world religions as valid but partial truths whereas Christianity was seen to offer the complete truth. During the 1960s and 1970s Christianity remained dominant, but with some move towards a more objective approach. The needs of the child were central and a thematic approach was encouraged. The Durham Report of 1970 upheld Christianity as the main religion for study as it represented the majority culture, however a brief introduction to world religions was recommended within the secondary school.

Netto (1989) held that religious education had been restricted by allowing Christianity to dominate, he maintained that this was evident in the GCSE syllabuses where the concern was in passing on information and a “particular set of values” (1989:164). Hill (1990) considered multi-faith approaches for religious education, and stated that the two which had contributed most were the religious emotivism and the religious universalism. The former stressed the importance of emotions in understanding and appreciating religions, with its aim being to find areas of agreement. The latter stressed the importance of belief-claims with all religions containing some truth, and again its aim being to find

areas of agreement. Hill pointed out that the believers of truth-claims were thus pushed towards the view of promoting a one-faith model. He stressed that religious education should allow for freedom to exercise informed choices.

The Swann Report of 1985 stressed the role of multi-faith education in order to promote racial tolerance. Fry (1986) stated that religious education was expected to lead in the field of multi-culturalism within the school, and that pupils were to be encouraged to make their own decisions as to the beliefs and views they held. Short and Carrington (1996) also stressed this importance of combining knowledge with understanding. They were concerned that multi-faith teaching might encourage suspicion if the subject matter became confused. Smith and Kay (2000) indicated that a more positive attitude to religions was established if a systematic study was followed rather than either a thematic approach, or a combined systematic and thematic approach. Short and Carrington held that misconceptions of religions, which may be acquired from sources beyond the classroom, had to be dispelled by multi-faith teaching.

Control

Robson (1996) pointed out that the 1944 Education Act removed all curricular requirements for secondary schools from central government control to the Local Education Authority and school governors. The 1988 Education Reform Act moved control of the national curriculum back to the government, but as religious education was not a national curriculum subject it remained under local control, under the management of the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) groups. These SACREs drew up, or adopted, Agreed Syllabuses to reflect Christian traditions and to

take into account other religions present in Great Britain. Everington (1996:69) praised this initiative,

“For the first time, representatives of the six major religious traditions present in Britain were assigned the responsibility of selecting those areas of study which they considered to be essential to an understanding of their respective traditions.”

Everington went on to indicate the important role of the faith communities in developing religious education, that these roles were complementary offering different perspectives and interests on the aims, methods and content of religious education.

In 1992, however, the Ofsted inspectorate was to include some assessment of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, thus returning some control to central government. Further centralisation took place with the 1994 Model Syllabuses for religious education. These syllabuses introduced by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) presented two approaches, that of separate study of religions and that of a thematic approach. The former being favoured. These Model Syllabuses were advisory with no legal force. SCAA recommended that Christianity be taught at each Key Stage, with local authorities deciding the percentage of time to be given to each religion dependent upon local circumstances. The Church of England Board of Education advised schools that Christianity should be taught from between fifty and seventy five per cent of curriculum time in religious education. Brown (1992) held that programmes of study, clearly indicating the content to be covered, should be presented.

In 2000 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) introduced a scheme of work for Key Stage 3, this was non-statutory guidance on religious education. This

covered assessment levels, learning about religion, learning from religion, and linking religious education with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In addition it presented fifteen teaching units, including learning objectives, activities and learning outcomes. It also promoted pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship.

Bolton (1997), however, argued against state control of religious education fearing that some groups would be marginalised as a national consciousness was encouraged.

To some extent discussion of centralised or localised aims and methods may be theoretical in that their influence on the classroom practitioner is uncertain. This is due to a variety of factors, not least the teacher's own outlook and training. Ofsted inspections have done much to encourage a more uniform and consistent teaching of religious education with better trained religious education teachers, especially in the secondary sector. One influential factor is that of text books especially for those non-specialist teachers in both secondary and primary schools. Within text books both the explicit knowledge and implicit understanding may be presented, but there is also the possibility that certain key points could be omitted. Some text books do not present challenging tasks, or do not differentiate material and tasks. Brown (1992) warned that the image of Jesus Christ presented in books written for pupils was misleading and led to different attitudes being formed. In such books difficult issues were overlooked, such as pain or prejudice, and a comfortable non-challenging image of Jesus presented.

Another resource used by teachers is that of the internet where schemes and lesson plans are readily available, but again these could so easily be devoid of any specific aim which

would link with the Agreed Syllabus. Brown called for teachers to be more theologically aware. He stressed that “What schools must begin to offer, and there is minimal recognition of this in syllabuses, is a variety of models and a variety of interpretations so that pupils come to recognise the rich spectrum of diversity and plurality of Christianity.” (1992:17).

Conclusion

The main aims of religious education are the passing on of objective information about religions, and gaining an appreciation of the influence of that religion. In addition there are other aims which are more narrowly targeted towards specific areas such as multi-faith teaching, or sub-structures of the two main aims such as moral issues. The various aims of religious education have been established by the faith communities, government and those involved with the development and implementation of religious education.

Astley, Francis, Wilcox and Burton (2000) suggested that there were five major aims of religious education. These were, first to understand the influence of religion; second, to think critically about religion; third, to reflect on ultimate questions; fourth, to develop a positive attitude toward religion; fifth, to promote a religious way of life. The first and second of these aims being present within religious education in the forms of ‘learning from religion’ and ‘learning about religion’. The third aim concerned with ultimate questions is also incorporated within the target of ‘learning from religion’. The fourth aim would certainly form part of the multi-cultural approach; and by making religious education issues relevant to the pupils as advocated by Loukes (1962) encourage a more

positive attitude. Kay and Francis (1996) however, maintained that there was insufficient evidence to support the view that particular approaches to the teaching of religious education resulted in a change of attitude. The fifth aim being confessional, does not constitute part of religious education within the state maintained schools.

Brown maintained that “Most thinkers about religious education would look for a balanced approach, extending pupils’ experience to help them towards an understanding of religion.” (1995:154). The difficulty being that there is a diversity of aims, and methods used to achieve such aims. This balanced approach needs to focus on Christianity as the dominant religion of Britain, but to include serious consideration of a variety of world religions particularly as represented in British culture. Access to the spiritual and moral dimensions needs to be encouraged, in order to help pupils to understand and develop their own inner-commitment and support of their community. The degree to which independent learning and experiential approaches can be incorporated will depend on a number of practical factors, as well as on the cognitive capabilities of the pupils.

A difficulty concerning aims of religious education is that they deal both with the desirability of skills such as empathy and reflection, as well as with knowledge and spiritual and moral dimensions. These aims are difficult to introduce to pupils in the artificial classroom situation and the success of such aims is very difficult to assess. Indeed many teachers of religious education insist that pupils cannot and should not be formally assessed, other than on the attainment target ‘learning about religion’. Pupils are given the opportunity to engage with these skills and issues but the level of their

understanding remains uncertain.

The question of how best to achieve these aims links with how pupils develop cognitive skills. Goldman (1964) wondered if there were particular times or stages at which pupils could more readily absorb specific ideas or concepts. Murphy (1977) felt that a number of factors such as the way material was presented and the method of testing were influential. Murphy also held that there was "...no clear evidence to suggest that the development of religious thinking in children is more dependent on cognitive developmental factors than it is on the development of religious language and religious word meaning." (1978:21). However, other researchers have based their work on some form of cognitive stage development, such as Harms, Peatling and McGrady, and from this they have attempted to find out the processes undertaken in developing religious understanding. Stage development generally indicates that as pupils become older their cognitive powers increase, this enables them to move from literal to abstract thinking.

The following chapter deals more fully with the concept of religious understanding.

CHAPTER TWO

ASSESSING RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

Summary

Research and ideas that helped form Goldman's perspective

Ronald Goldman

Criticism of Goldman

Research post-Goldman on religious understanding

Influences on children's religious understanding:

i) experience

ii) emotions

iii) language

iv) church and biblical teaching

Conclusion

Summary

This chapter gauges the influence of the work of Goldman in the 1960s, on the development of religious understanding. A consideration of the research subsequently carried out indicated that although a great deal of work had been undertaken, it tended to show isolated individual findings, sometimes with imprecise methodology employed. Therefore, development of an objective model of religious understanding has been limited. Nevertheless such research has resulted in a wealth of ideas which form the basis of future developments.

The research methodology falls broadly into two fields: that of qualitative in-depth research working with smaller study groups, or that of larger scale quantitative research which attempts to be more objective.

A number of researchers indicate that development of religious understanding is not entirely dependent upon cognitive levels but rather that a range of factors influence a child's understanding.

Research and ideas that helped form Goldman's perspective

Despite now being in the twenty-first century much of our knowledge regarding religious understanding or thinking stems from the 1960s, from Ronald Goldman in particular. Goldman in turn based his ideas on the work of Piaget in the 1920s and 1930s. Although there have of course been arguments both for and against the structures put forward by these individuals, nevertheless they have proved invaluable in encouraging further research. There has been some interplay between the two concepts of 'thinking' and

‘understanding’. Robert Fisher (1992) maintained that ‘thinking’ was the process which made sense of experience. The following interpretation of ‘understanding’ was proposed by the Branco Institute, (cited by Brooke, 2001:20), “the flexible possession of knowledge which allows application of knowledge to a new situation.” Thus ‘thinking’ appears to be the active assimilation and structuring of information and experience, whereas ‘understanding’ is the flexible adaptation of knowledge gained.

William James in 1902 (cited by Goldman, 1964) maintained that religious thinking was the same as all other thinking, except that it related to religion or religious matters. His definition of religion was the interplay of the emotions, acts and experiences of people in relation to the divine.

Piaget produced a structure of cognitive development: intuitive thinking, concrete thinking, and abstract or formal thinking (interspersed by two transition stages). Thus Piaget’s theory of development was based on three main stages.

The intuitive or pre-operational stage extended from about two to seven years, here Piaget maintained there was little systematic thinking. Only the isolated features of problems were recognised, with understanding limited to one aspect and this aspect was assumed by the child to be the central point. There was difficulty in relating one problem to another. Solutions were offered only in part, with the child not recognising that it did not answer the problem. Patterns of thought were partial, fragmented and inconsistent. Confusion was also caused as the child could only move forward with its thinking, not backward.

Piaget's concrete operational stage from about seven to eleven years, suggested there was little extension or generalisation from one concrete field to another. Piaget's formal operational stage from about the age of eleven onward, the child was able to think hypothetically, and situations could be tested true or false through the thought process. Logical thinking was possible in symbolic and abstract terms, and incompatibilities could be clearly seen. On achieving a particular level the pupil might however regress to simpler modes of thinking where the problem was difficult or the pupil tired or unmotivated. Piaget's stage development theory encouraged pupils to be seen as learning through thought and experience interacting. Gradually more complex understanding was assimilated. The learner needed to become an active participant and independent of, but interacting with, the social environment.

Piaget had been accepted as a central pillar within education circles in Britain since the 1960s. However, some critics of Piaget maintained that he did not take external factors, such as culture, environment, or educational opportunities sufficiently into account. Piaget's subjects were all white, male, upper-class European students. Nevertheless, other research since Piaget has reinforced the general idea of stage development within children. So that, even if Piaget's original research was not fully representative of the child population in Britain, it nevertheless recognised a basic development structure which could be used within a range of contexts. Another area for debate has been that of movement between the stages, with some researchers linking particular stages closely to age and others advocating a more flexible movement between stages which would allow for regression as well as advancement. Even Piaget admitted that it was possible that

some adolescents only used the formal operational stage in situations where particular interest lay.

Piaget adopted a structuralist approach to cognitive development, his philosophy being that both the physical and the biological worlds were formed in structures. As the cognitive structures developed so knowledge increased which led, when formal operational thinking was achieved, to objectivity and thus allowing the world to be perceived as it really was. Heywood (1986) maintained that Piaget's theory was one of evolution with a developed ontology and epistemology. There was an objective, independent structuring of knowledge and this was brought about by logic being directly genetically linked to an individual's DNA. The content of study, the aptitude or interests of the individual held no influence on cognitive development. Piaget held that the personal self played no part in cognitive development as this introduced subjective values thus detracting from the achievement of objective knowledge. However, Donaldson and colleagues (1990) carried out variations on Piagetian-style tasks by changing the content and other factors, such as the perceived intention of the experimenter and the form of instructions given, they found that Piaget's results did not hold true.

Piaget originally thought that the formal operational level was the inevitable final stage of development, however, it was found that not all adults reached this formal stage and even that some actually regressed from such a stage. This led Piaget to conclude that people only attained the formal operational level in areas in which they were interested. This showed that abstract thinking was not independent of its content, thus Piaget's idea that cognitive development followed in-built laws and was not influenced by content was seen

to be flawed.

Piaget's model of cognitive structure had been adopted by many and such breadth of acceptance was impressive, and this added to its strength. The "integration of the experimental results into an overall philosophical system makes his interpretation appear not simply persuasive, but assured." (Heywood, 1986:75). Heywood warned against overlooking the presuppositions of the structuralist philosophy.

Basil Yeaxlee (1939) supported a three stage structure, as did Piaget. Stage one, up to three years, being pre-religious. The child gained emotional experience through association with its parents, and these experiences demonstrated the capacities of God to the child. Stage two, age three to seven, being a blend of emotion and intellect. Reasoning was limited through lack of material, however such reasoning did become more purposeful. Stage three, age seven onwards, the development of an intellectual knowing. Progressively 'proofs' were demanded to support suppositions. Yeaxlee argued that religion was more than acquired habit of mind, but rather 'an innate capacity' as was speaking.

Harms (1944) also established three stages of development, but these were based on pupil's drawings of God. Stage one being between three and six years, and called the fairy tale stage of religion. The second stage being the realistic stage between the ages of seven and twelve. Finally, at twelve plus the third stage, the individualistic stage. Pupils were asked to draw their idea of how God or the highest being might look, then they were asked to write what it was the picture represented. Of 800 pictures by pupils aged three to

six, almost all showed God as a fairy tale conception. Harms felt that pupils “..have a leaning towards a God experience from the time their consciousness awakens.” (1944:115). Harms maintained that pupils, between the ages of seven to twelve, had made up their minds through the influence of adults and Sunday school or church as a social institution. During this stage children were most willing to adapt to religion. After this stage pupils started to think for themselves and individualistic characteristics were shown in their pictures.

Harms maintained that there was a mis-match between what children expressed in drawings about their religion and God, and what they said when explaining such beliefs verbally. He felt that religion had “been designed to represent a total framework for human existence.” (1944:112). The most important part of religious experience could not be verbalised but only presented pictorally and symbolically. Harms was asking whether there was “a unified law of religious development, valid for each and every human being.” (1944:115).

As the above pieces of research show, individuals were working with the concept of cognitive stage development pre-Goldman. Other researchers were also considering the links between age, cognitive development and suitability of teaching material.

Peel (1959) considering cognitive development and age, maintained that children found it difficult to suggest possibilities to account for events, rather than just describing them, before the age of thirteen. Peel considered there to be a more mature thinking from the chronological age of 13 years 5 months, which he linked with the mental age of 14 years

8 months. He held that the problems of thinking, linked with verbal understanding, were of central importance to education.

Ainsworth (1961) pointed out that although many religious education syllabuses suggested the study of parables from the age of five, she believed that children's understanding of parables was questionable. Ainsworth maintained that only by the age of ten did children begin to understand the more simple parables, that until then stories would be interpreted literally with importance being placed on the incidents of the story instead. The understanding of the significance of parables being abstract not concrete. This upheld Kenwick's ideas in the late 1940s, that eleven to twelve year olds had difficulty in transferring information to a new situation (cited by Goldman, 1964). The Cambridgeshire syllabus for the teaching of religious education in schools (revised 1949) held that "No attempt should be made to present religious ideas which are beyond the child's power of apprehension" (cited by Goldman, 1964:5).

The general points which emerged pre-Goldman were that religious ideas and concepts became gradually more accepted as the child became older as indicated by James, Yeaxlee and Harms. The importance and influence of the emotions and experience were recognised, as emphasised by Piaget and Yeaxlee. A number of researchers strongly agreed with Piaget-style developmental stages of operational thinking such as Yeaxlee and Harms. A link was indicated between mental age and religious thinking, as accepted by Peel. The taught subject matter of the religious education curriculum should link with pupils' mental capabilities, as advocated by Kenwick, Ainsworth, and the Cambridge syllabus.

It is clear that a number of important pieces of research were undertaken, with a variety of methods employed and results independently measured. This led to a rich diversity of material but little overall pattern of methodology pre-Goldman. In addition, although a recognised theoretical framework was sometimes used, that is stage development, it was applied in an inconsistent manner by individual researchers.

Ronald Goldman

Goldman undertook his research in an attempt to understand the religious thinking of children and adolescents. He stressed that the teaching of religious education should include both the objective and the emotions too. He wanted to discover the nature of children's religious thinking. He wondered if it were possible that there were patterns of religious thought linked with chronological and mental age. Goldman also considered the influence of other factors such as experience and parental attitudes.

Ronald Goldman (1964) sought to apply the Piagetian stages of cognitive development to the field of religious thinking and understanding. He felt that the pupil's mental age was a closer indication of their level and possible development, rather than their chronological age except in the case of moral development. He also felt that there would be movement back and forth across stages. Goldman (1964:3) asked:

“What is the nature of a child's religious thinking? How does he form concepts of God, of the Church, of moral rightness? Are there sequences or patterns of religious thoughts to be discerned with increasing chronological and mental age? What limits of religious understanding are imposed by age, immature experience, attitudes of parents, and many other factors? Does Biblical material of certain types assist or impede clarity of thought or level of insight into their religious truths? Are there ages or stages of what we might call “religious readiness” in the

growing young person, when the mind can more readily understand certain religious truths? Can a programme of religious education be devised which is suited to patterns of intellectual development?"

Goldman himself held that religious thinking was thinking directed towards religion, which seems in line with James in 1902. When using religious literature, such as the Bible stories, Goldman maintained that the thinking was dependent upon understanding the original experience upon which the story was based. That although the Bible was a book for adults, and theology an adult activity, nevertheless the child was developing religious concepts and Goldman considered this to be an apprenticeship.

Goldman selected the age range six up to seventeen for his research. His aim was to discover changes in religious thinking. He decided not to use written responses and multiple choice tests as they involved reading skills which not all pupils would have achieved. In addition questionnaires and multiple choice item tests give only limited results without depth. Goldman felt that they might also be unreliable due to pupils wishing to impress or conform to what they thought was required. Goldman chose the clinical interview method as it would eliminate problems of literacy, and personal interviews stimulate motivation and interest as well as allowing a more flexible time span. Research based entirely on drawings was rejected as they would be based on too narrow a range of thinking, older pupils would reject it as childish, and the evaluation would be too subjective. However, pictures were used as stimuli.

In the first preliminary discussions Goldman and his team met with sixty pupils aged between six and seventeen, some they spoke with individually and others in small groups.

Five simple pen and ink pictures were used as stimuli to elicit comments on the concepts of church, prayer and the Bible. Eight Bible stories were used to discover the nature of children's religious thinking. A simplified version of the stories was read, followed by a free discussion on the problems of each of the stories. Not every child discussed every story, but most discussed five stories.

In the second preliminary discussions there was a more systematic discussion of the pictures and the stories. Twenty seven children were selected from two infant, three junior, and three secondary schools. Information was given by the class teachers regarding chronological age and whether the pupils were below average, average or above average in school performance.

After this second stage, two of the pictures and five of the stories were rejected. The picture of a child looking at a picture of Christ was considered too ambiguous, but no reason was given for rejecting the picture of a child in church looking at the altar. The remaining pictures were a child entering church with a man and woman, a child kneeling and praying at a bedside, and a child looking at a mutilated Bible. These three pictures were selected because they encouraged responses involving the following concepts; the church and its nature, its purpose and motivation of attenders. Prayer and its content, purpose, the failure in prayer, and God's presence in prayer. The Bible and its uniqueness, its nature and origins. The three stories selected were Moses and the Burning Bush, Crossing the Red Sea, and the Temptations of Jesus. These were selected because they provided the widest range of responses to the largest number of concepts. Also taken into account was their use with different age groups and these three stories were

often recommended by Agreed Syllabuses across the country for a variety of age groups. There were a further six concepts involved; first, God and His nature, power and holiness. Second, the individual's relationship with God linking with guilt, fears, trust, expectation, the demands of divine love and justice, and how the divine communicates with humans. Third, group relationships with God; particularly group salvation and destiny, judgement on groups, and demands of divine love and justice. Fourth, Jesus and his humanity, power and relationship with God. Fifth, miracle and God's power over nature, divine intervention and appearance. Sixth, biblical authority and interpretation of the Bible, its authority and relevance. Goldman recognised possible weaknesses in that two of the three stories were about Moses, and that all three stories could have been viewed as television or cinema version which might encourage a more literal interpretation.

Goldman then carried out a pilot study using the three pictures and three stories. There were twenty pupils in the age range six to seventeen, with varying mental abilities and religious backgrounds. A standardised interview technique was used. After the pilot the test was modified, and a system for scoring the responses objectively was devised.

The final sample was then carried out with 200 pupils from maintained state schools, aged between six and eighteen years. Some pupils were not selected as they would not normally be part of the religious education classes. Those who were excluded were children whose parents were Roman Catholic, Jewish, African, Caribbean or of foreign extraction, or children who were withdrawn from school worship and religious education classes. In error one pupil was included whose parents were agnostic. There were ten boys and ten girls selected for each of the ten groups (aged 6/7; 7; 8; 9; 10/11; 11; 12; 13;

14; 15-17). Gender, age, intelligence, religious allegiance and religious behaviour were all assessed.

Responses were taken down verbatim, assessed on an agreed scale of theological concepts by forty independent theologically trained experts. Responses to five questions of the twenty two asked, were assessed for operational thought levels. The scores on all questions were scaled using the Guttman Scalogram method. The five questions used were:

S.1 Q.2 Why was Moses afraid to look at God?

S.1 Q.4 Why do you think the ground, on which Moses stood, was holy?

S.1 Q.5 How would you explain the bush burning, but not being burnt?

S.2 Q.5 How would you explain the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea?

S.3 Q.2 Why wouldn't Jesus turn the stone into bread?

Goldman recognised the problems brought about by differing theological views and interpretations. His criteria for scoring the tests were based on a central-to-liberal interpretation. This meant that the Bible was seen as the inspired but not the infallible Word of God; that humans have sometimes only partly understood the truth revealed to them; that biblical criticism should be encouraged; and that God had progressively revealed Himself to humans through the centuries. Goldman stated (1964:49) "There will be those who differ radically in their theology and in their case this research will have little to offer." He goes on to say "It is likely that if such criteria from, say a 'conservative' view of biblical theology were offered, then not only the assessing criteria but the whole nature of the questions and the interview procedure would have to be radically changed."

Goldman claimed that his research showed that, when applied to thinking about religion, three major stages of operational thinking had been established. He stressed that the sequence of thinking was more important than the apparent age boundaries indicated, that these age boundaries showed the general trends. Mental age boundaries were shown to be up to seven or eight years for the pre-operational intuitive stage, between seven or eight and thirteen or fourteen years for the concrete stage, from thirteen or fourteen years for the formal operational stage. This last stage being later than suggested by Piaget, and Goldman offered possibilities for this such as pupils needing to base religious experience on general experience of life. That it was necessary for some propositional thinking to take place in order to cope with analogy and metaphor; pupils needed to be taught to develop beyond the concrete level.

Goldman claimed that most pupils gave consistent responses to the questions, but that many were inconsistent with a few pupils showing a very wide range of responses. Goldman suggested possible factors of influence being the pupil's own motivation and experience, or the vocabulary, concepts and ideas within the story. Goldman offered evidence to show the fluctuating levels of pupils' thinking, such as Colin who was a regular Church of England Sunday school attender. He was chronologically aged 8:9 with a mental age of 7:5, he scored twice at intuitive/concrete level, twice at concrete level, once at formal operational level. Goldman's comment here was that "Mental age is not important in Colin's case, but church attendance obviously is." (1964:65). Cynthia, whose parents were agnostic, was chronologically aged 7:5 with a mental age of 8:0. She scored once at intuitive/concrete level, twice at concrete level, once at concrete/formal

level. There appeared to be one response missing. Goldman's comment was "Her better performance would be best explained in terms of her mental ability, or the impact of freshness of most of the stories heightening her interest and motivation." (1964:65). Stephen was a regular Free Church Sunday school attender and chronologically aged 7:8, with a mental age of 8:7. He scored once at concrete level and with the remaining four responses he scored above the concrete level. Goldman's comment being "Both his mental ability and his church attendance might account for his higher levels of thinking." (1964:66). William who was also a regular Free Church Sunday school attender, and chronologically aged 11:9 with a mental age of 11:10. He scored twice at intuitive level, once at intuitive/concrete level, and twice at concrete level. Goldman commented "Here is a case where attendance though regular at church, may be enforced and motivation is low." (1964:66). Lesley who had no religious links, was chronologically aged 11:5 with a mental age of 10:7. She scored once at intuitive level, three times at concrete/formal, once at formal level. Goldman commented "a very good average for a non-attender." (1964:66). Christopher, who was a regular Church of England attender and chronologically aged 14:5, with a mental age of 17:6. Christopher scored five times at formal operational level. Theresa, who was a regular Free Church attender and chronologically aged 16:1, with a mental age of 17:1. She scored once at intuitive/concrete level, once at concrete level, once at concrete/formal, twice at formal level. The two questions which held the lowest correlation between operational scale and theological scale were, 'How would you explain the burning bush?' and 'How would you explain the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea?'. Goldman admitted that belief became a factor with such questions, and it appeared that his own comments were pure speculation.

Goldman used these examples “to illustrate the uneven power of thinking exercised by many pupils.” The information may be more clearly expressed as:

Gender	C.A.	M.A.	Church	I	I/C	C	C/F	F
Boy	8:9	7:5	Yes		2	2		1
Girl	7:5	8:0	No		1	2	1	
Boy	7:8	8:7	Yes			1	2	2
Boy	11:9	11:10	Yes	2	1	2		
Girl	11:5	10:7	No	1			3	1
Boy	14:5	17:6	Yes					5
Girl	16:1	17:1	Yes		1	1	1	2

Where I, I/C, C, C/F, and F represent the five levels of operational thinking: Intuitive, Intuitive/Concrete, Concrete, Concrete/Formal, and Formal respectively. These examples may be misleading if Goldman selected them particularly because they illustrated such a mis-match of information, but if they represent a large proportion of the responses then it is difficult to ascertain how Goldman established his developmental theory. As already stated Goldman admitted that there were many children who gave inconsistent responses to the questions, and a few children showing a very wide range of responses.

The responses cited by Goldman all appeared to accept the stories as having happened. The final formal stage offering responses such as, Moses may have seen an image of the burning bush in his mind, others maintaining that with insufficient data it could not be

explained. Goldman said that a few agreed that the Red Sea was divided but not by God, but the majority at formal level regarded God as instrumental in the story. Even though some interpreted the Temptations as a test, it was not clear from the evidence offered by Goldman whether the pupils thought these events had actually happened. However, Goldman does say that after each story he asked whether the pupils thought that this story had really happened, along with other questions designed to elaborate on basic answers. Goldman also asked whether everything in the Bible was true, this question was to act as a check. These questions were in addition to the selected five questions, the responses to which were to establish Goldman's stage development theory. Seven pupils said none of the stories really happened, they were all of low ability and aged six. However, it appeared that others also thought that some of the stories were untrue.

With pupils aged up to 12:11; 58.9% interpreted three stories literally and 80.0% interpreted two or three stories literally. With pupils aged 13:0 to 14:11; 30.0% interpreted three stories literally and 57.5% interpreted two or three stories literally. With pupils aged 15:0 plus; 5.0% interpreted three stories literally and 15.0% interpreted two or three stories literally. There was no indication as to whether those not interpreting the stories literally interpreted them symbolically or rejected them.

Goldman showed three clear stages in the acceptance of the Bible as true; a basic literal stage up to about the age of thirteen, an intermediate partly critical stage aged between thirteen and fifteen, and a fully critical stage from the age of fifteen. This final stage Goldman admitted may not be a true picture, as the sample did not include those pupils who had left school aged fifteen. The first stage was when the Bible was seen as true

because God wrote it or because of the assurance of adults; that is, external authority. The second stage was when the Bible was seen as true because it was about God, and he was all powerful. The third stage was when the Bible was seen as true because of eye-witnesses, other source evidence, or the pupil's own inner experiences. Goldman was formulating his stages based only on the responses from those who accept the Bible as true, and those who did not accept the Bible stories in this way were not taken into account.

Goldman felt that his research pointed to a number of initiatives. First, an understanding of the concepts in order to bring about religious insights, as the introduction of inappropriate concepts too soon "may lead to regressive thinking in religion, and not only retard later insights but may prevent them from developing at all." (1964:227). Second, an awareness of inappropriate material such as parables for particular age groups, Goldman felt that it was possible that "very little biblical material is suitable before Secondary schooling." (1964:225). Third, that constant teaching at concrete level would encourage distortion and misunderstanding of religious material. Goldman felt that a more child-centred religious education was needed, taught in a more systematic manner.

Criticism of Goldman

Piaget's content analysis was that of an application of psychological criteria to the data, whereas Goldman's content analysis consisted mostly of theological criteria. McGrady (1983) held that, although flawed, Goldman's research did follow Piaget's technique of stage theory development in that Goldman was able to use the Piagetian model to analyse five items. This showed its usefulness with some aspects. McGrady felt that Goldman's

theological stages of conceptual development did not have a Piagetian base, thus the Piagetian stage theory only had limited influence on the development of religious thinking. Slee (1986b) also considered the fact that only five items were capable of being applied to the Piagetian criteria was a weakness. Goldman argued that from his results he could show the development of religious thinking in stages of operational logic, but Slee doubted the validity of such limited data. Slee also maintained that Goldman's content analysis was flawed in that the theological measure was biased in favour of Goldman's own theological stance.

Slee went on to question Goldman's manner of calculating information, saying it led to unreliable measures of accuracy, making it difficult to identify when pupils passed from one stage of thinking to another. Therefore, different categories of thinking could not be established.

Slee (1986a) maintained that in addition to allegations of being narrowly biblical with a liberal bias of interpretation, Goldman's model of religion had further complications. Slee stated that there were actually two models of religion underlying Goldman's work, those of explicit and implicit religion. The explicit model being used in order to measure religion as was required in Goldman's research methodology; and the implicit model employed to support his ideas on the development of religious education where emphasis was placed on personal attitudes, values and commitment. Thus, Goldman's educational arguments are not substantiated by his research claims as they relate to different models of religion.

Slee also criticised Goldman for using the Piagetian model without explaining why it was considered appropriate for studies in religious thinking, similarly Goldman does not explain how pupils move from one stage to the next.

Research post-Goldman on religious understanding

Goldman's research in the 1960s, linking religious understanding and development to cognitive stages as formulated by Piaget resulted in a resurgence of interest and research regarding children's religious understanding. A variety of ideas was researched following the stage development framework. However, Dean (1971) held that the stages of development suggested by Piaget were not precise, although she did agree that pupils passed through the stages in the same sequence. She felt it was also possible to be at different stages in different areas, and in addition to this there was great variety in the rate at which pupils moved through the stages and there was also the possibility of some regression.

Peatling (1974) carried out research during the 1970s using multiple choice pencil and paper tests based on the three Bible stories used by Goldman: Moses and the burning bush, crossing the Red Sea, and the temptations of Jesus. The choice of answers for each question were linked to four levels of religious thinking; very concrete, concrete, abstract and very abstract. It was suggested by McGrady (1983) that Peatling had combined pre-operational intuitive thinking with the early stages of concrete thinking, and that this actually meant that the single concrete level indicated in Goldman's work now became a measurement of two levels for one stage. In addition the use of intermediate stages differed, with Goldman the intermediate stage was placed between two stages but

Peatling placed the intermediate stage between his two composite scales (that is, between total concrete and total abstract). In addition the first two concrete levels were combined for a total concrete score, and the two abstract levels were combined for a total abstract score, giving in all six levels of religious thinking. This development was not found in either Piaget or Goldman. From his findings Peatling held that abstract religious thinking occurred later than the fourteen years two months suggested by Goldman. Peatling followed the stage development model thus indicating some continuity, but as the questions and the measurement instrument were different the two pieces of research really need to be considered separately.

Goldman's research showed that there was a transition stage between the ages of twelve and fourteen when conformist acceptance gave way to symbolic understanding and the beginning of a personalising of religion. Vianello (1992) suggested that 'the world' and 'religion' were considered as separate realities by younger pupils. Which in turn supported the view that religion was not being socialised, that is utilised by society, and therefore not being passed on to young people.

The results of Vianello's research in 1980 (1992) clearly showed that children's views of God change over time. He maintained that there was a turning point about the age of ten or eleven in the educational development processes of children. This linked closely to Goldman's research in 1964. In their 1980 study of 180 Italian children, aged six to eleven, Pagnin and Vianello (cited by Vianello, 1992) reached three main conclusions: first, that God was seen as increasingly separate from the world, as the child grew older. Second, that belief in heaven and God guaranteeing immortality were readily accepted;

and third that from the age of nine children began to doubt the existence of hell, which may indicate the beginning of a personal religious outlook. Vianello clearly supported parts of Goldman's research, however, because the method of research and measurement differed each needs to be considered separately.

Tamminen's research (1992) indicated that anthropomorphic responses of children were evenly spread across ages, which might mean that anthropomorphic concepts of God may have different meanings at different ages or stages. From the age of nine or ten children began to speak of God as Spirit, between ten or thirteen statements referring to God as Spirit were most common, but from fourteen there was an increasing alienation from religion. In this research only half of 1% spoke of hell whereas many children at all ages spoke of heaven. In the early years the emphasis was on everlasting life; what would heaven be like, and how to get there. After the age of eleven or twelve, questions and doubts about heaven increased gradually. Tamminen maintained that in childhood particularly, but also for many adolescents, heaven was placed in the clouds or outer space. Thus making it difficult for young people to accommodate the concept of heaven in their world view.

Tamminen's research supported the stage development advocated by Goldman, and also linked it with religious alienation. Again because there was no common format, the respective research pieces need to be considered separately.

There was general recognition that there was a certain period during which children's scepticism regarding religious issues developed. Hyde (1965) indicated a decline in

attitude toward religion as pupils grew older. Madge (1971) believed it began after the age of eight, Tamminen (1992) said that children became increasingly alienated from religion from the age of fourteen. McGrady (1994a) held that the formal operational stage coincided with a reliance on a factual world view and that a full understanding of symbolic interpretations could only come about when advanced operational thinking was achieved.

Some researchers, such as Fortosis and Garland (1990), suggested that there was a misconception of the formal operational level achieved by adolescents and that held by adults. They thought that adolescents did not have the ability or experience to apply their knowledge to events and behaviour. Thus, their ability to form judgements and make decisions was not necessarily the same as the adult level of operational thinking, they lacked the adult perspectives in judgement. Many researchers, such as Madge, emphasised the importance and impact of experience on the development of religious understanding.

Smith (1998) reconsidered Goldman's research, looking at the original questions and the responses produced, which indicated the different stages of thinking. Distinguishing between theological content and operational level Smith produced a questionnaire based on the burning bush story, using the Good News Bible, and basing her six main questions on Goldman's original eight questions. Goldman had analysed the responses to three questions from the burning bush story, Smith analysed responses to all six questions. Goldman had maintained that these questions could check the child's level of thinking using Piagetian methods. Goldman was attempting to consider the child's thought

structure and process rather than its theological insights, that is looking at the characteristic features of thinking rather than the content.

Goldman maintained that the mean score for intuitive thinking should decrease with age, and abstract thinking should increase. Smith compared responses of secondary school pupils in Years 7 to 10, but found no evidence for Goldman's claims. However, Smith found a strong link with church attendance, which suggested that rather than measuring stages of thinking relative to age, the test actually measured styles of thinking related to personal religious practice. Smith's findings were fourfold: first Goldman's original data proved less reliable than originally thought. Second, Goldman's ideas were still worth pursuing further, and third as Goldman's scales did not distinguish between different age groups then it was unlikely that different stages of thinking were able to be measured. Finally, Goldman's findings linked closely with different types or styles of thinking rather than with age or cognitive development.

Hutsebaut's (2000) research concerning styles of thinking showed that the individual's own characteristics and situation determined the religious thinking style(s). These styles might change over time and would be influenced by religious socialisation, age and cognitive development. Hutsebaut preferred not to link these styles with linear development, such as Goldman's stages, but rather to consider them as a process of change, where life experiences were essential for development.

The method of research used by Hutsebaut was that of self-assessment. Respondents were asked to place themselves, in relation to four styles, on a ten point scale.

Respondents assessed retrospectively whether they had experienced change in their interaction with religion. Hutsebaut was working on a model of development based on the four religious cognitive styles, which in turn was applied to three phases of the life cycle: childhood, adolescence, adulthood. Hutsebaut agreed with Goldman that children thought literally and that they moved towards thinking symbolically. Hutsebaut agreed with Fortosis and Garland (1990) that children's thinking took a different form to that of adults. Thus, this research linked with some of Goldman's findings, but again it used its own methodology and measurement. It was clear that the intention was that both would be developed into an ongoing model to be used and refined in future research.

Francis (ed. Kay and Francis, 2000) considered that Goldman's use of Piaget's framework may have been inappropriate, and that the range of biblical material was insufficient in that conclusions were based on responses to just five questions. Also, biblical material may have been distorted as a standard Bible text was not used. In addition analysis of 'stages of thinking' was confused with 'styles of thinking', that the use of statistical techniques made a poor match with qualitative data. Finally, that there were weak links between the research findings and curriculum recommendations such as the life-themes approach.

It is clear that since Goldman the idea of children gradually developing cognitively through stages is generally accepted. The methods of research employed since the 1960s have been diverse, including such techniques as clinical interviews which were used by Goldman. Semi-clinical interviews favoured by McGrady, Hay and Nye; questionnaires as used for example by Hyde. Other types of methodology included a study of drawings

by Harms, discussions by Loukes, observation for example by Madge, and the study of recollections by Hutsebaut.

Although some researchers may adopt more than one method, the two main methodological styles are the qualitative and the quantitative. The qualitative is the more subjective using interviews, observations, discussions and tending to be smaller research samples. The quantitative method is the more objective using clinical interviews and questionnaires, and tending to use larger research samples.

It is clear that some consensus of opinion has been reached by researchers, what is less clear is the compatibility of the various styles of research. Could these individual pieces be considered alongside each other as being equally valid? Do they work together to produce a coherent and valid full picture of the understanding of religious education? Murphy (1978) did not think that stage theory could be linked to religious thinking at all. His research on parables did not show that developmental stages were fixed, and indeed he felt that Goldman's research might well be misleading to both parents and teachers.

An example of qualitative research was that carried out by Madge. Madge maintained that children needed "time to grow through personal experience" (1971:74). In her earlier work (1965) Madge carried out observations of the child's spontaneous search for meaning within its own experience. She pointed out that immaturity and lack of experience brought limitations to a child's ideas. Madge admitted a problem with her research technique. She had used an indirect method of investigation, but because of lack of time with older pupils more direct methods were sometimes introduced, where Madge

“guided the trend of older children’s thought” (1965:9). However, she maintained that ideas expressed in guided talks corresponded with those voiced in unguided ones, that is uncontrolled discussions.

Other qualitative research was carried out by Hay and Nye (1998) who considered spiritual awareness to be an innate ability within humans. Hay and Nye carried out qualitative research and did not wish to remain neutral observers, thus this was a three year study with the observers fully involved. Taped conversations were held with thirty eight pupils ranging in age from six to eleven, up to three half hour meetings were held with each child on a one-to-one basis. Nye generated the criteria which would help identify each child’s spirituality and also establish patterns of the explicitly and implicitly spiritual. Hay felt that Goldman had made a mistake in assuming that “spiritual awareness is always something extraordinary” (1998:41). This indicated that although considering the same topic that is, spirituality, there would inevitably be disagreement because basic assumptions differed as well as the methodology and the criteria used as a measurement of findings.

Hyde’s quantitative research (1965) showed that attitude toward religion generally became more negative between the ages of eleven and sixteen, and that such attitudes were closely linked to church attendance. Hyde’s method was that of pencil and paper tests and measuring attitude through six sub-scales in order to produce an overall attitude score rather than percentage responses to individual questions. Hyde questioned 3,500 pupils. Hyde’s measurement instrument was used by other researchers, such as Richmond (1972), but it failed to become properly established. This method had the

advantage of questioning a large number of pupils and the potential of establishing a common measurement scale, thus leading to reliability.

Another quantitative study was carried out by Cox (1967), with 2,276 sixth formers. A questionnaire with both multiple-choice and open-ended questions was devised, this introduced an element of subjectivity. This looked at attitude in such areas as religious education, the Bible, and moral belief. This research was designed to show changes in attitudes among sixth formers, although Kay and Francis (2000) claimed that it actually showed opinion rather than attitude. This questionnaire devised by Cox, was adapted and used by Greer (1989) in Northern Ireland in 1968, 1978 and 1988. The questionnaire was, however, modified for the 1978 version with the open questions being omitted as well as some others. Other questions were added, for example concerning concepts of God and also spirituality, and an open question allowing pupils to describe their experience of God was added. This modified version was also used in 1988.

Influences on children's religious understanding

i) Experience

Harms (1944) felt that the child's religious development was much slower than in other fields of experience. This would indicate that religious understanding only developed when a wide range of other concepts had developed. Piaget (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958) stressed that the development of formal structures was dependent on both increased cognitive ability and on social factors such as the home and school. The ability to assimilate understanding of social ideals being gradually developed through adolescence and into adulthood, as adult roles were undertaken. Goldman said "It is the sheer moral

inexperience of the young which makes them unaware of the real issues of life.” (1974:35). In the early 1970s Madge (1971) maintained that young children thought in literal terms, but also used fantasy in order to make ideas meaningful. They tried to relate information to their personal experience, but their emotional, historical and political immaturity provided a barrier to understanding.

Harms reiterated his claim that different “psychic components” (1944:115) develop and mature separately, that religious thought and understanding did not develop in the same way as with other academic subjects such as science. He maintained that the intellectual force matured first about the age of three or four, with feeling and emotion next at age six or seven. Finally, the controlling of the will developed, in adolescence. Harms felt that as the child undertook formal schooling so contact with a wider range of social issues helped to formulate religious understanding.

Piaget (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958) held that in order to understand the development of personality, then the development of the thinking processes needed to be taken into account. Thus, the move into adolescence is parallel to intellectual development. Piaget felt that the thinking of the adolescent was different from that of the child. The beginning of formal thinking, at about eleven or twelve years of age, might be a result of the educational system which encouraged a progressive acceleration of individual development. He maintained that children became adolescents as they took on adult roles; however, this is seen as primarily a social transition rather than being linked to physical growth (puberty). A particular social environment could encourage movement between intellectual stages. Thus, both the educational system and the assumption of

adult roles were important social factors.

Piaget stressed the link between maturity levels and cognitive thinking levels. The adolescent held cognitive tools of spontaneous development that the child did not have, these tools were necessary to help the adolescent move towards coping with adult roles. The adolescent differed from the child in that he began to think beyond the present, he thought about his own ideas. The adolescent could analyse his own thinking and construct theories. The adolescent was able to assimilate the values of the social order, as the ability to use cognitive and evaluative data developed. Piaget felt that personalities developed according to social roles and scales of values, gained from social interaction. A strong personality disciplined a person and enabled them to adhere to a scale of values within a variety of situations. This led to the adoption of an individual social role. As the personality was formed so adolescents took their place in adult society, conversely the adoption of adult roles enabled the personality to be constructed. An essential feature of the adolescent was that of being able to plan for change, and this feature activated the formation of the personality.

“Experience is the basis of all learning, thinking and language. The school is concerned with helping children to build this organization of experience.” (Dean 1971:26). Goldman (1974) advocated the use of life-themes in the teaching of religious education, this meant a study of themes based on the child’s real life experiences. This approach was often unsuccessful, during the 1960s in primary schools, as it tended to follow a general theme with a tagged-on religious section which was often simply a Bible story. Holm (1975) maintained that this was still following the confessional approach in

its aim, even if the content and method had changed. There was some development during the 1970s to make the religious education element in the life-themes more closely linked to experience.

Understanding was seen to be affected by social development, experience and thinking. From the age of eight scepticism began to grow, Madge (1971) felt that the development of moral conceptions might affect biblical interpretations, but by the age of ten or eleven she felt that Bible events were being questioned in a more thoughtful manner. Madge supported Goldman's ideas in saying that too much emphasis on the miraculous element of Jesus in the early years made it very difficult for the older child or young adult to accept Jesus. Madge maintained that between eight and ten there was a development of imaginative sympathy, meaning that children could more readily appreciate another's point of view. Madge used the example of children's ability to write a modern version of the Good Samaritan parable. However, this may not only show development of empathy but also a development in their ability to transfer knowledge to a new situation, that is understanding.

Madge maintained that eight and nine year olds were able to appreciate the situation and feelings that another found themselves in. This might be enhanced by experience or the experience may dominate the situation, for example when explaining the feelings of the crippled woman who was healed by Jesus (Luke 13 v 10-13) one child used his knowledge of a fellow class-mate's back injury, and others expressed clear appreciation of the troubles of daily life for the woman. Madge went on to say that "Since children's experience differs, and they develop at different rates, variations must be expected in their

comprehension.” (1971:15).

ii) Emotions

Johnston in “The Language of Myth” (1975) recognised the importance of emotional development, and that the images that stories present were helpful in such development. He said that apart from personal memories people also held a collective set of images which resulted in certain stories being found in different cultures all over the world in very similar forms. He quoted Jung from 1919 who said that these images were “the most ancient and the most universal thought forms of humanity. They are as much feelings as thoughts” (1975:78). Johnston thought of story as aiding development and allowing a child to understand their inner world.

Other research stressed the importance of the emotions in a child’s development, and such emotions linked closely with a sense of awe and wonder. Madge (1971) maintained that the questions children asked and comments they made indicated a basic awareness of the mysterious. Madge emphasised that alongside intellectual development ran emotional development, stressing that a knowledge of the way children thought and felt was essential.

Godin’s research (cited by Gates, 1975) showed a sharp decline in magical thinking between the ages of eight and fourteen, maintaining that there was a gradual change from the magical to the sacramental. “Godin is also critical about the extent to which Goldman fails to appreciate the expressive power of symbols in the experiences of young children” (1975:65). Godin felt this understanding of the symbolic would not necessarily coincide

with the chronological development of the child, but a child may nevertheless feel something deeply. Intellectual knowledge might be affected by personal revelation at any stage.

Paffard in his research in the mid 1960s (1973), questioned whether this sense of wonder and awe could be classed as purely religious. Paffard held that mystical experiences did not formulate religious beliefs but rather that religious beliefs that are already held are linked to the mystical experience. He did class all such experiences as transcendental which for Paffard meant going beyond the ordinary limits. Thus depending on the individual outlook, responses could be taken to be religious or aesthetic, showing that it is not so much the experience that could be categorised but rather the individual's interpretation of it.

Hay, Nye and Murphy (1996) maintained that children have an innate spiritual capacity, but that it may develop in different ways as other capacities develop. This appears to be in keeping with findings of other researchers, such as Goldman, Madge and Tamminen. Nye held that the spiritual capacity in children ranged from those who perceive the spiritual in terms of questions or principles, those who made unconscious or conscious links with traditional religious language, and those who had directly and personally experienced the spiritual in the form of religious insight. Research was carried out through conversations with children and Hay and Nye recognised the subjectivity involved with such an approach.

iii) Language

Turner (1978) maintained that vocabulary was a good indicator of capacity for conceptual thought. He suggested that a test of religious language could be a means of assessing the understanding of religious concepts. Turner said that abstract concepts were developed through the use of words, and that a good knowledge of biblical language would indicate that religious concepts were well developed. To test knowledge of biblical language students were asked to explain a number of biblical words. Literal answers received no mark and 'insightful' answers were regarded as correct. Criteria for marking were provided by Turner. An example was "bread", with the literal answer being "something you eat"; and the 'insightful' answer being "He gives us our food and all" with some other answers referring to Christ as the sustainer of physical and spiritual life, or linking bread to the eucharist.

Hull (1991) held that the central issues of religion were not being taught to young children. These issues were the development of images and concepts, and also the vocabulary to encourage such development. This linked with the research of Madge (1971) which found that teachers as well as pupils were uneasy about the image of Jesus. In Madge's study of several hundred women training to teach, 75% admitted doubt and confusion in such areas as the Virgin birth, resurrection and miracles. Wright (1996) stressed the role of discussion in gaining religious understanding through linguistic competency. Through interaction a vocabulary could be established, and then religious experience could be expressed through religious language.

Although Goldman (1964) recognised that the child was developing religious concepts

and a theology, other research suggested that primary school pupils had a more developed understanding of religious ideas and concepts than Goldman allowed. This was shown in the work of Gates (1977) who held that the thoughts and feelings of children and adolescents were more strongly linked to the religious than perhaps had previously been thought. Murphy (1978) said that the theories on the development of religious thinking were stage development theories and that they were flawed because they did not have any common ground. Following Piaget there was a tendency to take on the cognitive developmental view, but according to Murphy, theories should also include the influence of language development on a child's thinking. Goldman's tests consisted of telling a story and then asking questions. Murphy maintained that other important factors should be considered such as: the choice of parable, the form of language, the questions and researcher's expectation, the ability of the child to abstract meaning from the parable. Murphy held that there was no clear evidence to show that the development of religious thinking in children was more dependent on cognitive development than on religious language.

Hull (1991) held that religious thinking at pre-concrete or concrete levels was adequate for that child and could involve abstract ideas and include imagination. In considering abstract ideas, Hull gave 'tomorrow' and 'big' as examples. He explained that 'big' was a relationship, and 'tomorrow' never actually came within reach but had to change on arrival into 'today' but children could use the word 'tomorrow' coherently at quite an early age. Research in 1935 by Griffith (cited by Goldman, 1964) looking at how three to seven year olds played, also indicated that there was much religious expression at that stage. Hull therefore, maintained that the Christian God was both concrete and abstract,

that there was theology available for both concrete and abstract thinking.

In summary, Turner (1978) held that good knowledge of biblical language would indicate that religious concepts were well developed. This appears to be in line with Goldman. Peel (1959) maintained that verbal understanding was essential for developing the child's cognitive understanding. Johnston (1975) held that stories helped develop the emotions, and Murphy (1978) stressed the importance of language on religious thinking. Hull (1991) felt that vocabulary was necessary to develop religious concepts.

iv) Church and Biblical teaching

Elkind (cited by Gates, 1975) maintained that children would grow out of any erroneous religious ideas formed in childhood, as they continued to mix with their parent's religious community so their thinking would gradually become more objective.

Smith (1998) found that Goldman's research indicated a close connection between the child and church affiliation, suggesting that church teaching and contact promoted styles of thinking. These children may have appeared to Goldman to be more developed in their understanding because of their knowledge of biblical material. Howkins, maintained that "Goldman's survey showed that systematic Bible teaching was associated with faster religious maturation." (1969:29). In order to understand, children needed first to be exposed to the subject matter, to have the ideas and information explained to them.

Conclusion

Thus the research points towards:

- Children's understanding develops in stages
- Children's religious understanding develops over time
- Vocabulary and use of story; emotional maturity; and experience can aid religious understanding
- Material taught should match and build on children's understanding.

Equally important in assessing any changes in religious understanding would be the research method employed to measure such changes. If such an instrument was to be adopted within schools to calculate the success of teaching, then an objective model would be required that could be administered easily.

In the quest to discover why pupils reject religious education to the extent they do, it would be necessary to discover whether they have successfully moved from the concrete level to that of formal operational thinking. Further, a study of whether moving from concrete cognitive level leads to rejection or acceptance, could aid in the development of teaching methods and curriculum.

This present research tests whether:

- children's religious understanding links with cognitive stages of development
- children's religious understanding does change over time
- other factors affect religious understanding
- religious attitudes affect religious understanding.

The next chapter deals with this last point of the influence of attitude.

CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSING RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES

'Religious' and 'Attitude'

The Measurement of Assessment of Attitudes

Attitude to Religion

Attitude to Religious Education

Teaching Religious Education

Conclusion

‘Religious’ and ‘Attitude’

A great deal of research has been carried out concerning ‘religious’ and ‘attitudes’. Such research has been presented in a variety of forms, for example attitudes to religious education; attitudes to religion and beliefs; attitudes towards Christianity. In addition there has been research considering how the content and methodology of religious education lessons might influence attitudes. Within this chapter the word ‘religious’ refers to such areas of research.

With regard to the meaning of the word ‘attitude’, Fishbein writing in 1963 (cited by Kay, Francis and Gibson, 1996) held “that attitudes should be taken as evaluations of beliefs” (1996:49) but as Kay, Francis and Gibson pointed out, to make evaluations involved a cognitive process. If this were the case then it could be argued that some attitudes would rely on cognitive development. It is not ‘intellect’ which influenced attitude toward Christianity, even though Goldman held that pupils could be properly prepared “to make the intellectual transition” (1996:45). Francis maintained that attitude was a stable long-term state developed from clusters of individual opinions which might involve dispute and variation. Opinions tend to refer to single issues, with attitudes being more broadly based and less likely to fluctuate (Smith and Kay, 2000).

A person’s religious understanding is influenced by factors such as emotions and attitudes, both their own and those of their family and peers. Jackson and Nesbitt (1992) carried out research which showed that children’s understanding and expression of their Christian tradition was very similar to that of their parents and church leaders. The

culture of the home and of the church reinforce each other. Kay, Francis and Gibson (1996) believed that decline of attitude toward Christianity was in fact connected with socialisation. As pupils become older so they associate more with adult attitudes and values. The position most people hold today is that of poor regard for Christianity; that is, if church attendance is to be taken as a guide.

Although not concerned with religious attitudes particularly, Vygotsky in the 1930s (cited by Daniels, 1996) maintained that people developed responsibility for themselves from the outside through symbolic cultural systems. Vygotsky felt that only by interacting with adults would children come to fully understand a concept; that socialisation and maturity increased together. He stressed the importance of understanding cultural influences which would show the ways that meanings evolve in different forms, according to different contexts. Vygotsky saw cognitive development proceeding through the formation of such meanings. Thus, because society determines the values and customs through its social context, so it strongly influences its young people.

Measurement and Assessment of Attitudes

Research concerning religious education and religious attitudes has taken a variety of forms, a number of which are given here to indicate the diversity of presentation, measurement and assessment. Putting such research together could provide an overall picture, but because so many formats have been used a coherent whole is difficult to ascertain. Researchers might choose to include interviews which could be either structured as used by Goldman (1964), or unstructured (Madge, 1965) or semi-clinical

(McGrady, 1994a). Interviews could be used with individual pupils as did Murphy (1977), or with individual pupils and parents as used by Jackson and Nesbitt (1992). The Children and Worldviews Project carried out by Erricker and colleagues (1997) used interviews with groups of pupils.

Research could be combinations of oral questions based on pictures and stories (Goldman, 1964), or longer written responses answering structured questions (Burton, 1995). It could take the form of discussions and longer written responses (Loukes, 1962), or questions based on story (Smith, 1998). Sometimes a variety of formats are used, such as direct observation of pupil activities, information from parents and teachers, recollections of childhood events by adults as well as longer written responses (Madge, 1965). Miles (1983) used interviews followed by a taught programme, and then a reassessment.

Research methodology has also included the use of adult recollections (Hutsebaut, 2000); the study of official reports (Orchard, 1991); and the use of questionnaires (Francis, 1987b).

Similarly the size of samples also varies. Some researchers dealt with relatively small sample groups (Smith, 1998) with 101 pupils. Other researchers divided the sample in order to compare results (McGrady, 1994a) where 117 pupils were tested and a group of 30 from the 117 were taken for a further test and a different group of 29 taken as a control group. Some researchers carried out their work in just one school (McGrady, 1994a)

whereas others used a variety of locations, such as Francis and Kay, who carried out research in 65 schools in England and Wales (Francis and Kay, 1995).

The age range of samples varied, for example Goldman's (1964) study was with pupils between six and eighteen, and Burton's (1995) was with pupils mostly aged fourteen years. In addition to this some researchers used stimuli such as pictures (Goldman, 1964) or taped Bible stories (Smith, 1998).

Analysis of the responses might take a variety of forms, such as computer generated statistics (Smith, 1998); or a number of assessors such as Goldman (1964), who had forty assessors to analyse responses which were scaled by the Guttman scalogram method. McGrady (1994a) established pupil operational levels through the use of multiple choice tests and then compared his interview responses with them using a panel of judges. Turner (1978) devised a test of 40 words which held specific biblical-theological meanings, he then determined the criteria for judging responses as being 'insightful' or not.

It is clear that there are two main research methods, that of the more subjective qualitative data collection and that of the more objective quantitative method. Within the qualitative field lies the greater variety of styles which both encourages flexibility and depth, but makes comparison of data difficult. Some researchers who favour this format consider the quantitative as being too 'one-dimensional', they ask for a fuller explanation of the responses because the reason *why* is still an unknown factor. Quantitative analysis

can measure specific data well and some researchers such as Levitt (1995) suggest a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches be followed, but others such as Francis (1995) point out that they may in practice be incompatible.

During the mid-1970s Francis (Kay and Francis, 2000) set up a series of interrelated studies looking at the development of attitudes towards Christianity during childhood and adolescence. Francis suggested the use of a common measuring instrument: the Francis scale of attitude towards Christianity. The idea behind attitude scaling was that stable underlying attitudes were reflected in the less stable opinions that pupils express. "It is the mathematically established pattern between opinions which indicate the directionality and intensity of underlying attitudes." (2000:372).

An initial 110 items were reduced to twenty four items concerned with God, Jesus, Bible, prayer, church or religion in school. They also had to reflect the affective or evaluative dimension which characterised attitudes, with attitude being defined as being built up from stable clusters of individual opinions. The twenty four items were arranged for scoring by the Likert method, that is a five point response scale, ranging from agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree to disagree strongly (Kay and Francis, 1996). The twenty four items being listed in Kay and Francis, 2000:373.

Francis (1993) offered considerable evidence to show the reliability and validity of the measurement scale for use with pupils over the age of seven. More than 100 published studies provided a cumulative picture of the personal, social and contextual factors

relating to attitudes toward Christianity during childhood and adolescence.

Attitude to Religion

With regard to religion, Glassey (1945) found that the attitude of older pupils was less favourable than younger pupils, and that boys' attitudes were less favourable than were girls'. The attitude of both boys and girls linked more closely with the mother than with the father. Hyde (1965) from a study of almost 2,000 pupils found that more favourable attitudes to religion were held by church attenders. He suggested that perhaps a positive attitude stayed with the church-goers but declined with non church-goers.

Francis' studies in the mid 1980s showed that Church of England voluntary controlled primary schools exerted a negative influence on pupils' religious attitudes, compared with county primary schools (Francis, 1987a). In addition Francis found that Church of England voluntary aided primary schools had the same impact on pupils' attitudes towards religion as county schools. However, "Catholic schools have a positive impact on the religious attitudes of their pupils compared with county schools." (1987a:190). Francis and Egan also carried out research (1987 and 1990) to assess the influence of Catholic schools on pupils, and concluded that Catholic schools contribute to the development of positive religious attitudes among pupils of ten and eleven years old.

Francis and Greer (1993) looked at the influence of religious experience in the development of positive religious attitudes among secondary school pupils in Northern Ireland. They found that the acknowledgment and naming of personal religious

experience was associated with the formation of more positive attitudes towards Christianity.

Research carried out by Kay, Francis and Gibson (1996) looking at a sample of over six thousand Scottish eleven to fifteen year olds, showed that the transition to formal operational thinking did not affect attitude toward Christianity. This finding disagrees with Goldman's assertion that formal operational thinking leads to a critical reassessment of immature theology, which in turn leads to a decline in attitude toward Christianity.

Vianello and Netti undertook research in 1984 (cited by Vianello, Tamminen and Ratcliff, 1992) to determine how general personality traits related to religion. Results indicated that among twelve year olds the personality trait 'search for security' was significantly related to a number of religious components; these included affirming God as protector and belief that God helped resolve moral conflicts. By the age of thirteen young people are less likely to affirm magical thinking and a predominant personality trait linked with religion is 'conformity'. It correlated highly with God as judge and that God helps to resolve human conflicts. The fourteen year olds presented a much more critical attitude, possibly making more use of reasoning abilities. This related to self-direction and a close link with parents, indicating that their criticism stemmed from personal reflection, relationships with parents and society, and a developing sense of autonomy. Therefore, this research showed that late childhood was a period of transition with respect to religion.

Using the Francis scale for measuring attitude with the Likert five point response choice, O'Keeffe (1996) gave 439 pupils a questionnaire. She wished to ascertain first, what patterns of behaviour were displayed; and second, what attitudes towards God, Jesus, the Bible and personal prayer were held. Her findings showed that the majority of pupils saw Jesus in terms of personal relationships and also indicated a trusting relationship with God. Regular church attendance was extremely high, many pupils did not regard church as a waste of time but affirming that church was important to them. Although 20% did consider the services boring. A high number attended Sunday school or young people's church group. Most pupils had at least one parent attending church on a weekly basis.

Research over some time has indicated the importance of the home in the development of religious beliefs, values and practices. Turner (1980) supported the view that the religious attitudes of pupils were greatly influenced by the attitude held by their parents. O'Keeffe (1996) showed that the home held more influence than the school, and although the school could enforce home values it could not over-ride them. With regard to personal and public prayer the pupils held a high positive view as they also did with regard to the Bible. However, quite a number of pupils (about 12%) found listening to the Bible boring.

Research by O'Keeffe was carried out within non-denominational Christian schools, these were established by independent churches and Christian groups in England, Scotland and Wales. The findings of O'Keeffe (1996) did not totally agree with the work carried out by Francis. His studies showed a steady decline in attitude towards religion

and religious education (1987b) and towards Christianity (Kay, Francis and Gibson, 1996) as pupils moved through from the age of eight to fifteen. However, O'Keeffe's research showed no confirmation of such findings and her study showed that attitude to Christianity did not become less positive from the age of eight to fifteen. O'Keeffe does state that further research on such environments should be carried out, including research on these same students as they move from this 'protected' environment and face the secular world. This links with Hyde's research (1965) mentioned earlier, where church attendance was seen to encourage a more positive attitude to religion.

Francis, Gibson and Lankshear (1991) undertook research regarding the influence of Protestant Sunday schools on attitudes towards Christianity among eleven to fifteen year olds in Scotland. Other than this research there has been little concerning the impact of Sunday school attendance on the shaping of religious attitudes during childhood and adolescence. The results of this research indicated that Sunday schools make a positive contribution to the religious development of adolescents, which is both unique and additional to the influences of the church attendance and of parental example. But this positive contribution is only marginal compared with the contribution that church attendance makes. Sunday school attendance does not lead to teenage membership of the church.

Francis (2000) in his study of teenage attitudes to the Bible, visited and revisited a group of schools every four years from 1974 until 1994. He found that girls held a more positive view of the Bible than did boys, and that younger pupils held a more positive

view than did older pupils. The age range studied was from eleven to sixteen years old. Francis found that the attitudes toward the Bible had changed over this twenty year period. In 1974, 33% agreed that they found it boring to listen to the Bible but this increased in 1978 to 34%; in 1982 it was 40%; in 1986 it was 49%; in 1990 it was 48%; and in 1994 it was 51%.

Greeley (1992) reported that in Britain 44% believed in the Bible as the actual or inspired word of God, whereas in the Irish Republic 78% believed so, with 81% in Northern Ireland and 83% in USA.

Francis (2000) carried out research in 185 schools in England and Wales. These schools represented state maintained, independent, denominational and non-denominational educational provision. Questionnaires were given to 33,134 Year 9 and Year 10 pupils. The conclusions reached were that 5% read the Bible at least once a week and 29% read the Bible frequently. Girls were more likely to read the Bible than boys, and thirteen year old pupils were more likely to read the Bible than fifteen year olds. Those pupils from professional and semi-professional backgrounds were more likely to read the Bible than those from working class backgrounds. It was found that among weekly churchgoing pupils the Bible was never read by 43% of Roman Catholics, 20% of Anglicans, 15% of Baptists.

Attitude to Religious Education

Pupils' attitudes towards religious education compared to other subjects on the

curriculum have been studied since the early 1900s. Lewis'(1913) research with 8,000 pupils aged seven to fourteen years showed that the least preferred subjects were: scripture, recitation, geography, grammar. Pupil comments about scripture being "Scripture will be of no use to me after I am fourteen" and "You can't make a living with Scripture." (1913:97). A number of research studies have been carried out since the 1960s, but they still indicate religious education as being at the least favourable end of the attitudinal continuum.

Ormerod's (1975) 'gender spectrum' of subjects showed religious education as being on the extreme feminine continuum for subject preference. Archer and Macrae (1991) reported that when seventeen subjects were ranked on a seven point scale from masculine to feminine, religious education was ranked in third place at the significantly feminine end of the continuum. Their study involved 60 pupils aged between eleven and twelve.

Williams and Finch (1968) showed the rank position of religious education as:

- 13th out of 14 by boys concerning usefulness
- 11th out of 14 by girls concerning usefulness
- 13th out of 14 by boys and girls concerning interest.

With 15 year old school leavers:

- less than 10% of boys found RE useful and interesting
- 30% of boys found RE useless and boring
- 19% of girls found RE useful and interesting
- 19% of girls found RE useless and boring.

Harvey (1984) showed that overall religious education was ranked:

- 16th by boys and 17th by girls out of 18 subjects
- 17th by boys in mixed schools
- 16th in single sex boys' schools
- 18th by girls in mixed schools
- 16th in single sex girls' schools.

Thus indicating a slight improvement in appreciation of religious education in single sex schools.

The perceived importance of religious education being ranked:

- 17th out of 19 by boys in mixed schools
- 17th out of 19 by boys in single sex schools
- 14th out of 17 by girls in mixed schools
- 13th out of 17 by girls in single sex schools

Thus indicating a slight improvement in perceived importance by girls in single sex schools.

Francis (1987b) showed that either music or religious education was the least preferred school subject for pupils between the ages of 9 and 15. Additional studies by Francis and Egan, in Australia (1987) and USA (1990), showed that the attitude toward religious education being most positive among pupils who felt religious education lessons helped them know Christ more deeply and also to deal with important issues of life.

Ormerod (1975) carried out research with 1,204 secondary school pupils looking at both subject preferences and choices, as well as effect of attitude toward teachers. His results showed that subject preference was more strongly linked to gender in co-educational schools than in single-sex schools. Also that the effect of attitude toward teachers showed a link between liking for the teacher and subject preference, but not subject choice. Although earlier research, such as Pritchard (1935), had indicated that liking for teachers had a negligible influence on pupils' subject preferences. Ormerod maintained that later studies showed that the influence of teachers on pupils' attitudes was considerable, with his own work showing a high correlation between liking of subject and liking of teacher.

More recent research by Lewis and Francis (1996) considered the influence of personality on the attitude of young people to religious education. Their research found a considerable variation in attitude between different groups of school pupils. The key factors were gender, age and religious membership or practice. Their four main conclusions were, first, the research confirmed previous research that girls held a more positive attitude towards religious education than did boys, and also the attitude became less positive with age. Second, Eysenck's dimensional model of personality was able to account for some of the variables in attitude to religious education. Personality was shown to be an important factor in explaining individual differences in attitude to religion. Eysenck's dimensional model of personality included the neuroticism-stability scale which measured emotional stability and over-reactivity, such as regarding prayer as

an answer to worries or asking for favour in answer to needs. Also included was the extraversion-introversion scale, which measured sociability and impulsiveness, where prayer was used as an inward conversation with God. Psychoticism was measured on a scale, from detached tough-mindedness to tender-mindedness, where prayer could be a response to guilt or showing a close relationship with God (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1985).

Third, the link between 'personality and attitude to religious education' was closer to 'personality and attitude to Christianity', than it was with 'personality and attitude to school'. The strongest predictors of a positive attitude to religious education and to Christianity were tender-mindedness and conformist social attitudes. Fourth, there was one significant difference between the findings concerning 'personality and attitude to religious education' and 'personality and attitude to Christianity', that was that the neuroticism scores did not influence the attitude to Christianity, but they did influence the attitude to religious education. This indicated that the more anxious pupil may have a slightly higher regard for religious education.

Reich (1989) pointed out that young people interested in science develop a negative attitude to religious education, because they see religious and scientific views as incompatible. "It is the maturity of children's thinking which influences the way they see the relationship between science and religion." (1989:26). Research carried out by Francis, Gibson and Fulljames (1990) with eleven to fifteen year olds, showed that pupils with a high level of interest in science had more difficulty in presenting a positive attitude towards Christianity.

Teaching Religious Education

Loukes (1962) maintained that older pupils saw religious teaching as childish and rejected it as being too literal, but his concern was that no alternative was offered. One pupil said, "I began to think of R.I. lessons as uninteresting we were told things out of the Bible and we just had to accept them as true. (It was hard luck if we had our doubts.)" (1962:82). Thus the content of the religious education lesson was being questioned, Hilliard too picked up on this point. Hilliard in 1963 (cited by Goldman, 1964) held that the time to start tackling the teaching of the overtly religious and inner meaning of stories was between the ages of twelve and fourteen. Goldman (1964) said that it was not until the age of thirteen that pupils moved away from concrete thinking to begin thinking of God in symbolic, abstract and spiritual forms. That up until that point pupils were at a literalist stage relying on the authority of the printed word and the adult world.

It appears that there has been disagreement as to what could be taught successfully at different ages, but running along side this was the way teaching or subject matter influenced pupil attitudes. Loukes' research considering fourteen year old pupils, found that they were confused in their response to religious education, that although the subject matter was interesting they found the teaching methods boring. The methods appear to be the teacher writing on the board and pupils copying, with the teacher giving information and the pupils taking a passive role.

Hubery (1965) argued for the experience-centred teaching of religious education, in this he stressed that all teaching must be relevant to the pupils. He suggested that religious

education teaching should always link with experience and need, as did Acland (1964), but that such teaching must be closely linked to pupil interests and outlook. Loukes also advocated discussion of topics linked to life-situations, and although following a theme would also incorporate suggestions by the pupils themselves. Hubery maintained that effective learning did not take place purely through the mind, the imagination or the emotions, that most people learn through a combination of their personalities, senses and relationships. The work of Goldman (1964) encouraged a general move toward the life-theme approach to teaching religious education.

The work of Francis, Gibson and Fulljames (1990) shows that in order to gain higher levels of achievement a more positive attitude must be established. To encourage this positive attitude towards both science and Christianity, pupils must be offered opportunities within religious education to critically consider both scientific enquiry and a range of Christian views on the authority of the scriptures.

After an analysis of HMI reports on religious education between 1985 and 1991, Orchard (1991, 1994) maintained that the problems in 1988 were due less to the multi-faith content of lessons than to the lack of time allocation and skilled teaching. A further study 1989-91 showed that religious education had still not been allocated sufficient time or resources. Orchard maintained that "it is the status of the subject which is at the heart of the problem." (1994:27). Research by Kay and Francis (1996) concerning the attitude young people held towards Christianity stated "what is less clear, however, is whether different approaches to religious education may result in pupils adopting a different

attitude toward Christianity.” (1996:154). So it would seem that there is no clear-cut approach that can be taken by all teachers for all pupils. Research carried out more recently by Kay and Smith (2001) disagreed with Orchard’s findings, and indicated that those religious education syllabuses which concentrate on world religions produce a less positive attitude in pupils toward Christianity, compared with syllabuses which concentrate on Christianity.

Research by Astley and Francis (ed. Francis, Kay and Campbell, 1996) found that ‘A’ level pupils studying the Gospels tended to hold low Christology (informed by the historical Jesus) seeing Jesus as a human figure with limitations. Thus, an in depth-study of biblical texts could influence the learner’s own Christology, meaning that academic theological enquiry and personal religious belief are not rigidly separate.

Dorman (1997) carrying out research within Catholic schools in Australia had been looking at the importance of the psychosocial environment, that is when the environment has a social bearing through its atmosphere and tone. The Catholic Church encourages the school environment to emphasise Gospel values to enhance its Christian community. Earlier research in Australia such as Flynn in 1985 and 1993, (cited by Dorman, 1997) indicated that the atmosphere of the school dictated the level of the Christian message, as Dorman states “the atmosphere *is* the Christian message for a very significant number of students” (1997:104). He goes on to cite Leavey, 1972 who stressed “that unless the student experience of the procedures of his or her school is reinforcing the content of the Christian message, then that Christian message tends not to be accepted.”

(1997:104-105).

Research by O’Keeffe (1996) indicated that the general ethos of the school and the strong parental support, may well prevent or ‘slow down’ the process where young people become progressively disillusioned with religious education as they grow older. O’Keeffe’s research was carried out within non-denominational Christian schools, these were established by independent churches and Christian groups in England, Scotland and Wales. In many cases these schools were a response to the spiritual approach taken by their local state maintained schools. Although it is admitted that Christian values and beliefs may still be offered by Christian state schools, it was felt that such values were being pressurised by a growing secular presence. In addition, the non-denominational Christian schools point out that teachers in maintained state Christian schools are increasingly non-Christian.

Smith and Kay (2000) carried out research with Year 9 pupils, in 22 co-educational comprehensive schools, and found that a systematic approach to teaching religions results in pupils having a more favourable attitude towards those religions. Thus, the thematic approach as well as the combined thematic and systematic approach were found to produce less positive attitudes towards religion.

Conclusion

A number of points are indicated through the research.

- Religious education as an academic subject is held in low esteem by young

people.

- Younger pupils are more positive in their attitude as older pupils become progressively more negative.
- Girls regard religious education more favourably than do boys.
- Pupils who are interested in science are less likely to be interested in religious education.
- Tender-minded pupils who conform to social attitudes are more positive toward religious education.
- Those pupils who tend to be anxious also have a more positive attitude toward religious education.
- Parental influence is the most powerful factor.
- The religious attitudes of young people are influenced by the adults in the society around them.
- The atmosphere of the school/classroom influences the pupils' acceptance or rejection of Christianity.
- Pupils in private Church schools and from Christian homes are less likely to reject Christianity during adolescence.

The research by Kay, Francis and Gibson in Britain (1996) and research by Dorman in Australia (1997) have important messages for religious education. The work of Kay, Francis and Gibson showed that young people were greatly influenced by the attitudes of the society in which they live, and so it is the predominate adult attitude which most affects the attitude of the pupils to religious education. O'Keeffe's work too, appears to

support this view. Dorman's research shows that young people take more account of the way teachers behave rather than specific teaching, and so if the teachers do not 'live' the Christian message then the teaching itself will have no influence.

CHAPTER FOUR

SYMBOLIC UNDERSTANDING

Summary

Introduction

The LAM Scales

Critique of the LAM Scales

Hutsebaut's non-linear process of change

Symbolism within the classroom

Conclusion

Summary

The place of symbolism in religion is an important one, although it is a contentious one too. There is a variety of interpretations of the Bible, and these various views are not compatible. They include the literal, symbolic, anti-religious and non-religious. According to Burris (1999) an understanding and appreciation of symbolism requires an open-minded approach which can allow for a variety of interpretations. It is argued by Nielsen (1998), that those pursuing a closed belief system are following a literalistic path and experience less conflict, as they channel responses directly through the core belief. Those pursuing an open belief system and selecting symbolic interpretations, experience more conflict as their responses link with other peripheral beliefs. Nielsen maintained that those who experience religious conflict were those who selected mythological or symbolic interpretations.

Piaget established a cognitive stage theory which suggested that pupils moved through three major stages as they developed cognitive ability. The final stage was achieved when they were able to think in symbolic terms, and this was called formal operational thinking. Piaget's theory was held to be linear and not allowing regression, which meant that once a cognitive level had been achieved then the individual would not move back to earlier levels but would either remain at that level or move forward to a higher level. Many researchers have been content to accept the principle of stage theory, even if there have been differences in outcomes

from individual research, such as McGrady (1994b). Other researchers disagree with Piaget, for example, Hutsebaut (2000) who maintains that it is possible for regression to

take place.

Hunt (1972a) devised a measurement scale which allowed respondents to select from literal, anti-literal and symbolic interpretations. Prior to this innovation only literal and anti-literal interpretations had been offered. This new scale permitted those who were religious but not literalists to select a religious symbolic interpretation rather than being forced to select an anti-religious stance. The LAM Scale, as it was called, was heralded as a breakthrough, but appears to have been put to little use. There has been constructive criticism of the LAM Scales by researchers such as Greeley (1972), Poythress (1975) and van der Lans (1991).

Introduction

Fawcett (1970) maintained that through the use of signs information could be relayed in a simple and direct manner, and it was a medium used in both Christian art and architecture as well as in the Bible. The use of signs meant that sacred history, as portrayed in the Bible, moved into Christian worship. Signs, however, become meaningful only where they are known and understood then they can act as signals, for example a flag could be associated with pride, loyalty and obedience. An allegory is a series of signs, with each element representing an element in reality. Fawcett held that signs needed to be linked to associated symbols in order to give depth and power, for through symbols ideas and concepts could develop. The sign of the cross, for example, achieved power through association with symbols such as resurrection and kingship. Whereas a sign was limited to one object, person or event; the symbol referred to a variety of places and times. Symbol, unlike signs, dealt with more than just the observable. Symbols were used as a

means of interpretation of 'truth', where symbolic language expressed how people saw the world. Fawcett said "Progress in understanding scripture may in fact be said to be proportionate very largely to the extent to which its symbolic character is recognized." (1970:31). This indicated that if symbolic language was not understood then the Bible would not be understood either. Fawcett held that symbol could direct a person's thinking, it was concerned with the subjective and could help make sense of human experience. Symbol could be used as a means of exploring the nature of being and peoples' relationship with it.

Aulén (1970) maintained that symbol was necessary when speaking of God, for God could not be described in the same way as finite objects. The use of symbols may prove meaningful in that they are understood and lead to at least partial knowledge of God through faith. However, they might equally be meaningless and lead, not to understanding, but to rejection of the Christian message. As Aulén stressed "One cannot understand what the Bible is talking about without understanding the language it uses, symbol language, the mother tongue of faith." (1970:99).

Avis (1999) held that the mystery of God was reflected in human imagination, thus the creative human imagination was the closest link with God. He felt that divine revelation was received through the imagination rather than through conscience or reason. Avis went on to say that ".. the deepest truths are conveyed in symbols .." (1999:4) and that symbol was irreducible, that is incapable of being translated into literal language. However, symbol needs to be interpreted through the use of imagination in order to reveal the 'truth'. People have to participate and use their imagination in order to respond to

symbol. Symbols have become central to religious thinking, enabling humans to make sense of the world and find meaning in life. Avis held that “Symbols are the life blood of a living faith” (1999:105), he also thought that symbols could reveal new truths and they could refer to an idea that transcends everyday life. Without symbol then the transcendent would remain inaccessible. Avis, along with Aulén and Fawcett, stressed that unless people could read symbolic language then they would misunderstand the message.

Parables contain a message or moral, they state a universal truth with the details of the story often being considered unimportant. Fawcett held that parables led to a new level of self-understanding which encouraged a change of behaviour or attitude. He also pointed out that changing cultural circumstances might lead to modern day misunderstanding or even no understanding. Biblical literature contains similes which provide simple descriptions, and metaphors offering deeper symbolic interpretation encouraging commitment. Again, Fawcett pointed out that metaphor could be misunderstood when the symbolism had been overlooked and the comparisons were taken literally.

As stated in chapter two, ‘Assessing Religious Understanding’, understanding occurs when knowledge can be internalised and used in a variety of situations. Thus symbolic understanding requires that the individual’s knowledge of symbolism can be transferred and used in different situations. In part symbolism can be taught, for example the peacock is a symbol of immortality, and following on from this a range of religious beliefs can be developed. Thus, such symbolism can be considered as a group property but may also be an individual’s own beliefs or property. Often in literature and poetry

authors present their work in their own personal symbolic style. Knowing the authors and their work is necessary for understanding the full message within the literature. So symbolism can be both external and internal, that is, as presented by the author and as perceived by the reader. Therefore, an understanding of symbolism relies on knowledge and imagination. This is reinforced by van der Lans (1991), who found evidence to show that individuals who selected metaphorical interpretations were more imaginative in their thinking.

This chapter is concerned with the symbolic understanding of the biblical message. For some, the Bible is riddled with symbolism, and this would include whole books for example Jonah, miracles for example walking on water, teachings such as the parable of the sower, and events such as the virgin birth. Others accept the Bible in a more conservative manner and such information is interpreted literally. It is clear then, that the Bible narratives are interpreted variously by individuals, in much the same way as other literature. The factors which influence individuals in their interpretation of biblical narratives include family, friends, church attendance, education and personality, these have been discussed in chapter three 'Assessing Religious Attitudes'.

In order to appreciate and understand symbolism the reader needs to actively engage the imagination. Some people may lack imagination, others may not regard such an important and serious book, as the Bible, as proper material for imaginative speculation. Johnston (1975) maintained that story-telling enhanced the child's ability to develop their inner self. Thus, the medium of story appears to be an acceptable one for passing on religious teaching. Story-telling and the discussion of such would develop vocabulary,

and Turner (1980) maintained that the understanding of abstract terms developed with age and that the use of his vocabulary tests would indicate conceptual ability. Murphy (1978) also held that religious thinking was reliant on both cognitive development and on religious language. Hull (1991) also agreed that by expanding vocabulary then concepts and images could be developed.

McGrady's research (1994a) considered the nature of religious language and in particular the use of religious metaphor. He narrowed his considerations to an examination of religious metaphor in a verbal or textual setting, and linked this examination to cognitive development. He compared his findings on religious metaphors with Goldman's stages of religious thinking based on Piaget. McGrady suggested six capabilities within metaphorical religious thinking: recognition, comprehension, production, elaboration, interrelation, validation. The first capability was that of identifying the presence of metaphor (recognition), where the individual became aware that the concept was being developed beyond its original context. Second, the individual was able to recognise common elements in the original context and the new context, which allowed for comparison (comprehension). The third capability involved the construction of a metaphor through the reorganisation of ideas (production). The fourth was being able to use metaphor and to develop its interpretation through contextualisation (elaboration). The fifth capability was that of using a number of metaphors in unison (interrelation). The final capability was the recognition of metaphor as an interpretation of complex religious experience (validation).

Research was undertaken between 1987 and 1989 with Irish Roman Catholic secondary

school pupils, in one school, aged between twelve and seventeen. Some of McGrady's findings (1994b) differed from those of Goldman in the 1960s. Goldman maintained that formal operational thinking was a pre-requisite for metaphorical thinking. McGrady held that metaphorical thinking was possible, although it may be limited, before the formal operational stage. McGrady suggested three phases of metaphorical religious thinking; first, pupils may be able to deal with short statements often linked to the individual's experience (pre formal operational stage). Second, they may be able to interpret more complex parables (pre formal operational stage). Third, they can understand miracle stories as symbolic or apply metaphorical thinking when conflict with a scientific world view arises (formal operational thought needs to be firmly established). McGrady also stated that with the development of formal operational thinking, so the appeal of metaphor diminishes in favour of factual aspects. He maintained that only with the establishment of advanced formal operations could symbol and metaphor be openly examined. McGrady stressed that the understanding of metaphor enabled mature religious thinking to take place.

The Bible is presented as narrative, and so understanding of narrative is important for the understanding of the Bible and its teaching. Story is a good form of passing on information as well as of developing the inner self and cognitive skills. The Bible uses metaphor and so as pupils become able to understand metaphor, so they can understand the Bible.

The LAM Scales

Research during the 1970s began to look into the ways different interpretations of

religious belief and commitment were being assessed and studied. Hunt (1972a) devised a measurement scale which he called the 'LAM Scales' (Literal, Anti-literal and Mythological Scales), he wanted to offer an alternative option for people holding a non-literal religious view when answering research questionnaires. He felt that other measurement scales had a bias toward a literal-fundamentalistic interpretation of Protestant Christianity. Such scales asked respondents to either agree or disagree with statements. Hunt felt that by only allowing respondents to accept or reject the literal responses, it meant that a large number of people were being forced to accept categories with which they really didn't agree.

The LAM Scales represented three possible responses to Christianity. The first response being that of a literal acceptance; here Hunt suggested the individual had unquestioningly accepted religious statements at face value. The second response being that of rejection (anti-literal); here Hunt suggested that religion had been left unexamined and then rejected, with the individual possibly rebelling against authority and searching for a self-identity. Hunt admitted though, that there may be other reasons for such rejection. The third response was that of recognition of the message in symbolic form, of Christian belief and teaching (mythological), here individuals may be seeking "deeper symbolic meanings which lie beyond their literal wording." (1972a:43). Hunt also thought that an individual's cognitive structure might be linked to the preference for the symbolic interpretation, encouraged through a variety of other factors. "The symbolic approach to religion may also be related to the complexity of cognitive functioning, education, age, or to other characteristics of individuals." (1972a:46), thus showing that such things as personality characteristics or culture might affect interpretation too.

The LAM Scales:

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
 - L 1. Agree, since available evidence proves God made everything.
 - A 2. Disagree, since available evidence suggests some type of spontaneous creation for which it is unnecessary to assume a God to create.
 - M 3. Agree, but only in the sense that this is an anthropomorphic way of talking about whatever Process, Being, or Ultimate Concern stands behind the creative process.
2. I believe that men working and thinking together can build a just society without super-natural help.
 - L 1. Disagree, since man without God's help can do very little that is good.
 - A 2. Agree, since men have and are increasing the ability and technical knowledge to improve society if they will apply this knowledge to the problems of society.
 - M 3. Disagree, although men's ability and technical knowledge is increasing, they must build on the ultimate power within oneself [sic] to understand and accomplish the full implications of justice and a good society.
3. The writings of such commentators on human life as Plato, Aristotle, Dante, and Shakespeare are as much inspired as are the writings of Moses and Paul.
 - L 1. Disagree, because the writings of Moses and Paul contain a special inspiration from God which other human writings do not have.
 - A 2. Agree, since there is really little difference in these writings. In fact, Plato and Aristotle may be even more important for us than Moses or Paul.
 - M 3. Disagree, although any writing may be inspired, the writings of Moses and Paul are especially significant because they form part of the revelation of God in history.
4. All miracles in the Bible are true.
 - L 1. Agree, because the Bible cannot contain any false report of God's work.
 - A 2. Disagree, since "miracles" can be explained by our modern understanding of the principles by which nature and human society operate.
 - M 3. Agree, but only in the sense that "miracles" are a dramatic report and interpretation of a natural process, with the literary purpose of pointing to the sovereignty of God. They are probably not factually accurate.
 - M 4. Perhaps, since there is considerable evidence for extra-physical power used by a few persons in every major cultural tradition, though there is no clear scientific proof.
5. Jesus was born of a virgin in a manner different from human beings.
 - A 1. Disagree, although most religions claim a virgin birth for their founder, we know that such an event is physically impossible.
 - M 2. Agree, but only in the sense that this is an ancient mythological way of talking about the Ultimate Reality as manifested in Jesus.
 - L 3. Agree, since God conceived Jesus in Mary's womb before she had sexual

relationship with Joseph, her husband.

6. The attempt to believe in a supernatural being is a sign of a person's failure to accept responsibility for his own life.
 - A 1. Agree, since belief in God is usually an escape from the problems of everyday life. Such belief does nothing to help solve one's problem.
 - L 2. Disagree, because belief in God is really the only way in which man can be saved and make his life worthwhile.
 - M 3. Disagree, since belief in God is basically man's way of talking about his full acceptance of personal responsibility in the face of ultimate and sometimes uncertain reality.
7. I believe in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - L 1. Agree, since God has said that he will be with us always. Prayer thus is an effective way of listening to God's guidance.
 - A 2. Disagree, since the supernatural, if it exists at all, is in no way directly involved in telling man what to do.
 - M 3. Agree, because this is one way of describing the involvement of God with his creation and man.
8. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.
 - L 1. Agree, since God created man and expects man to do God's will at all times.
 - A 2. Disagree, since man must find his own purposes in life. There are probably no purposes for man which are apparent in nature.
 - M 3. Agree, because the essential purpose of God is that man achieve his own maximum fulfillment through personal development and service to others.
 - M 4. Agree, since the individual who enjoys God's creation and serves his fellow man is at the same time glorifying God.
9. I believe Hell is a form of existence in a future life.
 - M 1. Disagree, since Hell is not a future life existence, but rather a present state in this life which occurs when man disregards his own code of ethics and/or rights of other individuals.
 - A 2. Disagree, since there is little, if any, evidence for any type of existence after this life.
 - L 3. Agree, since there is ample evidence in the Bible and other authoritative sources for Hell as a form of future existence.
10. The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, contain some legendary materials.
 - A 1. Agree, since most of the material in the gospels cannot be supported by other historical sources or is not relevant to life in today's world.
 - L 2. Disagree, since nothing in the four gospels could be legendary or in error, because these are part of the Bible and therefore infallible.
 - M 3. Agree, but this does not deny the basic purpose of the gospels, which is to use written language (however inadequate) to announce God's revelation of himself to man.

11. We are made for fellowship with God and our hearts are restless until they rest in him.
- M 1. Agree, although this is merely a way of talking about the ultimate nature of man's activities as being in some way related to God's purposes.
 - A 2. Disagree, since man's restlessness results from his inability to identify with a group of persons and enjoy people about him, not in a supposed relation to some God.
 - L 3. Agree, since God's basic purpose in creating man is so that man can be a companion to God.
12. Man is saved by the free gift of God's grace.
- L 1. Agree, since the Bible clearly states that salvation is by man's faith in God and his grace.
 - A 2. Disagree, since whatever salvation there is must come through man's work in the world about him.
 - M 3. Agree, since this is a traditional expression which really refers to the unconditional nature of God's grace toward man.
13. The biblical writers were endowed with a divine wisdom which enabled them to foretell specific events in the distant future.
- M 1. Disagree, since the basic purpose of prophecy in the Bible was to announce God's judgment of the ways in which that present generation failed to act in harmony with God's purposes for man.
 - L 2. Agree, since many of these prophecies either came true in earlier history, in the Bible, or are coming true in the world today.
 - A 3. Disagree, since biblical writers had no greater wisdom than other men of their day. Any prophecies which may have come true were the result of a knowledge of cause and effect which any man could achieve.
14. Man is ultimately responsible to God.
- A 1. Disagree, because man is finally responsible only to himself and his society.
 - M 2. Agree, because this is a way of describing the basic assumption upon which all other concepts of responsibility depend.
 - L 3. Agree, because God has created man in his image and expects man to do God's will.
15. God is only a symbol of man's ideals.
- M 1. Disagree, although man's experiences may be symbolized in the image of God, the reality of God always transcends man's symbols for that reality.
 - A 2. Agree, since religious men tend to ascribe to God their own highest ideals.
 - L 3. Disagree, since there is clear evidence for a real God who is much more than just the result of man's rational powers.
16. Jesus walked on water and raised the dead.
- A 1. Disagree, since these are probably exaggerated reports of events which could be explained through our knowledge of nature.

- L 2. Agree, since there are several accounts in which Jesus actually brought a physically dead person back to life. These accounts provide evidence for God's power over nature.
 - M 3. Agree, but only in the sense that these are figurative ways of describing man's awareness of the meaning of life in relation to the revelation of God.
17. The biblical story of creation is probably based on one of the early Babylonian myths.
- M 1. Agree, but the basic purpose of the creation story is to symbolize God's creative and redemptive relation to the universe and to man.
 - L 2. Disagree, since the biblical story of creation has not been duplicated in any way at any time. It refers to God's creation of the world and man.
 - A 3. Agree, since most religions provide such a creation story. Modern scientific theories of the origin of the universe have replaced these ancient accounts.

In the 1950s McLean had devised a twenty five item scale with an agree-disagree response format, called the Religious World Views Scale, which Hunt argued was a "well validated conservative-liberal scale" (1972b:290), Hunt used this scale to develop the LAM Scale. Hunt's stems were taken directly from McLean's RWV scale, and Hunt tested each of the three part responses of the LAM Scales against this non-religious scale of literalness. This test showed that both the literal and anti-literal responses correlated well, meaning that they were valid responses to use. There was no relation indicated between the M (mythological or symbolic scale) and the RWV scale, which was just as Hunt had predicted.

Hunt tried two different styles of scoring, the first style allocated two points for a first choice response, and one point for a second choice. The other style allocated just one point for a single choice response. This second style was selected as the correlation was high ($r=0.94$ for L, $r=0.97$ for A, $r=0.95$ for M), whereas correlation was much lower for the first style of scoring. The twenty five items were then cross-validated and seventeen items were selected as the final form of the scale, as each of the seventeen had correlated

highly with its respective scale. Hunt considered that the A (Anti-literal) results measured rejection of a literal view of religion because it was negatively correlated with the L (Literal) scale and was uncorrelated with the M (Mythological) scale.

The original sample was made up of 88 female and 85 male undergraduates at Southern Methodist University, in America. The distribution of the seventeen item LAM scores for males and females was:

			L	A	M
Males	N = 83	mean:	3.6	4.7	8.1
		SD:	4.2	4.8	4.2
Females	N = 85	mean:	3.1	3.3	10.0
		SD:	3.4	3.9	3.9

Hunt reported reliability coefficients of 0.87 (L), 0.92 (A), and 0.77 (M).

The LAM Scales offered two dimensions by which to measure religious faith; that of literal versus symbolic and that of religious versus anti-religious. Hunt also maintained that

“the present LAM Scales combine two types of judgments: (a) the meaning of the item stem and (b) whether the respondent agrees or disagrees with the item when interpreted in a particular way. Future scales may be improved by an answer format which will separate these two judgments by the respondent.” (1972b:291).

Critique of the LAM Scales

Greeley (1972) praised Hunt for his contribution to paper-and-pencil measures of religious interpretations, but pointed out that Hunt was in the main only able to offer one choice of mythological (M) response. Greeley stressed that respondents may have a variety of symbolic interpretations which would not agree with the alternative offered by Hunt. Greeley felt that in such a case symbolic interpretation may be substantially reduced to being "general ethical principles" (1972:287). Greeley maintained that symbols may be poetic descriptions which could act as both a way to and a description of Reality, which was not covered by Hunt's interpretations. It was clear that Greeley held Hunt's Scales in high regard, but he felt that they needed to be developed further. In considering the Scales, Greeley held that the Mythological interpretation offered too narrow a choice. He thought that Hunt had denied respondents the chance to select a symbolic interpretation which also allowed for acceptance of God, in some items. Greeley felt that the Mythological items were too humanistic and therefore obscured the transcendental. He thought that symbols were both a pathway toward, and a statement about, God or the transcendental.

Greeley reflected on the seventeen items presented in Hunt's final version of the LAM Scales, and the Mythological interpretation offered. Some of the comments made by Greeley indicated that he would like a more definite reference to the transcendental, other points show him in partial agreement with Hunt but wishing to elaborate or include a further dimension, with other items he shows total agreement.

In referring to the Mythological interpretation in item one of the LAM Scales, Greeley

conceded that this statement could refer to commitment to the transcendent, but felt that so much was omitted as to almost obscure the religious reality of God. He stressed that God's power was beyond the material world and that recognition of creation might also mean making a commitment to God. In item two, Greeley's complaint was that there was no reference to the transcendental. He maintained that because of humankind's innate need for God anything which excluded such a need could not succeed. In item three, Greeley presented an additional option that referred to God's covenant with humankind. In item four, Greeley suggested that miracles were a 'sign' of God's intervention rather than 'proof'. In item five, Greeley appeared to accept the interpretation offered, but added that the ultimate reality was present in Jesus in a very different way than it would be present in other people.

In item six, Greeley offered another possibility, that of recognition of human limitations and a reliance on a greater power. Items seven and eight were accepted by Greeley. In item nine, he suggested that Hell might be when humans turned from goodness and such an act robbed them of true freedom. Item ten was accepted. In item eleven, Greeley developed the item by including the desire humans had for transcendence. Item twelve was accepted.

In item thirteen, Greeley inserted an additional point which was that of prophecy revealing the divine plan. In item fourteen, Greeley suggested that there should be some inclusion of the concept of God as being different, separate and greater than humans; that is, being worthy of worship. Item fifteen was accepted. In item sixteen, Greeley appeared to desire the addition of an extra interpretation where the beliefs of the early

church, which recognized Jesus as a worker of signs and wonders, were validated. In item seventeen, Greeley pointed out the very different character of the God of the Jews, as portrayed in the creation stories, when compared with the gods of Babylon.

Hunt himself asserted that there may well be other interpretations, not only for the Mythological responses, but for the Literal and Anti-literal responses too. Hunt stressed that the LAM Scales were “to allow for more than one type of religiosity.” (1972b:290). Hunt recognised that the LAM Scales presented a combination of two types of judgements: the meaning of the item which indicated their interpretation of religious language, and the consequent response which showed an individual’s religious commitment. He hoped that these two judgements might be separated in future measurement scales. It is clear from Greeley’s response to Hunt’s scale that there would always be difficulties where closed response options were offered. This linked closely with the comments of Poythress (1975) and Burris (1999) who also state that the LAM Scales did not allow all groups to be recognized. Both Poythress and van der Lans (1991) advocated changing Hunt’s ipsative format to a Likert style, where each item would be independent but would allow more flexibility in responses.

Poythress (1975) highlighted Hunt’s concern that when dividing people into two groups only, that is religious and non-religious groups, then some individuals would be mis-classified. Hunt thought that religious people who did not agree with a literal interpretation would perhaps be assigned to the non-religious group. Hunt attempted to overcome this by adding a third group which he hoped would cater for the religious non-literal interpretation, that is a mythological interpretation. Poythress attempted to test

Hunt's concern that people with different religious sympathies might react differently when measured against other variables. Poythress took the variables of intelligence, authoritarianism, and racial prejudice as measures. However, Poythress modified Hunt's ipsative scales to a Likert scale format because he felt it allowed a more open and flexible response, as ipsative scores are not independent of one another. The more open the response procedure then the more likely it would be to elicit an honest response, especially where the respondent may not have a clearly defined concept of religious beliefs. Poythress removed the stem of each item and then presented each interpretation independently on a five point Likert scale. Poythress stressed that this format allowed for pure concepts to be clearly indicated, but in addition mixed or combined concepts could equally be identified.

Poythress then developed eight religious types from Hunt's original three, these being Mythological; Mythological/Anti-literal; Literal/Anti-mythological; Literal/Pro-mythological; Strongly Anti-religious; Moderately Anti-religious; Non-religious (slightly anti-religious); Non-religious. The first four types forming the pro-religious groups and the remaining four being sceptical of religious beliefs. Poythress compared the four pro-religious groups with the four sceptical groups and found the results (when comparing intelligence, racial attitudes, and attitude to authority) to be consistent with previous research. Where religious sceptics were shown to be more intelligent and less dogmatic than the pro-religious groups, there were no significant differences on racial prejudice. Poythress then compared the four pro-religious groups, that is, the two literal groups against the two mythological groups. Hunt (1972a) had thought that there would be differences between these groups when measured against other variables such as

cognitive functioning, education or age; however, Poythress found no such differences.

Poythress next compared the four sceptical groups, that is the two anti-religious groups against the two non-religious groups, and differences were found here. In studies such as Hunt's these four groups would be classed together and therefore differences would go un-noticed. The differences occurred when measured against the variables of authoritarianism and of prejudice; with the non-religious being more prejudiced and more likely to accept authority than the anti-religious. Hunt had stated that there may be various reasons behind the rejection of religious statements. Poythress supported Hunt's view that non-literal pro-religious individuals might be mis-classified if the Mythological scale was not made available. However, the second implication of Hunt's work, that is that people with different sympathies or interpretations might react differently when measured against personality variables, was not proven. Poythress's research upheld the existence of distinct religious types, and that in his own work the largest group was the non-literalistic pro-religious type. However, Poythress admits that "no conclusive causal statements can be made concerning the findings" (1975:282) as other variables such as gender, age, religious affiliation may indeed influence attitudes to religion.

Northover and Gonzalez (1993) were also concerned with other variables questioning whether religious beliefs, as measured by the LAM Scales, were more influenced by culture than by religion. Hunt (1993) felt that as religious beliefs were learned from a variety of sources, this would mean that culture would play an important part in their formation. Heimbrock (1986) too, pointed out that more account ought to be taken of cultural influences on the way religious views are thought to develop, and not rely too

heavily on cognitive stage theories.

Van der Lans (1991) used a revised form of Hunt's LAM Scales in order to look at the meanings given to religious statements by individuals. Van der Lans pointed out that little notice had been taken of the important area of the interpretation of religious language. He expressed disappointment that even in the mid-eighties researchers were still confining their work to comparisons of religious and non-religious groups. This led to little progress being made in attempting to link interpretation of religious language and social variables.

Van der Lans considered the use Hunt made of his chosen title "Mythological-Symbolic Religious Commitment: The LAM Scales" (1972a:42). Van der Lans felt that there was a lack of clarity. Within the first paragraph of his paper Hunt stated "...three religious meaning-commitment possibilities (Literal, Anti-literal, and Mythological)". He goes on to state that his research was concerned "...to describe a mythological-symbolic measure of religion" (1972a:43). He discussed the relative positions of 'conservative-liberal' and 'literal-symbolic' (or mythological) dimensions. Hunt then stated that his scale "...is a reinterpretation of religious statements to seek their deeper symbolic meanings" (1972a: 43). These four references clearly showed that Hunt equated 'mythological' with 'symbolic', that the two words were interchangeable. Further, that the last mentioned reference indicated that both words actually in his definition mean the symbolic. Hunt's interpretation of 'myth' was "...a symbol which points to a sign of God's action" (1972b:292).

Van der Lans recognised that there were different interpretations placed on religious beliefs. He was interested in seeing how people solved the disparity between religious and secular world views. In acknowledging the importance of the interpretation of religious language in such a quest he held that “metaphor is the leading stylistic character of religious language.” (1991:108). Van der Lans used a revised format of the LAM Scales in order to ascertain if the responses made related to different styles of religious cognitive functioning. Fifteen adults completed the LAM Scales in van der Lans’ first study, although he admitted to this being a very small number of subjects. The results of this study did not comply with expectation. Van der Lans used Oser’s developmental theory criteria to establish the subject’s religious judgement, where Stages one or two would be expected to link more closely with literal interpretations and Stages four or five with symbolic interpretations. However, responses to the LAM Scales did not link with the Oser criteria, van der Lans felt that the age factor had a negative influence as it brought with it previous religious knowledge and cultural aspects. It did show that scores on the LAM Scales could not be taken as a full true indication of the developmental level of religious judgement, van der Lans stated “Whether we can consider the LAM Scales a valid method for differentiating between styles of religious thinking is still an unsolved problem.” (1991:117).

Van der Lans carried out a second study, in this all 212 respondents were young adults and van der Lans hoped that this would negate the influence age may have had in his first study. This study took the form of a questionnaire that included a fourteen item LAM Scale, then five high literal and five high metaphorical respondents were selected to undertake interviews where subjects responded to a number of pictures. Van der Lans

had put forward two hypotheses, first that a high metaphorical score on the LAM Scales indicated a greater level of imaginative thinking. Second, that there would be no difference in linking religious meanings to a situation between high literal and high metaphorical respondents. However, high literal scorers would be more likely to use religious language in giving religious meanings, whereas high metaphorical scorers would be more inclined to use religious language to express a variety of meanings for a situation. Both hypotheses were proven.

Van der Lans found that the literal and metaphorical responses related to differences in general cognitive functioning, where literal interpretation related to a low degree of cognitive flexibility with traditional, single responses preferred. Metaphorical interpretation favoured views which allowed for a variety of responses and encouraged a more elaborate religious cognitive structure.

Nielsen carried out research (1998) which explored religious conflict, his sample of 202 adults also completed Hunt's LAM Scales. He found that those who had experienced religious conflict held higher mythological interpretations of religion. Nielsen linked this with the theory of open and closed belief systems put forward by Rokeach in 1960. This theory indicated that if a person held a closed belief system they had certain core beliefs and the peripheral beliefs operated through the core beliefs. This resulted in a minimum of conflict between peripheral beliefs as they seldom related directly with each other. On the other hand, if a person held an open belief system then there would be more likelihood of conflict, as the peripheral beliefs had direct contact with each other. Nielsen indicated that those respondents who selected Literal and Anti-literal items on the LAM

Scales, were exhibiting closed belief systems.

Correlations between the LAM Scales and other variables were considered. Literalism correlated positively with frequency of prayer ($r=.47$, $p < .01$) and church attendance ($r=.36$, $p < .01$). Anti-literalism correlated negatively with frequency of prayer ($r=-.38$, $p < .01$) and church attendance ($r=-.28$, $p < .01$). Mythological statements negatively correlated with frequency of prayer ($r=-.31$, $p < .01$) and church attendance ($r=-.28$, $p < .01$). Nielsen felt that these scores were influenced by the ipsative structure of the LAM Scales, and he suggested a more independent scoring method be adopted. Nielsen concluded that

“the Literal scale reflects an active, faithful approach to religion, while the Antiliteral scale reflects a negative view. Mythological scores were associated with having experienced conflict and with low levels of involvement in personal or public religion.” (1998:186).

In the early 1990s van der Lans and Jablonski (cited by Nielsen, 1998) showed that involvement in religious groups influenced literal or mythological item choice. Nielsen went on to question whether literal, anti-literal and mythological thought were equally complex; and were such responses influenced by the situation or possibly by the personality of the respondent?

Burris also considered this problem and asked “...is the mythological interpretive style in fact the most “mature” style, as Hunt (1972a) claimed?” (1999:32). He went on to question whether this stance had gained credence because it had become the middle way and socially respectable in mainstream Christianity. An interesting point raised by Burris, suggested a possible reason for the lower reliability scores on the mythological items, was

that these items held a variety of possible interpretations. He went on to say that “an individual whose predominant interpretive style is mythological may agree with the spirit but not the letter of M scale responses, and may therefore respond somewhat inconsistently.” (1999:33). Thus, it is not clear as to what exactly the M scale measures. The mythological responses being subjective and inevitably restrictive within a questionnaire format of research.

In considering the validity of the LAM Scales, Burris agreed that the research carried out by van der Lans supported the predictive validity of the scales showing that literal respondents were more concrete and less flexible than were mythological respondents. Burris, in agreement with Poythress, argued that the LAM Scales failed to provide sufficient categories within the anti-religious section. He felt that there ought to be provision for a symbolic non-religious alternative, it is not clear if this follows the view Poythress had of a non-religious group. Burris agreed that literal religious (L), literal non-religious (A), and symbolic religious (M) were represented.

Hutsebaut's non-linear process of change

Hutsebaut (2000) established a research instrument that attempted to suggest various possibilities which might play a role in establishing a cognitive developmental process. Hutsebaut had identified four religious cognitive styles; first, “orthodoxy” a literal interpretation and selected by religious believers. Second, “external critique” a literal interpretation and selected by non-believers; third, “relativism” where belief and religious tradition rely on the context and could be selected by both believers and non-believers. Fourth, “historical awareness” a symbolic interpretation and selected by believers. The

question Hutsebaut was considering was whether these four religious cognitive styles constituted a developmental process.

In his research Hutsebaut (2000) looked at the respondent's self awareness, of change or development, in personal experience of religion. He concluded that individual response to religion changed over time, he preferred to concentrate on the word 'change' rather than 'development', as his findings did not indicate a linear developmental process. 'Development' indicated qualitatively different stages with progression from one to another without regression. 'Change', however, indicated that the individual in a given situation determined their own religious style and not necessarily moving from one style to another. Religious style was linked to the processes of religious socialisation, age and general cognitive development of the individual. Hutsebaut referred to "moments of change", the first of which occurred between the ages of fourteen and twenty, and the second at approximately thirty-five years old.

Hutsebaut carried out research where 98 respondents were asked to indicate their present position against each of the four religious cognitive styles, on a scale of 0-9. They were then to indicate if they had experienced a moment of religious change, and to subsequently indicate the age they were at the time. They were to rate themselves against each of the four religious styles in relation to the religious style that existed before the moment of change. They were then asked if they had experienced a second moment of religious change, and again to indicate the age at which it occurred. Then they were to repeat the process of rating themselves against the religious styles. Thus, for most respondents twelve scores were obtained, that is a current state, the state before the first

change and the state before the second change. Each state being scored against each of the four religious cognitive styles.

Hutsebaut found that over time orthodoxy (literal interpretation) changed from high when respondents were younger, to lower at the respondent's current age (mean age 42). Historical awareness (symbolic interpretation) changed from low when respondents were younger, to higher at their current age. Both external critique and relativism changed from low to higher to lower again over the time period. Hutsebaut held that religious cognitive styles did not necessarily comply with cognitive developmental models, but rather that changes could occur at unpredictable times according to the individual situation and their interaction with religion.

Symbolism within the classroom

Heimbrock (1986) stressed that there was a variety of factors to be taken into account when assessing the development of pupils' attitude to religious education, not least the influence of culture. He pointed out that the Piagetian-style cognitive development theories could not account entirely for how pupils reacted to religious education. Avis (1999) maintained that unless young people understood the metaphors traditionally used to explain theological thought, they would be unable to understand a religious explanation of life. Erricker (1992) stressed that individuals needed a sense of identity to help them associate with their physical and mental environment. This then, would establish an awareness of their experiences, Erricker maintained that the "... way to metaphorical awareness is by appreciating the meaning or significance of an event in relation to one's own experience." (1992:31). By building on the tension between religious tradition and

personal experience, so communication and understanding developed thus enabling some appreciation of the meaning of faith as an experience.

McGrady (1994a) stressed the importance of metaphor within religious language. He held that metaphor operated at both a cognitive and an emotional level, with personality factors strongly influencing the image individuals held of God. Metaphors not only being textual and verbal, but also visual and enactive. McGrady maintained that through the use of metaphor, concepts could be developed or elaborated from concrete to abstract, from simple to complex. As a concept was elaborated so its range of interpretation broadened, and it took on new meaning. It was essential that the original meaning of the metaphor maintained a stable state, in order to develop in this way. The purpose of metaphor being to simplify complex ideas and to allow for the transference of information.

McGrady (1994a) noted that an awareness of cultural conventions and of the variety of connotations attributed to words, resulted in improved metaphorical understanding. McGrady's research (1994b) indicated that pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 3 might only be able to deal with simple metaphor, perhaps also requiring the use of indicators such as 'like' and 'as'. Where there was possible conflict of world-views between the biblical and scientific approaches, then it inhibited pupils from developing metaphorical thinking. Such conflict often occurred with the development of formal operational thinking. He suggested that teachers should help develop pupils' metaphorical capabilities in advance of the onset of formal operational thinking. McGrady stressed that pupils were able to think metaphorically before the formal operational level, although he

maintained that metaphor was only properly appreciated when advanced formal operational level had been achieved. McGrady thought that metaphorical thinking had been neglected within the religious education curriculum, and that teachers should adopt a strategy for encouraging the development of religious thinking.

Conclusion

Goldman held that until formal operational thinking took place then pupils were unable to fully comprehend symbolic interpretation. Hunt (1972a) also thought that there was a link between the ability to understand the symbolic and cognitive development. Hunt suggested that the individual who selected the mythological or symbolic responses was one whose

“religious framework is more complex and capable of assimilating both the intention of religious orthodoxy and the realities of the contemporary world. For most moderate to liberal Christian groups, this may be considered to be the most mature type of commitment.” (1972a:43,44).

Burris (1999), though, questioned this assumption. Heimbrock (1986) also questioned the arbitrary strictures placed on religious thinking which classify experiences and interpretations at different maturity levels, insisting that both genetic and social factors must influence such decisions.

Van der Lans maintained that the literal and metaphorical scales, which had been developed from Hunt's LAM Scales, “are related to differences in general cognitive functioning.” (1991:122). Where literal interpretation reflected a low level of cognitive flexibility with less awareness of the multiplicity of meanings possible. Those favouring “metaphorical interpretation seemed to possess a more elaborate religious cognitive

structure.” (1991:122). Hutsebaut supported this saying “the concept of religious maturity is fundamentally related to the process of religious development.” (2000:19). The ability to think symbolically is only achieved over a long period of time.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHOD

Summary

Introduction

Key points from earlier chapters that link to the present research

Development of the questionnaire:

Assessing religious understanding

Assessing religious attitudes

Assessing pupil profiles

Distribution of the questionnaire

Profile of pupils undertaking the survey

Conclusion

Summary

This chapter presents information from the four preceding chapters of this thesis, and it indicates how previous research supports the validity of the present research methodology to formulate an instrument by which to measure literal, symbolic and rejection interpretations of biblical passages.

The development of the aims of religious education show a concern with understanding religions from within the faith, as well as building up a body of objective knowledge. The embracing of world religions brought a new perspective and helped develop cultural awareness too. The understanding of religious education and religious issues is shown to be linked to Piaget's stage development theory and the important work of Goldman in the 1960s. The attitude pupils hold of religious education has traditionally been negative and there are a variety of factors which influence this attitude. These factors form a pupil profile which is considered further within this chapter. The profile is developed through church attendance, religious affiliation, prayer and reading the Bible, concept of God, and Jesus' teaching. Such a profile has been established through the administration of a questionnaire, data from this questionnaire were also provided on pupil understanding and interpretation of biblical passages, and on pupil attitude to religion and religious education. An explanation of the design and development of the questionnaire is given. The questionnaire was distributed to eighteen secondary maintained schools in two counties, with 3,412 pupil responses.

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with linking key ideas from past research with the development of a new measurement instrument, which seeks to distinguish between different interpretations of biblical passages.

The aims of religious education in secondary maintained schools are considered. This analysis shows that having discarded the confessional approach, which encouraged the nurturing of pupils, the phenomenological approach attempted unsuccessfully to merge an observable objective approach with an empathic approach. The phenomenological approach had been, in part, popular with teachers of religious education. Within this approach the objective understanding of factual knowledge had been widely adopted, but the empathic appreciation of the believers' faith, from within the religion, has generally proved more difficult to implement. It is the understanding of a religion from within, that is the understanding of the teachings of the religion as interpreted by believers themselves, with which the new measurement instrument is concerned.

In an attempt to counteract the over reliance on factual information, which tended to be encouraged by the phenomenological approach, the experiential approach was introduced into schools. The experiential approach to religious education encouraged independent learning through exploration based on the pupils' experience. This understanding of the pupil's personal experience was to develop in order to consider, and possibly incorporate, the experiences of others. Hay and Hammond (1992) thought that this might encourage pupils to move away from a single literal interpretation of the religious message. This links with the present research, in its attempt to assess how pupils interpret biblical

passages.

Research on cognitive theories indicated that as pupils became older so they moved through stages of development, but there is disagreement as to when these stages occur and whether they should be linked to mental or chronological age. There is also disagreement as to whether, once a stage is gained, the level is maintained or whether there might be regression. An important point that has been raised is whether the learning and comprehension of the child is the same as that of the adult. This may mean that concepts can be accessed by those operating at a concrete cognitive level rather than being exclusively available only to those firmly within the formal operational stage. The present research attempts to assess pupil understanding of biblical passages. Therefore, previous research on cognitive ability and stage development, may assist in the consideration of a workable religious education curriculum. If certain aspects within the understanding of symbolism can only be accessed at particular cognitive stages, then it is important to clarify exactly what needs to be taught at specific stages. This may be a finely balanced operation based on cognitive development of the individual pupils. However, research may show that other factors influence the attitudes of the pupils, and this negative or positive attitude then directly influences the learning ability or style of the pupils.

Research has shown that a number of factors influence pupils' attitude to religious matters. Those who were already established within a religious structure through church attendance, and girls who had a higher cognitive ability, tended to have a more positive attitude towards religious matters. Society and parental beliefs were influential too. The

present research is concerned with developing a measurement instrument which shows how pupils interpret biblical passages. Pupils' attitudes to religious matters might influence their choice of interpretation.

In the past the measurement of biblical or Christian interpretation tended to be a comparison of those selecting a literal interpretation with those rejecting biblical or Christian teaching. Richard Hunt devised the LAM Scales in the 1970s, which introduced a third option, namely that of a symbolic Christian interpretation. The proposed measurement instrument in the present research also offers literal, symbolic and rejection interpretations of biblical passages.

Key points from earlier chapters that link to the present research

Chapter one clearly shows that a number of different approaches to teaching religious education have been adopted at different times. Each approach offering a different emphasis which is directed or influenced by the particular aims being adopted. With the onset of secular values in Britain the confessional aims lost ground, it being considered unethical to encourage or nurture a religious faith through the religious education curriculum. It is recognised, however, that those pupils with a religious faith are generally those who are more positive in their attitude to religious education (Francis and Lewis, 1996) and would be more able to appreciate the underlying nuance of religious faiths in general.

The phenomenological approach had perhaps been too ambitious and only partially understood by the teachers implementing it. It had been intended as a complete model of

teaching religious education which would enable the objective presentation of information about the world religions and the cultures in which they were found. The pupils were also to be drawn into that religious environment and enabled to understand such an environment from the believers' point of view. Appreciation of the full range of emotions would be necessary within a variety of authentic settings. Many teachers of religious education reduced this method to one of objectivity through a consideration of world religions based on factual material. As with the confessional approach, an understanding of how and why religious people acted and thought as they did, required an understanding and appreciation of religious faith. As many pupils did not have this religious appreciation then it proved very difficult to access an empathic phenomenological approach to religious education.

The overall aims of religious education have been highlighted in the two Attainment Targets introduced by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, that of 'Learning About Religion' and of 'Learning From Religion'. The former target tending to encourage an objective approach and the latter being one which encompasses the more subjective skills such as empathy and appreciation of the spiritual.

To some extent the debate between the various approaches to religious education have failed to address a fundamental problem, namely the negative view of religious education held by pupils. The popular objective method of teaching religious education however, tends to assume that the factual information about the religion is indeed fact in the sense of being True. A religious believer accepting as fact that 'Jesus is the son of God', is not the same as saying that it is an absolute Truth for all. The pupils are not always aware of

this difference. Perhaps without either a personal awareness of religious belief, or without experience of the belief of others, then pupils cannot understand the meaning of religious education. This inability to differentiate between religious truths and factual truths leads to pupils rejecting religious statements and beliefs. The more subjective approach, encouraged through 'Learning from Religion', allows for a consideration of how religion and its teachings can influence people's behaviour and thinking. This allows interpretation and adaptation of some of the teachings, for example, The Good Samaritan parable and its message on prejudice and discrimination. However, it must be remembered that many pupils are confused as to which of the Bible stories are ones told by Jesus, and which are stories about Jesus, as often no structured Gospel study is undertaken.

The research considered in chapter two deals with how pupils' understanding of religious issues develops. Piaget's work on cognitive stage theory has been very influential with some researchers following his suggestions whole-heartedly and others inevitably being more cautious. It would appear that enthusiasm for Piaget's ideas was stronger in the earlier research and that, as time moved on, the more recent research began to question whether Piaget's theories were fully applicable to religious education. Nevertheless Piaget's theory, that pupils move from one cognitive stage to another, is now firmly established even if questions of regression or full competence at such stages remain matters of debate.

A major flaw in this area of research is the lack of a coherent methodology. The large amount of research undertaken seems to have been initiated by individuals working

independently. It would be useful to know when pupils hold sufficiently developed cognitive skills in order to undertake biblical interpretation. A knowledge of how pupils develop, in their understanding of religious issues, would enable a more precise educational scheme to be established for the teaching of religious education. The present research sought to ascertain pupils' preferred interpretation of biblical passages and the findings of such research could aid in the structuring of a developmental programme of study for each of the Key Stages.

Research within the area of religious understanding has alerted educators to the range and diversity of factors to be considered, such as the emotions (Madge, 1971), verbal understanding (Elkind, 1964), life experiences (Hutesbaut, 2000), spiritual capacity (Hay and Nye, 1998), and religious affiliation (Smith, 1998). It is with just such factors and concepts that the SACREs have been grappling in their various attempts to establish teaching programmes for religious education. The extent of such programmes being developmental is uncertain.

Chapter three is concerned with a consideration of the attitudes held by pupils with regard to religious education and religious issues. Traditionally religion has been held in low regard by pupils (Lewis, 1913) with older male pupils holding less favourable attitudes than girls or younger pupils (Glassey, 1945). Links between the church and the pupils were considered, which gave mixed messages, with church attendance and some church schools aiding a more positive attitude. There was a more positive attitude in Catholic schools and in independent church schools, whereas, the Church of England voluntary controlled primary schools had a negative influence on pupils' attitudes to religion

(Francis, 1987a). This could possibly be linked to the influence of the home or that some church teaching is more unified.

The Church of England appears to be in a difficult and ambiguous position. It is very tolerant of a great variety of views and opinions on both the Bible and on the Church's teaching, as well as its method of presentation through its services. However, the Church itself is unlikely to introduce or expound alternative biblical interpretations to its congregations. Therefore, for the ordinary Christian the interpretation she or he is mostly likely to be subjected to is a literal one. For some this can lead to a distortion of the information through a lack of awareness. Those children too, who gain their biblical knowledge from Sunday schools are likely to establish a literal interpretation of the actions of Jesus, because this is how the information is presented. This may be because the instructor holds such a view, or perhaps because it is felt that primary age children are too young to appreciate different interpretations of biblical material. In turn this may result in some children rejecting the Bible's message when they find they can no longer accept such information literally. Such an approach by the Church of England has resulted in there being no clear structures for religious education. Therefore, biblical interpretation has been overlooked, which may in fact passively be supporting the previously taught or implied literal interpretation.

Other factors have been shown to be important influences upon pupil attitudes, including the strong influence parents hold. While pupils are developing cognitively and emotionally they are dependent upon their parents, in the sense that, it is from the parents that they gain their perspective on life which indicates their position in society and their

understanding of society. The need or desire to question that perspective would depend on a variety of people and events such as the individual, the parents, other adult influences, society, culture, tradition and current events. As society has become more secular, so the links with the established religious structures of the church and biblical teaching have weakened, and indeed may be regarded by some as a potential conflict area. Research has indicated that those who hold the most favourable attitudes to religious education are girls (Lewis and Francis, 1996), and those who are tender-minded conformists (Francis and Lewis, 1996). Such individuals show interest and concern for others within a structured environment following established patterns of behaviour.

The most favourable candidates for religious education are likely to be those who are willing to accept and abide by the biblical interpretation offered to them within the school environment. Such individuals might well feel anxious at the thought of questioning the 'truth' of the Bible. They are certainly more likely to follow the example of the adults known to them. If such pupils are introduced, within a structured programme, to the ideas and interpretations of other Christian believers then this would offer them the choice of continuing to hold onto their beliefs, either through literal or symbolic interpretation, rather than being faced with the possibility of having to reject them when the literal interpretation is no longer an adequate response for them.

Chapter four is concerned with symbolic interpretation. Full symbolic or metaphorical thinking takes place alongside full development of the formal operational stage of cognitive thinking (McGrady, 1994b), this does still allow for the symbolic interpretation of biblical material to be in a formative state of development before the formal

operational level is fully established. Hunt (1972a) was the first to pioneer research which considered the possibility of symbolic interpretation of religious issues. Van der Lans (1991) showed that those pupils who were more imaginative were also more likely to select symbolic interpretations of religious material.

The present research is concerned with ascertaining the extent of the various interpretations held by Key Stage 3 pupils, specifically literal, symbolic and rejection of biblical passages. Pupil reaction to religious education could not be entirely dependent on cognitive theories (Heimbrock, 1986), and experience is thought to be an important factor (Goldman, 1964; Nielsen, 1998). Experience, however, is an elusive element and measurement of such may be difficult. It might be that relevant synthetic experiences will need to be provided within the classroom situation in order to ensure pupil access.

Research needs to be used constructively to improve the position of religious education within the school, an awareness of pupil attitudes to religious education and religious issues once discovered should then be used to develop a programme of study which will lead to the pupils being able to make informed decisions.

Development of the questionnaire

The aim of the research is to ascertain whether pupils' understanding and attitudes change between Year 7 and Year 9, specifically in relation to their understanding of biblical passages, and their attitude to religion and religious education. A questionnaire was devised which was divided into three distinct sections. The first section was concerned with pupils' responses to biblical passages, in that they were to select one from a choice

of three interpretations. The second section was aimed at showing pupils' attitudes to a number of areas linked to religion and religious education. The third section built up a profile of pupils undertaking the questionnaire showing church attendance and religious affiliation of pupils and their parents, pupils' concept of God, prayer and reading the Bible, and their views on passing on the teachings of Jesus.

Assessing religious understanding

In the first draft of the first section of the questionnaire, seventeen stem statements were presented, all of which linked to biblical teaching. Thirteen linked directly with Jesus, one with angels, one with the existence of God, one with the existence of life after death, and one with the creation of the world. Each stem statement carried with it three different statements of interpretation; a literal and a symbolic interpretation, as well as the opportunity to reject the stem statement. These three statements of interpretation were presented in random order throughout the questionnaire to avoid an obvious pattern emerging, which might influence the pupils. The three interpretative statements were each preceded with the word 'Agree' or 'Disagree'. For example:

Jesus was invented by the early Christians:

Agree - Jesus did not exist

Disagree - Jesus is written about in early historical documents as well as in the Bible

Agree - The idea of Jesus as God was introduced by the early church

The questionnaire was then piloted with two Year 7 and two Year 9 pupils, in order to check that the layout and vocabulary used were clear. There were a number of linguistic problems where the pupils did not fully understand the statements and asked for clarification.

In draft two of the questionnaire two structural changes were made. First, a short biblical passage was added which linked to the three interpretative statements. Second, the words 'Agree' and 'Disagree' which preceded each interpretative statement, were changed to 'True' or 'False'. The reasons for these changes were that it was hoped that the biblical reference would help contextualise the interpretative statements, and it was thought 'True' and 'False' would bring a sharper focus to the choice to be made. Those statements which were shown to be in need of clarification in the first pilot study were amended in this second draft. An example of the layout being:

"This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk1v1)
The idea of Jesus as God, was invented by the early Christians:
True - they pretended that Jesus was superhuman
False - Jesus was part of God
True - The idea of Jesus as God was developed after Jesus' death

A second pilot study was then carried out with three pupils in Year 7. Pupils felt that there was too much reading involved, which they found confusing. The layout had become cumbersome which led to part of the stem statement, which linked the biblical passage to the three interpretive statements, being removed in draft three. The instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire stated that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, therefore it was felt inappropriate to include the words 'True' and 'False' before the statements. In addition some slight readjustment to the wording became necessary. An example being:

"This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk1v1)
The early Christians pretended that Jesus was superhuman
Jesus was really a part of God
The idea of Jesus as God was developed after Jesus' death

It was then decided to expand this section from seventeen to forty items. The forty items

were divided into two sections, part A and part B. Part A consisted of sixteen of the original seventeen biblical passages, each with their three interpretative statements and an additional four items were selected, three taken from the Gospels and one from the Old Testament. Thus there were twenty items in part A. Part B was also to assess the religious understanding of pupils following a very similar format, with twenty biblical passages each with three interpretative statements. The difference being that these three interpretative statements always followed the same order of presentation as well as the same format of wording. For example:

“They (wise men) brought our their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and presented them to him” (Mt2v11)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning

There were twelve biblical passages taken from the Gospels, two from the Acts of the Apostles, and six from the Old Testament. Draft four consisted of further refinement of the interpretative statements within part A. A pilot of this fourth draft of the questionnaire was then carried out with 105 pupils in Year 7. The layout and the vocabulary in both parts A and B were clear.

Reliability analysis was then carried out on the two parts A and B. The first set of items (part A) showed weaknesses within the choice for the symbolic responses. Nine of the symbolic statements failed to work well empirically, and these were removed. The second set of items (part B) which employed the same three responses after the biblical passage, worked well empirically. Nine items which gained high alpha coefficients were selected. This resulted in eleven items being selected to form part A of the questionnaire,

and nine items in part B (draft five).

After the questionnaire data had been processed, two of the items in part A showed weaknesses in the symbolic responses, and it was decided to remove these items which resulted in there being a total of eighteen items, nine items in both parts A and B.

Assessing religious attitudes

Section two of the questionnaire contained statements designed to ascertain pupil attitude to religion and religious education. They were presented in a Likert style format with a five point scale ranging from Agree Strongly, through Agree, Not Sure, and Disagree to Disagree Strongly. The areas covered were: attitude to religious education, attitude to the content of religious education, attitude to assembly and festivals, attitude to Christianity, Church and Bible, attitude to faith and affiliation, attitude to prayer, attitude to forgiveness, and attitude to religious education teachers. A small pilot study was carried out with two Year 7 and two Year 9 pupils, to assess how well they would be able to cope with the vocabulary and the layout.

The first draft contained sixty two statements and the second draft contained seventy five statements, the actual eight areas covered remained the same but with some statement alterations and additions. In draft one the area 'attitude to religious education' had ten statements, and the area 'attitude to content of religious education' had thirteen statements, each area remained unaltered in draft two. The third area of 'attitude to assembly and festivals' had seven statements in draft one, the statement "I do not celebrate Christian festivals as religious events" was changed to "I celebrate Christmas as

a religious event". The alteration made the response specific to one religious event rather than a general one, the statement was then moved from 'attitude to assembly and festivals' into the area 'attitude to faith and affiliation' in draft two. The area 'attitude to Christianity, Church and Bible' had eleven statements, two statements were removed from section two and placed in section three in draft two in order to make the statement group more detailed. The fifth area of 'attitude to faith and affiliation' had five statements in draft one, and was expanded to six statements in draft two as already explained.

The area 'attitude to prayer' had three statements in the first draft, one statement was transferred to section three in order to ask more detailed questions. There were ten extra statements included for draft two, making a total of twelve statements in this area. The seventh area 'attitude to forgiveness' contained two statements in the first draft, and this was expanded to a total of eight statements in draft two. The final area 'attitude to religious education teachers' had seven statements which remained unaltered in draft two. The addition of extra statements necessitated a slight reorganisation of the layout in the second draft. There were also a few minor alterations in the statement formats, for example in the first draft the statement read "RE could help in going on to study A levels" and in the second draft it read "I would like to take RE as an A level subject". This introduced a subjective element which would elicit a more personal and precise response. The second draft was then successfully piloted with three Year 7 pupils.

Assessing pupil profiles

Section three of the questionnaire contained a variety of questions and the topics covered

were: pupil perception of recent religious education teachers, practical methods of teaching, resources, teaching of Christianity, and religious affiliation. Two small pilot studies were carried out with four and three pupils respectively, as with section two of the questionnaire. Slight changes to the layout and some additional questions were included in draft two after the first pilot had been carried out.

Section three also contained a variety of statements and the areas covered in the data were: pupils' church attendance and guardians' church attendance, religious affiliation, concept of God, and Jesus' teaching. A small pilot study of draft one was carried out with two Year 7 and two Year 9 pupils. The first two areas remained unaltered in draft two. The third area in draft one, "concept of God", had five statements which were increased to seven statements in draft two. The final area in draft one had three parts, two of these parts linked to Jesus' teaching and they remained the same in draft two, but one part which linked to the question "Did you learn about Jesus at any of the following?" was removed in draft two.

Draft two also contained statements transferred from section two of the questionnaire into section three, and this area was called 'prayer and Bible reading'. Draft two was piloted successfully with three Year 7 pupils. The data for section three of the questionnaire are shown later in the chapter. Table 5.2 shows the percentage results of pupils attending church as well as the frequency with which guardians attended. The aim was to clearly categorise responses which would then indicate specific differences, or similarities, between the three parts of this area. Table 5.3 shows the religious affiliation of pupils and lists Christian denominations and world religions, the aim was to acquire information

which could then be linked with other responses within the questionnaire. Table 5.4 indicates the frequency with which pupils prayed alone or read the Bible alone. Within the second section of the questionnaire pupils had been asked a series of questions to find out the reason that they prayed and read the Bible. The aim of this area was to find out the amount of personal commitment held by pupils to both prayer and the Bible. Table 5.5 shows how pupils prefer to think of God, the aim was to see if pupils thought of God in anthropomorphic terms or not. Table 5.6 indicates how pupils responded to the teaching of Jesus being taught to younger children.

Distribution of the questionnaire

Pupils were drawn from eighteen secondary schools, nine in Warwickshire and nine in Shropshire. Of the Warwickshire schools one was a voluntary aided Church of England school, one was a voluntary aided Catholic school, two were selective grammar schools, and the remaining five being non-denominational secondary modern schools. The schools in Shropshire were all mixed non-selective state maintained, one was a voluntary controlled Church of England school and the remainder were non-denominational. The title of the questionnaire being "The ideas of young people about religion and RE", the instructions stressed that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers but asked the pupils to be honest and give their own personal views. The questionnaires were administered by religious education teachers, within the schools, emphasising confidentiality and anonymity. Year 7 pupils answered the questionnaire during their first term in secondary school, that is, at the beginning of Key Stage 3. Year 9 pupils answered them during their final term in Year 9, that is, at the end of Key Stage 3. A total of 3,412 pupils took part in the survey, 54.5% of the pupils were in Year 7 and 45.5% in Year 9. Just over half of the

pupils were boys (51.5%) and 48.5% were girls. The schools that took part in the survey are displayed in Table 5.1:

TABLE 5.1: Schools participating in the survey

NAME OF SCHOOL	TYPE OF SCHOOL
WARWICKSHIRE	
Southam School	Secondary Modern, mixed
Bilton High School	Secondary Modern, mixed
Bishop Wulstan Catholic School	Secondary Modern, mixed
Harris C of E Voluntary Aided School	Secondary Modern, mixed
Lawrence Sheriff School	Grammar, boys
Kineton High School	Secondary Modern, mixed
Alcester High School	Secondary Modern, mixed
Alcester Grammar School	Grammar, mixed
Stratford upon Avon High School	Secondary Modern, mixed
SHROPSHIRE	
The Marches School	Comprehensive, mixed
Church Stretton School	Comprehensive, mixed
Belvidere School	Comprehensive, mixed
Sundorne School	Comprehensive, mixed
Meole Brace School	Comprehensive, mixed
William Brookes School	Comprehensive, mixed
Ludlow C of E Voluntary Controlled School	Comprehensive, mixed
Oldbury Wells School	Comprehensive, mixed
Bishops Castle Community School	Comprehensive, mixed

Profile of pupils undertaking the survey

The present research has considered both pupil understanding of religion and religious issues, and attitudes to religion. This has been an attempt to clarify and understand how pupils regard the biblical message, as well as to understand their attitude to both religious education and religion. Both of these sections show the current stage of pupil thinking, but it is also necessary to consider how the pupils have reached such decisions. A section of the questionnaire was therefore devised in order to consider a number of factors which may influence the pupils' responses within the first two sections of the questionnaire. Research has shown that factors, such as the home environment and religious affiliation, have a strong influence on pupils' views. The first factor that was thought likely to influence pupils was whether they or their parents attended church. Research has indicated that pupils have a more positive attitude to religious education when there is a more positive attitude towards religious beliefs (Francis and Lewis, 1996). The second factor considered was that of personal faith commitment by the pupils. This was based on their own perception of the strength of their beliefs and commitment. Unlike other school curriculum subjects, the pupils' views of religious education are greatly influenced by their subjective responses to religion, rather than an objective view of its importance as an educational subject (Francis and Lewis, 1996). The third factor, linking with religious affiliation, was individual prayer and reading of the Bible. The fourth factor attempted to discover pupils' image of God, whether they felt people could have a personal relationship with God, whether God was an impersonal force or whether they agreed with the traditional role of God as the Father of Jesus. The fifth factor was to consider pupils' views on whether Jesus' teachings on miracles, and on behaviour, should be taught to younger children. If the pupils rejected outright, the validity of passing on such

teachings, then this would reinforce their overall negative attitude to religious education. If, however, they should support the passing on of Jesus' teachings then this would add an interesting and significant dimension to the data being accumulated on pupil responses to religious education.

Some researchers have maintained that experience plays a very important part in pupils' appreciation of religious issues. Further research is required to pinpoint what such experience entails. Important aspects are the experience gained by the pupils in their association with adults, and developing an appreciation of their own values and attitudes to religion and related issues.

Church attendance: pupils and guardians

An important statement within this section is "I go to church or other place of worship", and 11% of the full cohort stated that they went to a place of worship at least once a month.

TABLE 5.2: Church attendance: pupils and guardians

	%
I go to church or other place of worship:	
nearly every week	7
at least once a month	4
sometimes	17
once or twice a year	20
less than once a year	14
never	37
My mother/female guardian attends a Christian place of worship:	
nearly every week	9
at least once a month	4
sometimes	11
once or twice a year	11
less than once a year	6
never	41
don't know	18
My father/male guardian attends a Christian place of worship:	
nearly every week	6
at least once a month	2
sometimes	8
once or twice a year	9
less than once year	7
never	48
don't know	21

Mothers (or female guardians) attended a place of worship more frequently than did pupils, 13% going at least once a month. With 8% of fathers (or male guardians) attending a place of worship at least once a month. The percentage of those never going to a place of worship were: pupils 37%, female guardians 41%, and male guardians 48%. These results show that the pupils reflected the attendance behaviour of their female guardians more closely than that of the male guardians.

Religious affiliation

More pupils had been confirmed or admitted into adult membership of a church (15%) than had chosen to attend church at least once a month (11%). However, 17% did sometimes attend a place of worship.

TABLE 5.3: Religious affiliation

	%
Have you been confirmed or admitted to adult membership of a church?	15
I belong to the following religious group:	
Anglican/Church of England	30
Roman Catholic	6
Baptist	2
Methodist	2
Jehovah's Witnesses	1
Salvation Army	0
Society of Friends	0
United Reform Church	0
Buddhist	1
Hindu	1
Jewish	0
Muslim	1
Sikh	0
Other	5
none	35
don't know	17

There were 30% of pupils stating that they were Anglican (all other groups being represented by less than 10%), and 35% stating that they were of no religion, and 17% not knowing if they belonged to any religious group.

Prayer and reading the Bible

There was some similarity between the percentage of pupils who regularly attended church (11%) and those who prayed by themselves at least once a week (15%).

TABLE 5.4: Prayer and reading the Bible

	%
I pray by myself:	
nearly every day	8
at least once a week	7
at least once a month	5
occasionally	39
never	41
I read the Bible myself:	
nearly every day	2
at least once a week	3
at least once a month	3
occasionally	25
never	67

There was a close link too between those who prayed by themselves at least once a week (15%), and those who had taken up adult membership of a church (15%). However, 41% said that they never prayed which was a similar figure to those who said that they never went to a place of worship (37%). There was an even greater percentage of pupils who said that they never read the Bible (67%), and only 5% saying that they read it at least once a week.

Concept of God

Traditional forms of worship such as church attendance, Bible reading and prayer were not followed by pupils, but nevertheless they favoured the more established and traditional forms used to refer to God.

TABLE 5.5: Concept of God

	%
Do you find it helpful to refer to God as:	
a person who loves us	57
a spirit	55
an external force	34
the creator	53
the power	43
the Father of Jesus	57
other	29

There were 57% of pupils who thought of God as “a person who loves us”; 55% thought in terms of a spirit; 53% referred to God as creator; and 57% referred to God as “the Father of Jesus”. Fewer, although still a substantial number, referred to God as “the power” (43%) and “an external force” (34%).

Jesus' teaching

Church attendance by pupils was low (11% attending at least once a month) but they nevertheless thought that the teachings of Jesus should be passed on to younger children.

TABLE 5.6: Jesus' teaching

	%
Children should learn about Jesus' nature miracles and healing miracles when they are:	
under 7 years old	42
between 7 and 10	68
over 10	70
Children should learn about Jesus' teaching on how to behave when they are:	
under 7 years old	62
between 7 and 10	71
over 10	64

Pupils in Key Stage 3 thought that the best age to teach about Jesus' nature and healing miracles was over the age of ten (70%); almost as many pupils thought that over seven was a suitable age (68%), but only 42% thought nature and healing miracles should be taught to children under the age of seven. The pupils thought that younger children should learn about Jesus' teaching on how to behave, with most (71%) thinking between the ages of seven and ten being most suitable. Those advocating over the age of ten were 64%, and a similar figure (62%) thought that it would be suitable material for the under sevens.

The data show that pupils continue to value the Bible, in that they feel that there is a need for the teachings of Jesus and the miracle stories. A belief in God is also evident as shown in the range of terms used to refer to Him. Those references which indicate a belief in an anthropomorphic God with attributes similar to those of humans were "a person who loves us" (57%) and "the Father of Jesus" (57%), with over half of the pupils in favour of such interpretation. Reference to a more spiritual God when using terms

common within Christianity, that is a spirit and the creator, also scored well with over half of the pupils in favour of such interpretations. Those terms which were less familiar gained lower scores. Pupils though, are rejecting traditional forms of prayer and worship.

Conclusion

This chapter pulls together a variety of elements and explains the part each plays in the formation of a measurement instrument concerned with interpretation of biblical passages. The various aims of religious education indicate that those concerned with establishing a curriculum for religious education within schools found themselves in a difficult position. They were attempting to explain the importance of religion, for believers, to pupils who were becoming increasingly secular in their outlook. This present research into symbolic understanding attempts to aid this explanation.

Pupils' attitudes to religious education, unlike other curriculum subjects, are greatly influenced by external factors such as; school (Francis and Egan, 1987 and 1990), church (Hyde, 1965) and home (Turner, 1980) playing important roles. Individual personality and the influence of adults on the pupils are also important (Kay, Francis and Gibson, 1996). No other curriculum subject relies so heavily upon experience gained from the social environment as does religious education.

“Attitude towards religious education is part and parcel of the adolescent's world-view, involving such disparate but crucial areas as personal wellbeing, worries and anxieties, school and work, religious beliefs, political and social concerns, sexual morality, and attitudes towards right and wrong.” (Francis and Lewis, 1996:242).

The profile of the pupils, outlined within this present research, is formed by their

responses to some of these external factors.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA SHOWING UNDERSTANDING OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES

Summary

Introduction

The Questionnaire

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Of what value is this research?

Summary

As indicated in earlier chapters, research has suggested that as pupils mature in age they do not always reassess their earlier religious ideas. Thus there is a rejection of religious matter, and development of religious understanding does not take place. It has been suggested that younger children interpreted biblical passages in a literal manner, and that many did not move from this stance except in rejection of it.

The present study builds on research already carried out, by looking at reasons why adolescents often seem to adopt a negative attitude towards religious education in school.

A questionnaire was devised in order to ascertain pupil interpretation of biblical passages. A total of 3,412 pupils took part in the survey, with 54.5% being Year 7 pupils and 45.5% being Year 9 pupils. They attended a variety of state schools in Warwickshire and Shropshire, and were asked to indicate their preferred interpretation of biblical statements and texts. The results reveal that there was a reduction in literal responses and an increase in both symbolic and rejection responses between Year 7 and Year 9. It is also shown that boys favoured all three interpretations equally, whereas girls favoured literal and symbolic over rejection.

Introduction

Goldman, following the developmental stages formulated by Piaget, was concerned that as young people moved into the formal operational thinking stage at about the age of thirteen so their attitudes to religion became more negative. Goldman stated (1964:240) "there is a later tendency to see much previous teaching as "childish" and to reject it at

that level because the authoritarian literalism of the Junior child is unacceptable...". Goldman's theory indicated that there would be an increase in pupils rejecting biblical stories and teachings at the end of Key Stage 3, that is aged thirteen to fourteen.

As discussed more fully in chapter four, Hunt's LAM Scales (1972a) tried to provide a wider dimension with paper-and-pencil measures in showing respondents' interpretation of doctrines and practices. Rather than simply offering 'agree or disagree' options, LAM Scales (Literal, Anti-literal, Mythological) were developed. The aim was to provide for three commitment possibilities, thus allowing the respondent who has a less literal but nevertheless religious perspective, to avoid being categorised as less religious than those holding strong literal views. The LAM Scales therefore, indicated a method of research which could provide independent scores for literal and symbolic interpretations of religion, and in addition a measure of the rejection of religion.

Within this present study a questionnaire was devised to provide an objective and reliable measure of biblical interpretation, which when applied to pupils of different ages could indicate their preferred style of interpretation.

Cousins and Eastman (1969:15) maintained that "By removing misconceptions and by positive teaching, religious education should have made it possible for the pupil to judge Christian claims objectively." McGrady (1994a) disagreed with Goldman's idea that biblical material should be restricted until formal operational thinking was established. McGrady held that pupils were able to think metaphorically before this stage; therefore, he advocated developing their metaphorical capabilities in readiness of early formal

operations. Astley and Francis (1996) showed that when undertaking a taught 'A' level course the student's own personal beliefs were influenced by the study of the academic subject matter.

The implication here is that if the questionnaire in this present study showed that pupils did reject Bible teaching as they moved through the Key Stage, then an emphasis on the teaching of symbolic awareness could help pupils develop a more abstract level of thinking.

There appears to be very little guidance given within local Agreed Syllabuses to help teachers of religious education. This might be welcomed by many as it allows freedom of choice but perhaps leaving others at a disadvantage, not least the non-specialist both in the secondary and primary sectors. Walshe and Copley (2001:36) found, when looking at Key Stage 1 within twenty four Agreed Syllabuses, that “.. even when a syllabus did specify a particular event or passage it gave no guidance as to how that passage should or could be used in the classroom situation.”

Religious education tends to fall into two main categories, that of 'learning about religion', and that of 'learning from religion'. 'Learning about religion' is, to a large extent, shared between the primary and secondary sectors. This deals primarily with factual information about religious practices and places of worship. 'Learning from religion' also has some ground common to both the secondary and primary schools, particularly where religious teaching influences the behaviour of believers, for example, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Other aspects of learning from religion include moral

or ethical issues, which although they may not be directly referred to in religious writings, nevertheless link with the underlying principles of ethical codes. Another major factor is that of religious teachings, both their message and influence. These last two sections of ethics and of religious teachings are more deeply rooted in the secondary school than in the primary. It is with religious teachings that this present research is more closely linked.

Some, although by no means all, pupils arrive at secondary school in Year 7 knowing some Bible stories. The question being whether a rejection of these Bible stories leads to a rejection of Christian teaching and of religious education. A questionnaire was devised which was to be administered to Year 7 pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 3, and also to Year 9 pupils at the end of Key Stage 3. If Goldman's theory was correct then there ought to be movement from concrete thinking in Year 7 to more abstract thinking in Year 9. In addition according to more recent research, such as Lewis and Francis (1996) there are differences between the genders in their attitude to religion, would this also be reflected in their interpretation of biblical writings?

The Questionnaire

A total of 3,412 Key Stage 3 pupils took part in the survey. Pupils were drawn from eighteen secondary schools, nine in Warwickshire and nine in Shropshire. The questionnaires were administered by religious education teachers within the schools, emphasising confidentiality and anonymity. Year 7 answered the questionnaires during their first term in Key Stage 3, and Year 9 answered them during their final term in Key Stage 3.

How the scales were developed

The overall intention was to develop an instrument which would indicate whether pupils favoured literal, rejectionist or symbolic interpretations of Bible passages. Using the Good News Bible eighteen short passages were selected from the Gospels, which would present a general picture of Jesus. The intention was to link the passages to a small number of important Christian concepts, namely those of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, the birth and death of Jesus, and Angels. These concepts were randomly presented in an attempt to encourage the pupils to respond to each independently.

Following each of the biblical passages three statements were given; they represented a literal response, a symbolic response and a rejection response. Pupils were asked to select one response which best described their own belief concerning each of the eighteen biblical passages. The format of the responses to the eighteen passages was presented in two different ways. The first nine passages were followed by individual statements presented in random order to ensure that an obvious pattern did not emerge. The second group of nine biblical passages was followed by a fixed formula, with the wording and layout being identical in each of the nine cases.

How do pupils interpret biblical passages?

Table 6.1 lists the Bible passages followed by the literal, rejection and symbolic statements. The full cohort of pupils answering the questionnaire was 3,412 and the responses to each statement are shown as a percentage of this total.

TABLE 6.1: How pupils interpret biblical passages

	%
“He really was the Son of God!” (Mt27v54)	
Jesus was really the son of God	44
Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else and certainly not God	20
Jesus was a person with an extra special relationship with God	36
“Jesus went to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, the man he had raised from death” (Jn12v1)	
Jesus really brought people back from the dead	29
The writer of the story wanted to show Jesus had power in this world and the next	33
Nobody can give life to a dead person	38
“Suddenly a strong wind blew up, and the waves began to spill over into the boat, so that it was about to fill with water. ‘Be quiet!’ and he said to the waves ‘Be still!’ (Mk4v37,39)	
The miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened	28
Although not factually correct, the miracles are interpretations of events	47
Miracles cannot happen, since they go against scientific laws of nature	25
“he (Joseph) had no sexual relations with her (Mary) before she gave birth to her son” (Mt1v24)	
Mary really was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	32
Saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary’s purity and the importance of Jesus	26
Mary could not have been a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	42
“When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened’” (Lk2v15)	
The shepherds were working nearby and the angels told them what had happened	53
The writer was trying to show that Jesus would be especially close to the poor	32
The shepherds were working and not interested in a baby being born	15

After Jesus' crucifixion "the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors ...Then Jesus came and stood among them" (Jn20v19)

Jesus came back to life and appeared to his disciples in a physical form	30
Jesus' followers felt he had communicated with them in a spiritual way after his death	46
Jesus had been fully human and after he died he could not communicate with anyone	23

"As he (Jesus) was blessing them, he departed from them and was taken up into heaven" (Lk24v51)

This could not happen as heaven does not exist	17
Jesus' body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven	47
The writer wanted to show the disciples felt that Jesus would live on in power and glory	36

"An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right of the altar where the incense was burnt" (Lk1v11)

Angels exist and are messengers of God	34
There is no scientific evidence for the existence of angels	43
The writer wanted to show how God uses angels to communicate with people	23

"Then the three disciples saw Moses and Elijah (important Jewish leaders who had died) talking with Jesus." (Mt17v3)

This was impossible as they had died years before	35
This was to show that Jesus was as important as Moses and Elijah	38
This actually happened through the power of God	27

"Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill these jars with water. Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast.' They took him the water, which now had turned into wine" (Jn2v8-9)

This actually happened as described in the Bible	33
These events did not happen	27
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	40

Jesus "broke the (5) loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people" (about 5000 of them). Everyone ate and had enough. (Mt14v19-20)

This actually happened as described in the Bible	37
These events did not happen	27
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	36

“They (wise men) brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.” (Mt2v11)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	53
These events did not happen	18
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	30
“Between three and six o’clock in the morning Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water.” (Mt14v25)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	30
These events did not happen	35
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	34
“‘Drink it (the wine), all of you,’ he said; ‘this is my blood, which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” (Mt2v27-28)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	42
These events did not happen	24
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	35
After Jesus died “the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” (Mt27v51)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	39
These events did not happen	28
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	34
“Suddenly there was a violent earthquake; an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled the stone away, and sat on it.” (Mt28v2)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	28
These events did not happen	40
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	32
Jesus went “into the desert, where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was hungry when it was over.” (Lk4v2)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	36
These events did not happen	33
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	31
Jesus said to Simon “... let down your (fishing) nets for a catch.’ ...Simon answered ‘we worked hard all night long and caught nothing.’ ... They let them down and caught such a large number of fish that the nets were about to break.” (Lk5v4-5)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	41
These events did not happen	24
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	35

Literal responses were selected by between 53% and 27%. For example, almost half (47%) believed that Jesus' body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven at the Ascension. Almost one third (32%) believed that Mary was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus.

The data show that the Rejection responses were selected by between 43% and 15%. For example, just over one third (38%) believed that nobody can give life to a dead person (in response to the raising of Lazarus). One fifth (20%) believed that Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else and certainly not God.

The Symbolic responses as indicated in the data were selected by between 47% and 23%. For example, just over one third (36%) believed that Jesus was a person with an extra special relationship with God. Just over a quarter (26%) believed that saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary's purity and the importance of Jesus.

The biblical passages were selected with the intention that they would be able to offer literal and symbolic interpretations. However, no research has been carried out to find out if pupils understand these passages, whether they had heard of them before or whether such passages have any influence or offer any help in the completion of the questionnaire. The Bible passages were all short extracts with the overall intention being to provide a setting for the concept under consideration. By providing long Bible passages it was felt that the pupils would be deflected from a more thoughtful consideration of the responses. The research was restricted to Christianity in this first instance in order to maintain clarity and a workable scale. This avoided the question of the theological acceptance of

symbolism within other religions.

Consideration of items, grouped under concepts

Concept: Jesus

Item one “He really was the Son of God!” (Mt27v54)

The concept of Jesus as being part of the Trinity is central to mainstream Christianity. I was interested in seeing how pupils reconciled traditional Trinitarian teaching with the idea of an historical and fully human Jesus. Another factor for consideration was their understanding of the importance of Jesus’ relationship with God.

All three responses used the name of Jesus, this was necessary as the name had not been given in the Bible passage. The literal response (Jesus was really the son of God) used a small ‘s’ for the word son, this was done to take the emphasis away from the phrase as a title and direct it more toward the idea that Jesus was actually begotten of God. Perhaps the word ‘child’ or ‘offspring’ could have been used, although ‘offspring’ being old-fashioned may have caused problems of its own. Another possibility would be to rephrase the response to: Jesus was God in human form, which may be a clearer format. The rejection response (Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else and certainly not God) tried to convey the idea of a human Jesus but not a unique, special and different sort of human. His was a humanity available to all, Jesus was not seen as starting from a special and privileged position in his quest for God. In order to emphasise that Jesus was not God in human form this point was included in the response. It is recognised that such an emphatic statement might encourage non-believers to opt for this response.

The symbolic response (Jesus was a person with an extra special relationship with God) presented Jesus as human and not God, but as one who could pass on teaching about God because of his own relationship with Him. This relationship was not presented as unique to Jesus, thus implying that such a relationship could be for all. Alternatively the symbolic response could have been linked to the author and his desire to portray Jesus in a particular manner. For example, the writer wanted to show that Jesus had an extra special relationship with God.

There is perhaps a need for a greater difference between the rejection and symbolic responses. The emphasis with the symbolic response is on the concept of relationship and by adding 'certainly not God' to the rejection response it was felt that sufficient differentiation had been offered. Alternatively the rejection response could have simply stated that there is no God and therefore Jesus could have no relationship with or be part of a non-existent God. This option of 'no God' was not given primarily because I did not want to set the scene for a complete denial of any recognition or understanding of the Bible passages. My concern was not to ascertain whether the pupils were believers or not per se at this stage, but rather to discover their understanding of selected Christian writings and concepts. Therefore, I wanted to encourage them to consider each Bible passage separately. The Bible passage and the wording of the responses to act as aids in helping the pupil to select the most appropriate response in each case.

Item two "Jesus went to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, the man he had raised from death" (Jn12v1)

Although pupils may not be conversant with this story it was felt that the short Bible

passage was sufficiently clear and precise. This Bible passage was chosen in order to explore the concept of resurrection and the power of Jesus, as well as life in this world and the next.

The literal response (Jesus really brought people back from the dead) carried conviction by using the emphasis of 'really' and presented the statement in a clear way by changing the more old-fashioned 'raised from death' to 'back from the dead'. The emphasis is clearly on the physical here and now. The rejection response (nobody can give life to a dead person) was again short and clear, the phrase 'back to life' was avoided as it may have been associated with near-death experiences and thus introduce further implications which would be beyond the scope of this questionnaire. The symbolic response (the writer of the story wanted to show Jesus had power in this world and the next) contains a number of points which link with a super-figure who can over-ride natural phenomena, and has both contact and control with an after-life. Sympathy with any one of these points might encourage pupils to support the symbolic response. Alternatively, there might be just too much to cope with here, and a single link with spirituality might serve better.

Item nine "Then the three disciples saw Moses and Elijah (important Jewish leaders who had died) talking with Jesus." (Mt17v3)

Although it was suspected that many pupils would not know this event of the Transfiguration, it is nevertheless an important piece in the overall picture of Jesus. In order to try to clarify the story more information was inserted than had been the case with the other Bible passages. All three responses were clear and no reference was made to

the appearance of Jesus as it was thought this would prove a distraction. The literal response being, this actually happened through the power of God; the rejection response being, this was impossible as they had died years before. The symbolic response being, this was to show that Jesus was as important as Moses and Elijah.

Item fourteen “‘Drink it (the wine), all of you,’ he said; ‘this is my blood, which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” (Mt2v27-28)

Item seventeen Jesus went “into the desert, where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was hungry when it was over.” (Lk4v2)

Both of items fourteen and seventeen were given standardised responses, and it was considered that the Bible passages themselves were clear. The three responses were the literal response (this actually happened as described in the Bible), rejection response (these events did not happen), and symbolic response (the events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning). The responses were presented in this sequence for each item.

Concept: Miracles of Jesus

Item three “Suddenly a strong wind blew up, and the waves began to spill over into the boat, so that it was about to fill with water. Jesus stood up and commanded the wind, ‘Be quiet!’ and he said to the waves ‘Be still!’” (Mk4v37,39)

The concern here was to explore pupils’ perceptions of miracles. Nature miracles were selected rather than healing miracles because pupils often hold a less clear position

regarding healing, being influenced by awareness of increasing medical knowledge and practices such as faith healing. The literal response (the miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened) was short and clear, and as with the other responses in this item, it did not actually limit the response to any type of miracle. The rejection response (miracles cannot happen, since they go against scientific laws of nature) could perhaps have been left at 'miracles cannot happen' without any qualifying statement being required. The symbolic response (although not factually correct, the miracles are interpretations of events) could be reduced to the second part only. However, the two parts do make a strong and definite statement.

Item ten "Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill these jars with water. Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast.' They took him the water, which now had turned into wine" (Jn2v8-9)

Item eleven Jesus "broke the (5) loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people" (about 5000 of them). Everyone ate and had enough." (Mt14v19-20)

Item thirteen "Between three and six o'clock in the morning Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water." (Mt14v25)

Item eighteen Jesus said to Simon "'..let down your fishing nets for a catch.' ..Simon answered 'we worked hard all night long and caught nothing.' ..They let them down and caught such a large number of fish that the nets were about to break." (Lk5v4-5)

Each of these four items is concerned with nature miracles and each takes the standardised response format. By having four items following an identical format it

should be easier to compare results. In addition a comparison will be possible with the one item within the non-standardised responses.

Concept: Birth of Jesus

Item four “he (Joseph) had no sexual relations with her (Mary) before she gave birth to her son” (Mt1v24)

The story of the virgin birth is probably the most well known of the stories about Jesus, and adolescents generally show greater interest in the debate than they do in other Christian concerns. The Bible passage does not mention the word ‘virgin’ which is used in each of the three responses, and perhaps its meaning should be clarified. The three responses here all appear clear. The literal response being, Mary really was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus; the rejection response being, Mary could not have been a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus. The symbolic response being, saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary’s purity and the importance of Jesus.

Item twelve “They (wise men) brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.” (Mt2v11)

A well known story with the responses presented in the standardised format. This will allow for comparison with the non-standardised responses.

Concept: (i) Birth (ii) Angels

Item five “When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened” (Lk2v15)

This Bible passage is presenting a well known story that for many will have been enacted or read in school nativity plays over a number of years. The literal response (the shepherds were working nearby and the angels told them what had happened) could perhaps have been improved by actually stating that the event was the birth of Jesus. The rejection response (the shepherds were working and not interested in a baby being born) does link directly with Jesus' birth but the response does not allow for the event not to have happened. Working on the assumption that Jesus as an historical person did exist, then he was obviously born but this response does not separate a natural birth from the attending angels phenomena. A better response would have been "Jesus' birth was an ordinary event, and of no concern to the local shepherds". The symbolic response (the writer was trying to show that Jesus would be especially close to the poor) attempts to link Jesus' birth with the Christian ideal of concern for the needy, but whether shepherds are recognised in our society as representing the poor and needy is not clear. Thus, selection of the symbolic response may depend on specific taught knowledge more than do the other responses of literal interpretation and rejection.

Concept: Angels

Item eight "An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right of the altar where the incense was burnt" (Lk1v11)

Although Zechariah's name or his position as John's father could have been inserted either in the Bible passage or in the responses, it was not because it was felt that as most pupils would not recognise it then it might become a distraction. The main concern was to discover the pupils' responses to the concept of angels. The literal response (angels exist and are messengers of God), although making a very definite statement also

qualifies it with an additional section which is perhaps unnecessary. The rejection response (there is no scientific evidence for the existence of angels) is potentially misleading as pupils may agree with the fact of no available scientific data but may not agree that this therefore proves angels do not exist, which is the implied assumption. Thus, this may not render quite the clear result required. The symbolic response (the writer wanted to show how God uses angels to communicate with people) again lacks clarity. The phrase 'the writer wanted to show' is a device engaged in order to attempt to introduce some impartiality or distance between the pupil and the intended biblical message. Thus, the pupil does not have to agree with the said symbolic interpretation but merely recognises that the author understands the event in such a way. It would perhaps have been more clear to say 'the writer wanted to show that God communicated with people', this would of course, omit the reference to angels which in turn would undervalue the Jewish concept of God.

Concept: Death of Jesus

Item six After Jesus' crucifixion "the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors ...Then Jesus came and stood among them" (Jn20v19)

A key event for the Church but a lesser known event to many pupils. The responses need to be able to offer some realistic choices even if the precise biblical event referred to is not well known. The information given here is detailed and clear, as are each of the responses. The literal response being, Jesus came back to life and appeared to his disciples in a physical form; the rejection response being, Jesus had been fully human and after he died he could not communicate with anyone. The symbolic response being, Jesus' followers felt he had communicated with them in a spiritual way after his death.

Item seven “As he (Jesus) was blessing them, he departed from them and was taken up into heaven” (Lk24v51)

There is some lack of clarity here as two points are intermingled, that of a physical Jesus leaving the disciples and the concept of heaven. The literal response (Jesus’ body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven) requires an acceptance of a bodily resurrection and afterlife. The rejection response (this could not happen as heaven does not exist) also deals with the two points of Jesus in a bodily state, leaving his followers and rising to heaven. Thus, the response does not show clearly which point is being rejected. The symbolic response (the writer wanted to show the disciples felt that Jesus would live on in power and glory) emphasises both the author’s intent and the emotional state and purpose of the disciples. Thus, the response reflects a more objective choice.

Item fifteen After Jesus died “the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” (Mt27v51)

A clear but probably lesser known Bible passage, the responses following the standardised response format. It will allow the possibility of comparison with non-standardised responses.

Concept: (i) Death (ii) Angels

Item sixteen “Suddenly there was a violent earthquake; an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled the stone away, and sat on it.” (Mt28v2)

A clear account linking both with Jesus’ death and with the existence of angels. The responses following the standardised response format and so it will be possible to

compare results with non-standardised responses.

How do the responses correlate?

As stated earlier in the chapter, the format of the questionnaire responses to the eighteen biblical passages was presented in two different ways. The concern with the first set was that the individual statements might not be equally objective. The concern with the second set was that pupils would simply select one interpretation for the whole set, without reference to the Gospel passages under consideration. Thus, it was decided that both formats be used allowing comparison of methodology.

As each of the three scales contains two distinct styles of responses, Tables 6.2-6.7 present the correlation levels for each style separately, thus comparing the range of correlation for each style of response and ascertaining whether the pupils responded differently when selecting interpretations from the two format styles.

TABLE 6.2: Literal Interpretation: individual statements

Item	r
Jesus was really the son of God	0.5531
Jesus really brought people back from the dead	0.5990
The miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened	0.6767
Mary really was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	0.5648
The shepherds were working nearby and the angels told them what had happened	0.6357
Jesus came back to life and appeared to his disciples in a physical form	0.5981
Jesus' body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven	0.5684
Angels exist and are messengers of God	0.6397
This actually happened through the power of God	0.5679

Table 6.2 shows the responses to the first set of nine Literal interpretations, which are each presented in the form of an individual statement. Correlation reliability of the eighteen interpretations was carried out, and the nine individual statement responses are shown to be either 0.7 or 0.6. This was a good correlation level.

TABLE 6.3: Rejection Interpretation: individual statements

Item	r
Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else and certainly not God	0.5623
Nobody can give life to a dead person	0.5734
Miracles cannot happen, since they go against scientific laws of nature	0.6090
Mary could not have been a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	0.5396
The shepherds were working and not interested in a baby being born	0.5781
Jesus had been fully human and after he died he could not communicate with anyone	0.6760
This could not happen as heaven does not exist	0.5908
There is no scientific evidence for the existence of angels	0.5610
This was impossible as they had died years before	0.6390

Table 6.3 shows the responses to the first set of nine Rejection interpretations, which are each presented in the form of an individual statement. Correlation reliability of the eighteen interpretations was carried out, and the nine individual statement responses are shown to be between 0.7 and 0.5. Thus, a good correlation level is indicated between the interpretations.

TABLE 6.4: Symbolic Interpretation: individual statements

Item	r
Jesus was a person with an extra special relationship with God	0.3264
The writer of the story wanted to show Jesus had power in this	
The writer of the story wanted to show Jesus had power in this world and the next	0.4166
Although not factually correct, the miracles are interpretations of events	0.4811
Saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary's purity and the importance of Jesus	0.3778
The writer was trying to show that Jesus would be especially close to the poor	0.4007
Jesus' followers felt he had communicated with them in a spiritual way after his death	0.4466
The writer wanted to show the disciples felt that Jesus would live on in power and glory	0.4558
The writer wanted to show how God uses angels to communicate with people	0.4026
This was to show that Jesus was as important as Moses and Elijah	0.3878

Table 6.4 shows the responses to the first set of nine Symbolic interpretations, which are each presented in the form of an individual statement. Correlation reliability of the eighteen interpretations was carried out, and the nine individual statement responses are shown to be between 0.5 and 0.3. Most responses were 0.4, indicating a fair correlation level.

TABLE 6.5: Literal Interpretation: standardised format

Item	r
(Water into wine)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.7450
(Feeding 5,000)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.7291
(Wise men)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.6438
(Walking on water)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.7280
(Last Supper)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.6636
(Temple curtain)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.5525
(Earthquake)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.6596
(Temptations)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.6692
(Catch of fish)	
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.6889

Table 6.5 shows the responses to the second set of nine Literal interpretations, which are presented in a standardised format. Correlation reliability of the eighteen interpretations was carried out, and the nine standardised responses are shown to be between 0.8 and 0.6. Thus, a good correlation level is indicated between the interpretations.

TABLE 6.6: Rejection Interpretation: standardised format

Item	r
(Water into wine) These events did not happen	0.7003
(Feeding 5,000) These events did not happen	0.6950
(Wise men) These events did not happen	0.6669
(Walking on water) These events did not happen	0.6943
(Last Supper) These events did not happen	0.6703
(Temple curtain) These events did not happen	0.5803
(Earthquake) These events did not happen	0.6073
(Temptations) These events did not happen	0.6393
(Catch of fish) These events did not happen	0.6629

Table 6.6 shows the responses to the second set of nine Rejection interpretations, which are presented in a standardised format. Correlation reliability of the eighteen interpretations was carried out, and the nine standardised responses are shown to be between 0.7 and 0.6. This shows a good correlation level.

TABLE 6.7: Symbolic Interpretation: standardised format

Item	r
(Water into wine)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.6178
(Feeding 5,000)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.6222
(Wise men)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5180
(Walking on water)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5942
(Last Supper)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5615
(Temple curtain)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5309
(Earthquake)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5545
(Temptations)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5747
(Catch of fish)	
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5887

Table 6.7 shows the responses to the second set of nine Symbolic interpretations, which are presented in a standardised format. Correlation reliability of the eighteen interpretations was carried out, and the nine standardised responses are shown to be between 0.6 and 0.5. Most responses were 0.6, indicating a good correlation level.

As five of the six Tables indicated good correlation levels and one indicated fair levels, it was decided that these findings showed that the different styles of responses did not influence the pupils.

Reliability analysis was carried out on each full set of eighteen responses, that is literal, rejection, and symbolic interpretation.

TABLE 6.8 : Literal Interpretation: whole scale

Item	r
Jesus was really the son of God	0.5531
Jesus really brought people back from the dead	0.5990
The miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened	0.6767
Mary really was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	0.5648
The shepherds were working nearby and the angels told them what had happened	0.6357
Jesus came back to life and appeared to his disciples in a physical form	0.5981
Jesus' body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven	0.5684
Angels exist and are messengers of God	0.6397
This actually happened through the power of God (Water into wine)	0.5679
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Feeding 5,000)	0.7450
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Wise men)	0.7291
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Walking on water)	0.6438
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Last Supper)	0.7280
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Temple curtain)	0.6636
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Earthquake)	0.5525
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Temptations)	0.6596
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Catch of fish)	0.6692
This actually happened as described in the Bible	0.6889

Table 6.8 indicates the reliability of the Literal interpretation with the item rest of scale correlations ranging between 0.8 and 0.6. This indicates a good correlation level for the eighteen items, with the overall reliability being Alpha coefficient 0.9331.

TABLE 6.9: Rejection Interpretation: whole scale

Item	r
Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else and certainly not God	0.5623
Nobody can give life to a dead person	0.5734
Miracles cannot happen, since they go against scientific laws of nature	0.6090
Mary could not have been a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	0.5396
The shepherds were working and not interested in a baby being born	0.5781
Jesus had been fully human and after he died he could not communicate with anyone	0.6760
This could not happen as heaven does not exist	0.5908
There is no scientific evidence for the existence of angels	0.5610
This was impossible as they had died years before (Water into wine)	0.6390
These events did not happen (Feeding 5,000)	0.7003
These events did not happen (Wise men)	0.6950
These events did not happen (Walking on water)	0.6669
These events did not happen (Last Supper)	0.6943
These events did not happen (Temple curtain)	0.6703
These events did not happen (Earthquake)	0.5803
These events did not happen (Temptations)	0.6073
These events did not happen (Catch of fish)	0.6393
These events did not happen	0.6629

Table 6.9 indicates the reliability of the Rejection interpretation with the item rest of scale correlations ranging between 0.7 and 0.5. This indicates a good correlation for the eighteen items. The overall reliability being Alpha coefficient 0.9281.

TABLE 6.10: Symbolic Interpretation: whole scale

Item	r
Jesus was a person with an extra special relationship with God	0.3264
The writer of the story wanted to show Jesus had power in this world and the next	0.4166
Although not factually correct, the miracles are interpretations of events	0.4811
Saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary's purity and the importance of Jesus	0.3778
The writer was trying to show that Jesus would be especially close to the poor	0.4007
Jesus' followers felt he had communicated with them in a spiritual way after his death	0.4466
The writer wanted to show the disciples felt that Jesus would live on in power and glory	0.4558
The writer wanted to show how God uses angels to communicate with people	0.4026
This was to show that Jesus was as important as Moses and Elijah (Water into wine)	0.3878
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Feeding 5,000)	0.6178
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Wise men)	0.6222
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Walking on water)	0.5180
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Last Supper)	0.5942
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Temple curtain)	0.5615
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Earthquake)	0.5309
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Temptations)	0.5545
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Catch of fish)	0.5747
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	0.5887

Table 6.10 indicates the reliability of the Symbolic interpretation with the correlation reliability range being between 0.6 and 0.3. Although weaker than the other two sets of responses, this is still a sound correlation for the eighteen Symbolic items. The overall

reliability being Alpha coefficient 0.8742.

With Alpha coefficient levels of approximately 0.9 for each set of responses, this indicates that all three scales are reliable. The eighteen item scale was adopted as it was found that the two different formats of responses scaled well, and it would in addition maintain the size of the scale which would strengthen subsequent findings.

How do the responses differ by gender?

Table 6.11 shows the gender response scores for the Literal, Rejection and Symbolic interpretations, each of which contains eighteen responses. The boys' mean scores showed Literal interpretation as 6.1 and Rejection as 6.2 and Symbolic as 5.7. Most girls do not favour Rejection (4.0) but are almost equally divided between Literal (7.0) and Symbolic (6.9) interpretations. These two latter interpretations are each more strongly supported by girls than by boys. The greatest difference was that displayed by the Rejection responses with girls preferring not to select the Rejection interpretation.

TABLE 6.11 : Overall scores

Scale	Male		Female		t	p<
	mean	sd	mean	sd		
Literal	6.1	5.7	7.0	6.0	4.3	.001
Rejection	6.2	5.7	4.0	4.7	11.2	.001
Symbolic	5.7	4.6	6.9	5.0	7.1	.001

Table 6.11 shows the overall mean scores for both boys' and girls' responses. This indicated that girls favoured Literal and Symbolic interpretations more than boys, who favoured the Rejection interpretation much more than girls. The following three Tables (6.12 - 6.14) show the percentage of pupils selecting each of the Literal, Rejection and Symbolic responses. The percentages are given for both male and female separately, thus allowing a comparison of responses over each of the eighteen items.

TABLE 6.12 : Literal interpretation by gender

Item	Male %	Female %	χ^2	p<
Jesus was really the son of God	43	46	2.7	NS
Jesus really brought people back from the dead	28	30	2.5	NS
The miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened	28	29	0.7	NS
Mary really was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	31	33	2.3	NS
The shepherds were working nearby and the angels told them what had happened	48	57	26.3	.001
Jesus came back to life and appeared to his disciples in a physical form	31	30	0.7	NS
Jesus' body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven	43	51	19.3	.001
Angels exist and are messengers of God	29	39	30.4	.001
This actually happened through the power of God (Water into wine)	24	30	15.8	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Feeding 5,000)	31	36	7.7	.01
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Wise men)	36	39	3.6	NS
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Walking on water)	49	57	21.2	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Last Supper)	28	33	6.6	.05
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Temple curtain)	40	43	1.7	NS
This actually happened as described in the Bible	37	41	6.0	.05

(Earthquake)				
This actually happened as described in the Bible	25	31	15.8	.001
(Temptations)				
This actually happened as described in the Bible	34	38	4.3	.05
(Catch of fish)				
This actually happened as described in the Bible	39	43	7.3	.01

Table 6.12 shows that boys selected Literal responses by between 49% and 24%, whereas girls selected them by between 57% and 29%. The highest scoring Literal response from boys was that wise men gave gifts to Jesus, with almost half selecting this (49%); and it was also the highest response from girls, with over half selecting it (57%). The other highest scoring Literal response from girls was that angels told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus, with over half selecting it (57%); and this was also scored highly by boys, with almost half selecting it (48%). The lowest scoring Literal response from boys was the Transfiguration appearance of Moses and Elijah, with less than a quarter selecting it (24%); this also received a low score from girls, with under a third selecting it (30%). The lowest response from girls was that miracles actually happened as recorded in the Bible; with just over a quarter selecting it (29%).

TABLE 6.13 : Rejection interpretation by gender

Item	Male %	Female %	x ²	p<
Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else and certainly not God	24	15	49.3	.001
Nobody can give life to a dead person	44	32	46.9	.001
Miracles cannot happen, since they go against scientific laws of nature	30	20	45.0	.001
Mary could not have been a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	46	37	26.9	.001
The shepherds were working and not interested in a baby being born	20	10	76.3	.001
Jesus had been fully human and after he died he could not communicate with anyone	29	17	58.1	.001
This could not happen as heaven does not exist	23	11	93.2	.001
There is no scientific evidence for the existence of angels	50	37	52.1	.001
This was impossible as they had died years before	40	30	41.4	.001
(Water into wine)				
These events did not happen	33	20	67.7	.001
(Feeding 5,000)				
These events did not happen	34	20	79.8	.001
(Wise men)				
These events did not happen	24	11	88.2	.001
(Walking on water)				
These events did not happen	42	29	59.4	.001
(Last Supper)				
These events did not happen	28	19	33.7	.001
(Temple curtain)				
These events did not happen	33	23	42.2	.001
(Earthquake)				
These events did not happen	47	33	61.7	.001
(Temptations)				
These events did not happen	38	27	41.3	.001
(Catch of fish)				
These events did not happen	31	18	68.0	.001

Table 6.13 shows that boys selected Rejection responses by between 50% and 20%;

whereas girls selected them by between 37% and 10%. However, the highest scoring Rejection response from both boys and girls was that there was no scientific evidence for the existence of angels, with half of boys (50%) and over one third of girls selecting it (37%). The lowest scoring Rejection response from both boys and girls was that the shepherds had no interest in the birth of Jesus, with one fifth of boys and a tenth of girls selecting it (20% and 10% respectively).

TABLE 6.14 : Symbolic interpretation by gender

Item	Male %	Female %	x ²	p<
Jesus was a person with an extra special relationship with God	33	40	16.6	.001
The writer of the story wanted to show Jesus had power in this world and the next	29	38	30.6	.001
Although not factually correct, the miracles are interpretations of events	42	51	26.3	.001
Saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary's purity and the importance of Jesus	23	30	17.4	.001
The writer was trying to show that Jesus would be especially close to the poor	31	33	1.4	NS
Jesus' followers felt he had communicated with them in a spiritual way after his death	40	53	52.8	.001
The writer wanted to show the disciples felt that Jesus would live on in power and glory	34	39	9.5	.01
The writer wanted to show how God uses angels to communicate with people	21	24	5.0	.05
This was to show that Jesus was as important as Moses and Elijah (Water into wine)	36	41	7.0	.01
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Feeding 5,000)	36	44	23.8	.001
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Wise men)	30	41	40.7	.001
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Walking on water)	27	32	7.2	.01
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Last Supper)	30	39	27.5	.001
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Temple curtain)	32	38	14.4	.001
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	31	37	12.6	.001

(Earthquake)				
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	29	36	20.6	.001
(Temptations)				
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	28	35	18.6	.001
(Catch of fish)				
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	31	39	21.4	.001

Table 6.14 shows that boys selected Symbolic responses by between 42% and 21%; whereas girls selected them by between 53% and 24%. The highest scoring Symbolic response from boys was that miracles are interpretations of events, with more than one third selecting it (42%); and this was highly scored by girls too, with over half selecting it (51%). The highest scoring Symbolic response from girls was that Jesus had communicated with the disciples in a spiritual way after his death, with over half selecting it (53%), and this was also scored highly by boys, although with less than half selecting it (40%). The lowest scoring Symbolic response from both boys and girls was that the writer of the Gospel wanted to show God communicating with people, with just over one fifth of boys (21%), and just under a quarter of girls (24%) selecting it.

How do responses differ by age?

Table 6.15 shows how the overall responses differ according to age for the Literal, Rejection and Symbolic interpretations, each of which contains eighteen interpretations. The responses being shown as mean scores. The Literal interpretation of Gospel passages are favoured most by Year 7 pupils (7.4); and the Rejection option being least popular (4.7). Year 9 pupils favour Symbolic interpretations (6.7), and almost as many selected Literal responses as Rejection responses to Gospel passages (5.6 and 5.7 respectively).

The trend being for pupils to reject Literal interpretations as they become older (a decrease of 1.8) in favour of both the Rejection of Christian teaching (an increase of 1.0) and of adopting a Symbolic interpretation (an increase of 0.8).

TABLE 6.15 : Overall scores

Scale	Year 7		Year 9		t	p<
	mean	sd	mean	sd		
Literal	7.4	5.8	5.6	5.8	8.8	.001
Rejection	4.7	5.0	5.7	5.7	5.3	.001
Symbolic	5.9	4.6	6.7	5.1	4.6	.001

Table 6.15 shows the overall mean scores for both Year 7 and Year 9 responses, and indicated that Literal interpretation declined with age. There was an increase in Symbolic interpretation between Year 7 and Year 9, and an even greater increase in Rejection interpretation as pupils grew older. The following Tables (6.16 - 6.18) show the percentage of pupils selecting each of the Literal, Rejection and Symbolic responses. The percentages are given for both Year 7 and Year 9 separately, this allows a comparison of responses over each of the eighteen items.

TABLE 6.16 : Literal responses by age

Item	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	χ^2	p<
Jesus was really the son of God	49	38	37.8	.001
Jesus really brought people back from the dead	32	25	21.9	.001
The miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened	33	23	38.9	.001
Mary really was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	37	26	53.2	.001
The shepherds were working nearby and the angels told them what had happened	59	45	68.9	.001
Jesus came back to life and appeared to his disciples in a physical form	34	25	32.2	.001
Jesus' body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven	52	41	37.4	.001
Angels exist and are messengers of God	37	30	15.5	.001
This actually happened through the power of God (Water into wine)	31	22	31.4	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Feeding 5,000)	38	27	52.1	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Wise men)	44	29	78.2	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Walking on water)	60	44	81.6	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Last Supper)	34	26	22.8	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Temple curtain)	45	37	18.4	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Earthquake)	43	34	27.1	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Temptations)	32	23	38.3	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible (Catch of fish)	41	30	44.2	.001
This actually happened as described in the Bible	46	35	41.6	.001

Table 6.16 shows that Year 7 pupils selected Literal responses by between 60% and 31%; whereas Year 9 pupils selected them by between 45% and 22%. The highest scoring Literal response from Year 7 was that wise men gave gifts to Jesus, with over half

selecting it (60%); and this was highly scored by Year 9 too, with just under half selecting it (44%). The highest scoring response from Year 9 was that angels told the shepherds of Jesus' birth, with just under half selecting it (45%); this was also scored highly by Year 7, with over half selecting it (59%). The lowest scoring Literal response from both Year 7 and Year 9 was that the Transfiguration happened through the power of God, with under one third of Year 7 selecting it (31%) and just over one fifth of Year 9 selecting it (22%).

TABLE 6.17 : Rejection responses by age

Item	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	χ^2	p<
Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else and certainly not God	14	27	93.4	.001
Nobody can give life to a dead person	37	39	1.2	NS
Miracles cannot happen, since they go against scientific laws of nature	22	30	26.7	.001
Mary could not have been a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus	40	43	3.3	NS
The shepherds were working and not interested in a baby being born	12	19	26.3	.001
Jesus had been fully human and after he died he could not communicate with anyone	20	27	23.0	.001
This could not happen as heaven does not exist	15	20	14.4	.001
There is no scientific evidence for the existence of angels	41	46	8.6	.01
This was impossible as they had died years before (Water into wine)	34	37	3.8	NS
These events did not happen (Feeding 5,000)	23	31	24.9	.001
These events did not happen (Wise men)	24	31	18.4	.001
These events did not happen (Walking on water)	15	22	33.8	.001
These events did not happen (Last Supper)	33	38	10.4	.01
These events did not happen (Temple curtain)	22	25	4.7	.05
These events did not happen (Earthquake)	27	29	0.8	NS
These events did not happen (Temptations)	38	43	8.3	.01
These events did not happen (Catch of fish)	29	37	21.7	.001
These events did not happen	22	27	11.6	.001

Table 6.17 shows that Year 7 selected Rejection responses by between 41% and 12%; whereas Year 9 selected them by between 46% and 19%. The highest scoring Rejection response from Year 7 and Year 9 was that there was no scientific evidence for angels, with two fifths of Year 7 (41%) and almost a half of Year 9 (46%) selecting it. The lowest scoring Rejection response from both Year 7 and Year 9 was that the shepherds were not interested in the birth of Jesus, with over one tenth of Year 7 (12%) and just under one fifth of Year 9 (19%) selecting it.

TABLE 6.18 : Symbolic responses by age

Item	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	χ^2	p<
Jesus was a person with an extra special relationship with God	37	35	2.6	NS
The writer of the story wanted to show Jesus had power in this world and the next	31	36	11.1	.001
Although not factually correct, the miracles are interpretations of events	46	48	1.2	NS
Saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary's purity and the importance of Jesus	23	31	32.4	.001
The writer was trying to show that Jesus would be especially close to the poor	29	37	24.1	.001
Jesus' followers felt he had communicated with them in a spiritual way after his death	46	48	1.6	NS
The writer wanted to show the disciples felt that Jesus would live on in power and glory	34	39	11.4	.001
The writer wanted to show how God uses angels to communicate with people	22	24	0.9	NS
This was to show that Jesus was as important as Moses and Elijah (Water into wine)	36	41	9.7	.01
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Feeding 5,000)	38	43	6.1	.05
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Wise men)	32	40	24.8	.001
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Walking on water)	26	34	24.7	.001
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Last Supper)	33	36	2.0	NS
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Temple curtain)	33	37	6.5	.05
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning (Earthquake)	30	38	21.0	.001
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	30	35	8.3	.01

(Temptations)				
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	30	33	4.9	.05
(Catch of fish)				
The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning	32	38	13.7	.001

Table 6.18 shows that Year 7 selected Symbolic responses by between 46% and 22%; whereas Year 9 selected them by between 48% and 24%. The two highest scoring Symbolic responses from both Year 7 and Year 9 were that the miracles were interpretations of events and that Jesus communicated spiritually with his disciples after his death, (both 46% and 48% respectively). This shows that nearly half of Year 7 and Year 9 selected these responses. The lowest scoring Symbolic response from both Year 7 and Year 9 was that the Gospel writer wanted to show God communicating with people. Here just under a quarter of both Year 7 and Year 9 selected it (22% and 24% respectively).

How do same sex responses differ by age?

Comparison of Year 7 boys and Year 9 boys

Table 6.19 shows the mean scale results of Year 7 and Year 9 boys. Boys become less literal as they grow older (difference in mean scales being 1.7), there is an increase in Symbolic interpretation (0.4) and a greater increase in Rejection of biblical passages (1.4).

TABLE 6.19 : Year 7 and Year 9 boys' scores

Scale	Year 7		Year 9		t	p<
	mean	sd	mean	sd		
Literal	6.9	5.7	5.2	5.6	6.0	.001
Rejection	5.5	5.4	6.9	5.9	4.9	.001
Symbolic	5.5	4.4	5.9	4.8	1.5	NS

Comparison of Year 7 girls and Year 9 girls

Table 6.20 shows the mean scale results of Year 7 and Year 9 girls. Girls become less literal as they grow older (difference in mean scales being 2.1), there are increases in both Rejection and Symbolic interpretations (0.6 and 1.4 respectively).

TABLE 6.20 : Year 7 and Year 9 girls' scores

Scale	Year 7		Year 9		t	p<
	mean	sd	mean	sd		
Literal	8.0	5.8	5.9	5.9	6.5	.001
Rejection	3.8	4.4	4.4	5.1	2.5	.05
Symbolic	6.3	4.7	7.7	5.2	5.4	.001

Tables 6.19 and 6.20 show that both boys and girls select Literal interpretation less as they grow older, and that both Rejection interpretation and Symbolic interpretation are selected more by Year 9 pupils than by Year 7 pupils. There are marked differences

between boys' and girls' selection responses in both Year 7 and Year 9. Tables 6.19 and 6.20 show that Year 7 and Year 9 boys select Literal interpretation less (mean scale 6.9 and 5.2 respectively) than do Year 7 and Year 9 girls (8.0 and 5.9 respectively). The difference in the mean scales for girls being 2.1, and the difference in the mean scales for boys being 1.7. This indicates that girls reject Literal interpretation at a higher rate than boys, between Year 7 and Year 9. However, because the Year 7 mean scale for boys' Literal responses starts at a lower mean scale (6.9), boys at Year 9 still scored lower mean scales (5.2) on Literal responses than did the girls at Year 9 (5.9).

The difference between the mean scales at Year 7 and at Year 9 in boys' selection of the Rejection interpretation is 1.4, and the difference between the mean scales in girls' selection of the Symbolic interpretation is also 1.4. The difference between the mean scales at Year 7 and at Year 9 in boys' selection of the Symbolic interpretation is 0.4, and the difference between the mean scales in girls' selection of the Rejection interpretation is 0.6.

Boys at Year 7 are more likely to select Rejection (mean scale 5.5) than are girls (mean scale 3.8), and this ratio increases by Year 9 with the boys' Rejection mean scale being substantially higher than that of girls (6.9 and 4.4 respectively).

Boys at Year 7 select Rejection and Symbolic interpretations equally (mean scale 5.5), whereas more girls select Symbolic interpretation at Year 7 (mean scale 6.3). This ratio increases by Year 9 with the girls' Symbolic mean scale being higher than that of boys (7.7 and 5.9 respectively).

Findings shown under concepts

Jesus

Many Key Stage 3 pupils think of Jesus as the son of God (44%). They understand that the disciples thought him as important as other great Jewish leaders (38%). The events re-enacted through Holy Communion today are regarded as having actually happened (42%), as did the temptations of Jesus (36%).

Miracle

The 'raising of Lazarus' is rejected (38%), as is 'Jesus walking on water' (35%); however the 'stilling of the storm' is interpreted symbolically (47%) as is the 'turning of water into wine' (40%). The 'feeding of the 5,000' and the 'great catch of fish' (37% and 41% respectively) are regarded as having actually happened.

Birth

The virgin birth is rejected by many Key Stage 3 pupils (42%), but they feel that angels did tell the shepherds about Jesus' birth (53%) and the wise men did bring gifts (53%).

Death

At Jesus' death the curtain in the Temple is regarded as having been actually torn (39%), and that Jesus rose bodily into the sky at his Ascension (47%). Jesus' appearances to the disciples after his crucifixion are regarded as spiritual (46%), whereas the angel moving away the tomb's stone is rejected (40%).

Angels

Angels are accepted literally at the birth of Jesus (53%), but rejected both at Jesus' tomb (40%) and on the grounds of no scientific evidence when appearing in the Temple (43%).

Of what value is this research?

Goldman maintained that pupils discarded literalism in their religious thinking as they became older, but that they often failed to replace or develop such ideas with "higher order" formal operational thinking. They often simply rejected religion and religious ideas.

This research offers a format for assessing pupils' interpretations of biblical statements and texts. It reinforces Goldman's claims that Literal interpretation of biblical passages does decrease between Years 7 and 9 and that Rejection increases. However, there appears also to be an increase of Symbolic interpretation which may be increased even further by adopting Cousin's and Eastman's (1969) suggestion that a structured religious education course could in fact encourage formal operational thinking. It is generally acknowledged that maturity of thought and response is brought about through experiential factors. Thus by allowing opportunities of experience even within the classroom, by building up knowledge and discussing issues, so the development of formal operational thinking should be encouraged.

Consideration of other factors, also included in the survey, need to be cross referenced to try to measure other influences on the interpretation of biblical passages. The following chapter looks at attitudes to religion and religious education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DATA SHOWING ATTITUDES

Summary

Introduction

The Questionnaire

How the items were developed

Overall attitude of pupils

How do responses differ by gender?

How do responses differ by age?

Findings

Of what value is this research?

Summary

Research has indicated that religious education is one of the least preferred subjects in school and that it has been held in low esteem by pupils since before the 1944 Education Act. Some researchers such as Goldman and Madge claim that the lack of experience prevents pupils from developing their understanding of religious issues.

This chapter considers the data collected from 3,412 Key Stage 3 pupils in the counties of Shropshire and Warwickshire. A questionnaire was devised which contained a section which sought to discover pupil attitudes to religious education. The results indicate that religious education remains in a weak position within state maintained schools and that of the four groups surveyed, the Year 9 boys formed the group with the least positive attitude to religious education. Girls were generally more positive about religious education than were boys.

Introduction

The attitude of pupils is built up by the formation of clusters of pupil opinions (Kay, Francis and Gibson, 1996) and whereas opinions refer to a single issue, attitude indicates a more stable long term view. Opinions can be ascertained by asking a range of questions and then the emerging pattern of the responses indicates the attitude. Although much research has been undertaken to try to assess pupil attitudes it is difficult to compare because of the variety of research methods and assessment methods adopted. Some researchers prefer in-depth interviews whereas others consider interviews to allow too much subjectivity in the interpretation of the responses. Other research sought to be more objective and used quantitative questionnaires, but of course, some researchers felt that these were too restrictive or

even prescriptive by the use of set questions with Likert style responses.

In considering research concerned with attitude to religion and religious issues, in chapter three, a number of points are made in the conclusion. These included the negative attitude many pupils have of religious education: that pupils became more negative toward religious education as they grew older; boys were more negative toward religious education than were girls; and that the atmosphere of the classroom influenced pupil attitude to religious education. These various points are reflected in the items presented in the questionnaire, the items are clustered under eight sections in order to see if this present study upholds previous research.

The Questionnaire

How the items were developed

The intention within this second part of the questionnaire was to develop an instrument which would show pupil attitudes to a range of items related to religious education in schools. These related areas being religious education; content of religious education; religious education teachers; assembly and festivals; Christianity, Church and Bible; faith and affiliation; prayer; and forgiveness. Pupils were asked to indicate their response on a Likert style scale where possible responses were: Agree Strongly, Agree, Not Certain, Disagree, Disagree Strongly. These responses were then collapsed into three categories in order to maintain clarity when recording results. The Agree Strongly and Agree responses were amalgamated to form the main Agree category; the response of Not Certain was maintained, Disagree and Disagree Strongly formed the other main category of Disagree.

Overall attitude of pupils

Tables 7.1 to 7.8 list the items that show pupil attitude to religious education and related issues, under eight sub-headings. The full cohort of pupils answering the questionnaire was 3,412 and the responses to each statement show the percentage of pupil selection. The Agree responses were selected by between 89% and 6%. For example, almost half (44%) said that they liked religious education; but less than a fifth wanted to take the subject as a GCSE option (14%).

TABLE 7.1: Attitude to Religious Education

	yes %	? %	no %
I like lessons about Bible stories	26	33	40
I like lessons about the Church and its religion	24	30	46
I like RE	44	24	31
I would like to take RE as a GCSE option	14	26	59
I would like to take RE as an A level subject	10	27	61
RE could help in going on to university	24	38	36
RE could help in getting a job	27	34	37
The Government is right to encourage students to study RE	49	28	23
Some RE should be taught in all year groups	61	18	20
Some RE should be taught every week	49	24	26

Ten items were grouped in this section and they refer to whether pupils like religious education or specific religious education lessons, and whether they would like to take religious education at Key Stage 4 or 5. It also questions whether pupils consider religious education to have any relevance in gaining qualifications after school and linking to a career. The amount of religious education taught is questioned and also whether the government ought to be involved. The aim being to find out pupils' attitudes towards religious education and their interest in it, and how valuable they

considered it with regard to their careers.

The data show that less than half of the cohort liked religious education lessons (44%); with nearly a third (31%) actually disliking religious education and almost a quarter (24%) being non-committal. When looking at different religious education lessons, pupils disliked the use of Bible stories (40%) almost as much as they disliked lessons about the church and Christianity (46%). Pupils liking Bible stories (26%) and lessons about the church and its religion (24%) were similar, representing approximately a quarter of the cohort. In response to these two questions the pupils who were unsure constituted about a third (33% and 30% respectively) of the total number. The option of choosing religious education as an examination subject gained little support, with 14% wishing to take it at GCSE level and 10% opting for an 'A' level in religious education. Those against such options were 59% at GCSE level and 61% at 'A' level; however, approximately a quarter were undecided (26% and 27% respectively).

The first five items of this section question the personal desirability of studying religious education, whereas the latter five items are more general and ask pupils to offer a more philosophical response rather than one based on their personal preferences. Pupils recognising that religious education could help in going on to university and in getting a job (24% and 27% respectively) was less than the number of pupils holding a negative view of such usefulness (36% and 37% respectively). A substantial proportion of pupils were uncertain of the effects the study of religious education might have beyond school (38% and 34% respectively). Pupils were willing to concede that although they personally might not wish to select religious

education as an examination option, nevertheless they recognised it as an academic subject worthy of study and of use in an industrial society.

Government support for the study of religious education was seen in a positive light with 49% in favour; less than a quarter (23%) were against such intervention and 28% of pupils were unsure. Despite nearly half of the pupils being against the teaching of Bible stories and the Christian religion, the data show that 61% thought religious education should be taught throughout the secondary school and 49% thought that this should be done on a weekly basis. Opposition to these two items resulted in scores of 20% and 26% respectively, those pupils who were uncertain scoring 18% and 24% respectively.

TABLE 7.2: Attitude to the content of RE

	yes %	? %	no %
RE should teach about a range of religions	75	14	10
RE should teach about things like “telling the truth”	69	20	10
RE should teach about things like “looking after the environment”	51	26	23
RE should mostly teach about Christianity	24	21	55
RE should encourage students to make their own decisions	78	15	6
RE should encourage class discussions	70	21	9
RE should encourage students to hear other people’s ideas	76	16	7
RE should encourage students to think about the problems others face	70	19	10
RE should encourage students to think about the purpose of life	67	22	10
RE should encourage students to think about how people should behave	56	27	16
RE should encourage students to think about how people should treat others	73	17	9
RE should tell students what to believe	11	12	76
RE should encourage a range of possible answers to difficult moral questions	45	40	13

This section looks specifically at the content of religious education lessons, there are thirteen items ascertaining the range and diversity of religious education as perceived by pupils. Responses were invited concerning the teaching of a range of religions, moral and environmental issues, decision making and discussion of issues, empathy, and beliefs. The responses might show if pupils appreciated that there were several dimensions to religious education going beyond ‘learning about religion’ to a consideration and discussion of a whole spectrum of issues which link directly to the world in which they live. The aim in this section was to find out what pupils thought to be the purpose of religious education lessons by looking at their responses to

content of lessons. There may be a link between how they perceive the role of religious education and their personal attitude to it as a subject.

In the first section 'Attitude to Religious Education', pupils were against religious education lessons which had a specifically Christian content, such lessons would come under the attainment target of 'learning about religion'. In response to religious education teaching mostly about Christianity, the same percentage of pupils agreed (24%) as had liked lessons about the church and its religion. Over half (55%) did not agree that the emphasis should be on Christianity, and 21% were undecided. The responses to whether religious education should be concerned with a range of religions was even more marked, with three quarters (75%) of pupils agreeing and only 10% in disagreement and 14% being uncertain.

The majority of pupils (69%) thought that religious education should be concerned with issues like 'telling the truth', with only 10% against this and 20% being unsure. Similar figures are shown in connection with religious education being concerned with how people should treat others; 73% being in favour and 9% against with 17% undecided. This indicates a high level of concern among pupils in connection with inter personal relationships where trust, honesty and respect hold important roles. Although the item dealing with how people should behave might be expected to have similar results to the item on how people should treat others, this was not the case. Pupils agreeing that religious education should be concerned with people's behaviour scored 56%; with 16% disagreeing and 27% not sure. This indicates that perhaps behaviour is considered to be more of a social nicety than a possible moral action, with pupils of this age range. Linking with the item on behaviour is that of religious

education being concerned with environmental issues, where similar scores were given. Half of the pupils (51%) agreed that such issues of responsibility should be discussed, but almost a quarter (23%) did not and 26% were unsure. In contrast to this, another item concerned with consideration of the problems others face, which in some circumstances could be expected to link closely with environmental concerns, scored more positively. Pupils in agreement with consideration for others scored 70%; with only 10% disagreeing and 19% being undecided.

Pupils were strongly in favour (67%) of religious education being the arena for encouraging consideration of the purpose and meaning of life; with only 10% disagreeing that this should form part of the religious education curriculum and 22% being unsure.

Pupils were strongly against the suggestion that religious education should try to influence their personal beliefs with a score of 76%; only 11% thought that religious education ought to tell them what to believe and 12% were undecided. However, pupils were generally in favour of encouraging discussions and considering a range of opinions. A large number of pupils supported the option to make their own decisions (78%); with only 6% disagreeing and 15% being unsure. Class discussions scored 70% in favour; with 9% against and 21% being undecided. Linked with this was the item stating that religious education should encourage pupils to hear other people's ideas where 76% were in agreement; only 7% were against such a suggestion and 16% were uncertain. The final item in this section gained comparatively low positive support, 45% of pupils thought that religious education should encourage a range of possible answers to moral problems; 13% disagreed and a substantial number (40%)

were unsure.

TABLE 7.3: Attitude to assembly and festivals

	yes %	? %	no %
School should hold a religious assembly every day	6	17	76
School should hold a religious assembly at least once a week	25	28	46
School should only hold a religious assembly occasionally	43	27	30
The main British festivals are linked with Christianity	47	34	18
Many people take part in the festivals but they do not believe in the religion	54	32	13
Some of the festivals are not celebrated as religious events	54	35	10

Three items concerning school assembly and three concerning festivals are grouped together here as both assembly and festivals are opportunities for worship. The items on assembly relate only to how often they should be held, with no reference to content. The items on festivals attempted to find out if pupils linked festivals, and therefore some school holiday time, to religious events. The aim was to find out what the attitude of pupils was to opportunities for formal worship within school, and whether they thought people used festivals as a form of worship. The questions ‘Many people take part in the festivals but they do not believe in the religion’ and ‘Some of the festivals are not celebrated as religious events’, are too vague and should link specifically to Christianity.

Pupils were strongly against a daily act of worship with a score of 76%; only 6% agreed and 17% were unsure. A weekly act of religious worship was considered more acceptable with 25% in agreement, but still a substantial number disagreeing (46%)

and 28% being undecided. Occasional acts of worship were preferred with 43% in agreement, but a third (30%) still in disagreement and almost as many (27%) being non-committal.

Almost half of the pupils thought that the main British festivals linked with Christianity (47%), but 18% disagreed with a substantial number being undecided (34%). Perhaps pupils find the concept of formal Christian ritual difficult to reconcile with the idea of a festival being an actively, joyous occasion. Alternatively, there may be more recognition of festival-type qualities within the religious celebrations of other faiths.

There appeared to be a widespread acceptance that individuals might take part in the merry-making of festivals without accepting the religious basis or teaching. Over half (54%) agreed that such an attitude prevailed; 13% disagreed and 32% were not certain. Linked with this was the item suggesting that festivals were not always celebrated in a religious sense but as secular occasions. The response was almost identical with the previous item (54% in favour, 10% against, 35% unsure) which indicates that the two items were too similar. The first item was meant to show that people joined in a religious event even though they did not believe, for example Christmas. The second item was meant to show that the whole event had become non-religious, for example Easter had become centred upon the giving of Easter eggs.

TABLE 7.4: Attitude to Christianity, Church and Bible

	yes %	? %	no %
Christianity is an important part of life in Britain	44	35	20
People can be Christians without going to church	76	15	8
The church has no real message for us today	20	39	40
Church is old fashioned	30	26	43
It is important that young children learn about the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem	52	28	19
The Bible has no real message for us today	20	35	44
Some Bible stories have a symbolic meaning (an extra meaning for some people)	56	32	12
To understand the Gospel stories you need to know about life and ways 2000 years ago	26	41	32
The Bible has no meaning for today	18	37	44

Nine items were grouped in order to ascertain pupil attitudes to established religion, the importance and relevance of the church and Bible was considered as was the cultural status of Christianity. The aim of this section was to find out pupil attitudes to the Christian religion by considering the role of the church in their eyes, and the position of the Bible and its teaching. If there is a negative attitude here, then it is likely that negative attitude to religious education is also held.

Many pupils still consider that Christianity is an important part of British culture with almost half of the pupils (44%) in agreement; 20% disagreeing and a substantial number (35%) were undecided. The link between being a Christian and church attendance appears to be weak, with 76% of pupils thinking it unnecessary to attend church in order to be a Christian. Only a small percentage (8%) disagreed and 15% were unsure. When considering the message that the church has for people today, a substantial number of pupils tended to think that the church had a relevant message

(40%), with 20% agreeing that the church had nothing to say that was relevant for today; a high number of pupils (39%) were undecided. Perhaps this latter group conceded that they did not know what message the church was trying to deliver. As there were 40% of pupils recognising that the church had a relevant message, it is perhaps surprising that so many had thought attending church was not particularly necessary for Christians (76%). The number of pupils considering the church as old fashioned was 30%; with 43% disagreeing and 26% being unsure. The figures for pupils thinking that the church has a relevant message, and that the church is not old fashioned are very similar (40% and 43% respectively).

Over half of the pupils thought that children should learn about the birth stories of Jesus (52%); with 19% disagreeing and a substantial number (28%) being undecided. Linking with this, many pupils felt that the Bible did have a message for today (44%); with 20% thinking that it held no real message for people and a high proportion (35%) being uncertain. Again, perhaps this last percentage indicates that many pupils are hazy as to the actual content of the Bible. Perhaps the popularity of the birth stories is because they are woven into British national heritage, although the figures in response to 'some Bible stories have a symbolic meaning' seem to indicate a deeper awareness of biblical stories. In response to this item pupils were in agreement scoring 56%; with 12% disagreeing and 32% unsure. As 40% of pupils did not like lessons about Bible stories, but 52% thought that children should be taught about the birth of Jesus, it might be assumed that some pupils in Key Stage 3 felt that they had outgrown Bible stories.

The need for historical awareness in which to anchor Jesus' ministry and the

development of the early church, met with uncertainty (41%); this might be because this area of study is possibly not considered deeply until the next Key Stage. However, 26% were in agreement and 32% disagreed that such historical knowledge was necessary for understanding the Gospels. The two items ‘the Bible has no real message for us today’ and ‘the Bible has no meaning for today’ are too similar to gain independent responses, but they do act as reliability checks. The results for each item are very similar with pupils agreeing with each statement 20% and 18% respectively, the percentage of pupils who disagreed with each statement was identical (44%), and those unsure scored 35% and 37% respectively.

TABLE 7.5: Attitude to faith and affiliation

	yes %	? %	no %
Jesus can still help people today	33	30	36
I have a religious faith	35	29	34
I want to get married in a Christian place of worship eg church	50	30	18
I want my children to be baptised	43	33	23
My family encourage me to attend Church or a religious group	17	17	64
I celebrate Christmas as a religious event	36	26	36

Six items were presented in order to show whether pupils held a personal belief or recognised it in others, and whether they linked some aspects of their lives with the church or Christian faith. The aim being to find out if pupils held a positive attitude to the established church, even if they did not attend. It might be that pupils follow a religion at a more superficial level rather than being fully committed, these different approaches to religious faith may indicate different attitudes to religious education.

Not surprisingly, the first two items scored very similar results; 'Jesus can still help people today' and 'I have a religious faith', with each category gaining approximately one third. In agreement that Jesus could help were 33% of the pupils; with 36% disagreeing and 30% being unsure. In agreement that they held a personal religious faith were 35% of pupils; with 34% disagreeing and 29% being uncertain. Similar results were gained when considering the religious celebration of Christmas, with 36% agreeing that they did celebrate Christmas as a religious festival; 36% disagreed and 26% were unsure. The responses showing whether pupils were encouraged by family to attend church were a little surprising in that only 17% said their family encouraged church attendance; against 35% who held a religious faith. A high percentage (64%) said their family did not encourage them to attend church, and 17% were unsure.

With regard to pupils linking religious ceremonies with future actions within their own lives, the general attitude was positive. Half of the pupils wanting to marry in a religious place of worship (50%); with 18% not wishing to and 30% remaining un-committed. Slightly less pupils wanted their children to be baptised (43%); with 23% disagreeing and 33% being unsure.

TABLE 7.6: Attitude to prayer

	yes %	? %	no %
Saying prayers does no good	21	34	44
I pray in times of special need	42	21	35
I pray before an important sporting event	23	21	55
I pray when I am feeling lonely	23	21	54
I pray when I am feeling frightened	32	19	47
I pray when I am in trouble	35	18	45
I pray when I am taking exams	32	20	46
I pray when I am ill	22	22	54
I pray when a member of my family is ill	53	16	28
Sometimes I pray for fine weather	20	18	61
Sometimes I pray for good luck	41	18	40
Sometimes I pray to win the lottery	42	11	45

This section grouped together twelve items to find out, not only if pupils were involved in personal prayer, but the scope of such prayer. The aim here was to find out if pupils used prayer as a support because they were feeling vulnerable this would possibly agree with other research where pupils who are more nervous or introvert (Lewis and Francis, 1996) tend to be more positive toward religious education.

Almost half of the pupils (44%) disagreed with the statement that saying prayers did no good, thus showing a positive attitude toward prayer, while 21% showed a negative attitude and 34% were uncertain. Praying at times of special need was upheld by 42% of pupils; with 35% disagreeing and 21% being non-committal. Particularly stressful times were specified as times for prayer, and they were before sporting events, feeling lonely, feeling frightened, being in trouble, and taking exams. Praying before a sporting event and also praying when feeling lonely gained almost identical scores. For both items 23% of pupils were in agreement, with 55% and 54%

respectively disagreeing, and 21% being uncertain. However, more pupils prayed when feeling frightened or were in trouble 32% and 35% respectively, with 47% and 45% not praying, and 19% and 18% being unsure. Similar results were obtained in response to prayer when taking exams with 32% of pupils praying at such times; although 46% did not and 20% were undecided.

Prayer in connection with illness showed that pupils were much more likely to pray for another, than for themselves. Over half of the pupils said that they did not pray when they were ill themselves (54%); and an equal number (22%) said they would pray as those who showed uncertainty. However, over half (53%) said that they would pray for a family member who was ill, with 28% saying that they would not and 16% being unsure.

The final three items linked prayer to less serious situations and praying for fine weather was generally rejected (61%); with 20% agreeing and 18% being uncertain. Praying for good luck was more acceptable with 41% in agreement; almost as many (40%) disagreeing and 18% undecided. Praying for a lottery win was similar to that of praying for good luck with 42% in agreement; 45% disagreeing and 11% uncertain.

TABLE 7.7: Attitude to forgiveness

	yes %	? %	no %
God punishes people who do wrong	15	34	49
God forgives people who do wrong	41	33	24
God forgives people only if they are sorry for doing wrong	41	35	23
I try to punish those who hurt me	31	28	39
I try to forgive those who hurt me	52	25	22
When others do wrong against me I want to get even with them	45	28	25
I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me	24	32	43
I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me only if they are sorry	52	29	17

Eight items were set out covering forgiveness and punishment, linked to both God and the pupil's own outlook. It was hoped that such items would show if there were links between religious belief and personal attitude. Given that forgiveness is a major concept within Christianity, then responses in this section were felt to be of value in comparison with the section on 'Attitudes to religious education', thus developing a more complex picture of pupil attitudes within this area.

The image pupils appear to hold of God is that he is forgiving although this is conditional, the pupils themselves may not be fully aware of this conditional state. Pupils tend to disagree with the statement that God punishes wrong-doers (49%); with 15% thinking he would punish and a substantial proportion (34%) being uncertain. The situation, not surprisingly, is upheld when asked if God forgives wrong-doers and 41% agree; 24% say he would not forgive and 33% are unsure. In response to whether God forgives only those who are sorry, there were 41% in agreement; 23%

disagreed and 35% were unsure. As can be seen, responses to God forgiving wrong-doers are very similar to responses to God forgiving only if they are sorry (41% and 41% in agreement, 24% and 23% disagree, 33% and 35% unsure, respectively). This is not to say that pupils who think God would not forgive, would go so far as to say he would therefore have to punish wrong-doers. Perhaps a question to this end would have been beneficial.

With regard to personal forgiveness it appears that many pupils make a real effort to carry this out in their own lives, however a retaliatory element is also in evidence. The responses to retaliation when hurt were very similar, with 31% of pupils in agreement; 39% disagreeing and 28% being uncertain. Surprisingly, a second item acting as a reliability check showed pupils scoring 45% in agreement with getting even with wrong-doers; 25% disagreed and 28% were undecided. When considering forgiving those who hurt them, over half of the pupils were in agreement (52%); with 22% disagreeing and 25% being unsure.

Pupils recognised the difficulty in forgiving those who wronged them, less than a quarter found it easy (24%); with 43% stating that it was not easy to forgive and 32% being uncertain. In response to being able to forgive when the wrong-doer was sorry, over half agreed that they could (52%); 17% said that they would not find it easy to forgive even if they were sorry, and 29% were unsure. Pupils though, scored highest in trying to forgive others and in forgiving wrongdoers when they were sorry.

TABLE 7.8: Attitude to RE teachers

	yes %	? %	no %
I think all RE teachers should:			
have a sense of humour	81	11	5
keep control of the class	72	14	12
explain topics clearly	85	7	5
encourage me to give my opinions	72	16	10
be friendly	88	6	4
help when I find the work difficult	89	5	4
be strict	16	22	59

There were seven items presented in order to ascertain how pupils wanted teachers to behave. The items were concerned with control of the class, help and encouragement given, and how the teachers presented themselves to the pupils. This section indicates how pupils wish to see religious education happening within the school.

The most popular item within this section was that teachers should help with difficult work; with 89% of pupils agreeing, only 4% disagreeing and 5% being unsure. Pupils wanted teachers to be friendly with 88% of pupils being in agreement; only 4% disagreeing and 6% being undecided. Clear explanation of topics was scored as the next most popular item; with 85% in agreement, only 5% disagreeing and 7% uncertain. Teachers with a sense of humour were also required with pupils in agreement scoring 81%; only 5% disagreeing and 11% unsure. Encouragement to give opinions was considered desirable with 72% in agreement; only 10% disagreeing and 16% being uncertain. This was equalled by the need for the teacher to keep control of the class; with 72% in agreement, 12% disagreeing and 14% being unsure. Strictness within the class was not considered necessary with only 16% requiring

strict teachers, and 59% disagreeing with the need for strict teachers, and 22% being uncertain.

How do responses differ by gender?

The following Tables indicate the gender response scores for the eight sections showing pupil attitudes to issues related to religious education. The responses are shown as percentages of both male and female separately and indicating the combined score for Agree and Agree Strongly.

TABLE 7.9: Attitude to religious education

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
I like lessons about Bible stories	26	27	1.2	NS
I like lessons about the Church and its religion	22	26	7.4	.01
I like RE	39	51	48.0	.001
I would like to take RE as a GCSE option	10	18	39.1	.001
I would like to take RE as an A level subject	9	11	5.7	.05
RE could help in going on to university	24	25	0.9	NS
RE could help in getting a job	29	28	0.3	NS
The Government is right to encourage students to study RE	44	54	39.3	.001
Some RE should be taught in all year groups	55	68	58.4	.001
Some RE should be taught every week	46	54	22.9	.001

Table 7.9, 'Attitude to religious education', shows that the attitude of girls was more positive than that of boys, that is that the girls were more in agreement with the item statement than were boys. Boys selected Agree responses by between 55% and 9%, whereas girls selected them by between 68% and 11%. The highest scoring response from boys and girls was that some religious education should be taught in all year

groups (55% and 68% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both boys and girls was wanting to take religious education at 'A' level (9% and 11% respectively). The closest scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that religious education could help in getting a job (29% and 28% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that some religious education should be taught in all year groups (55% and 68% respectively).

Table 7.10: Attitude to the content of RE

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
RE should teach about a range of religions	69	83	83.2	.001
RE should teach about things like “telling the truth”	67	73	12.7	.001
RE should teach about things like “looking after the environment”	50	52	0.4	NS
RE should mostly teach about Christianity	24	24	0.2	NS
RE should encourage students to make their own decisions	74	83	41.2	.001
RE should encourage class discussions	67	73	16.0	.001
RE should encourage students to hear other people’s ideas	71	82	57.4	.001
RE should encourage students to think about the problems others face	64	78	80.3	.001
RE should encourage students to think about the purpose of life	63	73	41.0	.001
RE should encourage students to think about how people should behave	54	60	11.8	.001
RE should encourage students to think about how people should treat others	68	79	45.4	.001
RE should tell students what to believe	12	11	1.8	NS
RE should encourage a range of possible answers to difficult moral questions	44	46	1.4	NS

Table 7.10, ‘Attitude to the content of religious education’, shows that again girls were more positive in their attitude than were boys. Boys selected Agree responses by between 74% and 12%, while girls selected them by between 83% and 11%. The highest scoring response from boys and girls was that religious education should encourage pupils to make their own decisions (74% and 83% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both boys and girls was that religious education should tell pupils what to believe (12% and 11% respectively). The closest scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the suggestion that religious education should mostly teach about Christianity (24% and 24% respectively). The greatest difference

in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that religious education should encourage pupils to think about the problems others face (64% and 78% respectively).

TABLE 7.11: Attitude to assembly and festivals

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
School should hold a religious assembly every day	7	6	2.9	NS
School should hold a religious assembly at least once a week	28	24	7.2	.01
School should only hold a religious assembly occasionally	40	47	15.7	.001
The main British festivals are linked with Christianity	49	46	2.8	NS
Many people take part in the festivals but they do not believe in the religion	55	54	0.2	NS
Some of the festivals are not celebrated as religious events	56	54	0.6	NS

Table 7.11, 'Attitude to assembly and festivals', shows that boys were more positive in their attitude than were girls. Boys selected Agree responses by between 56% and 7%, while girls selected them by between 54% and 6%. The highest scoring response from both boys and girls being that some festivals are not celebrated as religious events (56% and 54% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both boys and girls was that schools should hold a religious assembly daily (7% and 6% respectively). Another close score occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that many people take part in the festival although they do not follow the religion (55% and 54% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that schools should only hold

occasional assemblies (40% and 47% respectively).

TABLE 7.12: Attitude to Christianity, Church and Bible

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
Christianity is an important part of life in Britain	44	45	0.2	NS
People can be Christians without going to church	72	82	46.5	.001
The church has no real message for us today	23	16	22.1	.001
Church is old fashioned	37	24	69.3	.001
It is important that young children learn about the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem	48	56	22.5	.001
The Bible has no real message for us today	23	17	19.1	.001
Some Bible stories have a symbolic meaning (an extra meaning for some people)	54	58	5.9	.05
To understand the Gospel stories you need to know about life and ways 2000 years ago	29	23	15.4	.001
The Bible has no meaning for today	22	14	38.6	.001

Table 7.12, 'Attitude to Christianity, Church and Bible', shows that girls were more positive in their attitude than were boys. Boys selected Agree responses by between 72% and 22%, while girls selected them by 82% and 14%. The highest scoring response from both boys and girls being that people can be Christians without going to church (72% and 82% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both boys and girls was that the Bible has no meaning for today (22% and 14% respectively). The closest scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that Christianity is an important part of life in Britain (44% and 45% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that Church is old fashioned (37% and 24% respectively).

TABLE 7.13: Attitude to faith and affiliation

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
Jesus can still help people today	32	34	2.1	NS
I have a religious faith	32	39	19.9	.001
I want to get married in a Christian place of worship eg church	46	58	48.8	.001
I want my children to be baptised	38	50	50.5	.001
My family encourage me to attend Church or a religious group	18	17	1.6	NS
I celebrate Christmas as a religious event	36	39	2.7	NS

Table 7.13, 'Attitude to faith and affiliation', shows that girls were more positive in their attitude than were boys. Boys selected Agree responses by between 46% and 18%, while girls selected them between 58% and 17%. The highest scoring response from both boys and girls being that they wanted to get married in a Christian place of worship (46% and 58% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both boys and girls was that their families encouraged them to attend a place of worship (18% and 17% respectively), and this also produced the closest scores between boys and girls. The greatest difference in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that they wanted to marry in a Christian place of worship (46% and 58% respectively).

TABLE 7.14: Attitude to prayer

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
Saying prayers does no good	26	16	52.9	.001
I pray in times of special need	36	49	54.6	.001
I pray before an important sporting event	26	20	14.5	.001
I pray when I am feeling lonely	19	28	35.8	.001
I pray when I am feeling frightened	26	40	67.9	.001
I pray when I am in trouble	31	40	31.0	.001
I pray when I am taking exams	29	38	27.5	.001
I pray when I am ill	20	26	17.6	.001
I pray when a member of my family is ill	47	63	79.9	.001
Sometimes I pray for fine weather	20	20	0.0	NS
Sometimes I pray for good luck	39	44	7.0	.01
Sometimes I pray to win the lottery	46	38	19.8	.001

Table 7.14, 'Attitude to prayer', shows that girls were more positive in their attitude than were boys. Boys selected Agree responses by between 47% and 19%, while girls selected them by between 63% and 16%. The highest scoring response from both boys and girls was that they prayed when a member of their family was ill (47% and 63% respectively). The lowest scoring response from boys was that they prayed when feeling lonely (19%), and the lowest scoring response from girls was that saying prayers does no good (16%). The closest scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that they sometimes pray for fine weather (20% and 20% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that they prayed when a member of the family was ill (47% and 63% respectively).

TABLE 7.15: Attitude to forgiveness

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
God punishes people who do wrong	15	16	0.1	NS
God forgives people who do wrong	38	45	17.0	.001
God forgives people only if they are sorry for doing wrong	40	43	5.1	.05
I try to punish those who hurt me	40	23	113.5	.001
I try to forgive those who hurt me	40	65	202.8	.001
When others do wrong against me I want to get even with them	52	39	52.5	.001
I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me	21	28	17.4	.001
I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me only if they are sorry	49	57	17.6	.001

Table 7.15, 'Attitude to forgiveness', shows that again girls were more positive in their attitude than were boys. Boys selected Agree responses by between 52% and 15%, and girls selected them by between 65% and 16%. The highest scoring response from boys was that they try to get even with people who wrong them (52%), and for girls was that they try to forgive those who wrong them (65%). The lowest scoring response from both boys and girls was that God punished wrong-doers (15% and 16% respectively), this was also the closest score between boys and girls. The greatest difference in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that they try to forgive those who hurt them (40% and 65% respectively).

TABLE 7.16: Attitude to RE teachers

	male %	female %	x ²	p<
I think all RE teachers should:				
have a sense of humour	83	84	1.0	NS
keep control of the class	68	80	59.2	.001
explain topics clearly	84	91	35.8	.001
encourage me to give my opinions	71	78	21.6	.001
be friendly	86	94	49.6	.001
help when I find the work difficult	87	95	49.3	.001
be strict	16	17	0.5	NS

Table 7.16, 'Attitude to RE teachers', shows that the girls were more strongly in agreement with the item statements than were boys, indicating that girls were more positive in their attitude than were boys. Boys selected Agree responses by between 87% and 16%, while girls selected them by between 95% and 17%. The highest scoring response from both boys and girls was the statement that they wanted help when work was difficult (87% and 95% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both boys and girls was that teachers should be strict (16% and 17% respectively), this was also the closest score between boys and girls. The greatest difference in scores occurred between boys and girls in response to the statement that teachers should keep control of the class (68% and 80% respectively).

How do responses differ by age?

The following Tables show the response scores of Year 7 and Year 9 pupils for the eight sections indicating attitudes to issues related to religious education. The responses are shown as percentages of Year 7 and Year 9 separately and indicating the combined score for Agree and Agree Strongly.

TABLE 7.17: Attitude to Religious Education

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	x ²	p<
I like lessons about Bible stories	33	18	100.1	.001
I like lessons about the Church and its religion	29	18	59.8	.001
I like RE	50	39	41.7	.001
I would like to take RE as a GCSE option	11	17	26.7	.001
I would like to take RE as an A level subject	12	8	12.8	.001
RE could help in going on to university	28	20	28.8	.001
RE could help in getting a job	27	29	2.5	NS
The Government is right to encourage students to study RE	54	43	35.4	.001
Some RE should be taught in all year groups	67	54	56.5	.001
Some RE should be taught every week	55	43	53.7	.001

Table 7.17, 'Attitude to religious education', shows that Year 7 pupils were more positive in their attitude than were Year 9 pupils. Year 7 pupils selected Agree responses by between 67% and 11%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 54% and 8%. The highest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that some religious education should be taught in all year groups (67% and 54% respectively). The lowest scoring response from Year 7 pupils was that of choosing religious education as an examination option at age sixteen (11%), and the lowest scoring response from Year 9 pupils was that of choosing religious education as an 'A' level option (8%). The closest scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that religious education could help in getting a job (27% and 29% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that they liked lessons about Bible stories (33% and 18% respectively).

TABLE 7.18: Attitude to the content of RE

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	x ²	p<
RE should teach about a range of religions	77	75	1.3	NS
RE should teach about things like “telling the truth”	72	67	11.5	.001
RE should teach about things like “looking after the environment”	52	50	2.3	NS
RE should mostly teach about Christianity	29	18	49.5	.001
RE should encourage students to make their own decisions	76	81	11.9	.001
RE should encourage class discussions	66	74	26.6	.001
RE should encourage students to hear other people’s ideas	75	78	4.1	.05
RE should encourage students to think about the problems others face	69	74	10.2	.01
RE should encourage students to think about the purpose of life	67	68	0.0	NS
RE should encourage students to think about how people should behave	56	58	1.3	NS
RE should encourage students to think about how people should treat others	73	73	0.0	NS
RE should tell students what to believe	15	7	46.9	.001
RE should encourage a range of possible answers to difficult moral questions	43	48	7.5	.01

Table 7.18, ‘Attitude to content of religious education’, shows that Year 9 pupils were more positive in their attitude than were Year 7 pupils. Year 7 pupils selected Agree responses by between 77% and 15%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 81% and 7%. The highest scoring response from Year 7 pupils was that religious education should teach about a range of religions (77%), and the highest scoring response from Year 9 pupils was that religious education should encourage pupils to make their own decisions (81%). The lowest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that religious education should tell pupils what to believe (15% and

7% respectively); which taken conversely, indicates that Year 9 feel more strongly than Year 7 in the freedom to choose personal beliefs. The closest scores occurred between Year 7 and 9 pupils in response to the statement that religious education should encourage pupils to think about how people should treat others (both scoring 73%). The greatest difference in scores occurred between Year 7 and 9 pupils in response to the statement that religious education should mostly teach about Christianity (29% and 18% respectively).

TABLE 7.19: Attitude to assembly and festivals

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	χ^2	p<
School should hold a religious assembly every day	8	5	12.5	.001
School should hold a religious assembly at least once a week	36	14	211.3	.001
School should only hold a religious assembly occasionally	46	39	17.3	.001
The main British festivals are linked with Christianity	49	46	4.7	.05
Many people take part in the festivals but they do not believe in the religion	50	60	29.5	.001
Some of the festivals are not celebrated as religious events	51	59	20.8	.001

Table 7.19, 'Attitude to assembly and festivals', shows that Year 7 pupils were more positive in their attitude to assemblies than were Year 9; and that Year 9 pupils were more aware of the potential for the celebration of festivals to move from the religious to the secular, than were Year 7. Year 7 pupils selected Agree responses by between 51% and 8%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 60% and 5%. The highest scoring response from Year 7 pupils was that some festivals were not

celebrated as religious events (51%), the highest scoring response from Year 9 pupils was that many people take part in the festivals but they do not believe in the religion (60%). The lowest scoring response from both Year 7 and 9 pupils was that schools should hold a religious assembly everyday (8% and 5% respectively), and the closest scores occurred in response to this statement too. The greatest difference in scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that schools should hold a religious assembly at least once a week (36% and 14% respectively).

TABLE 7.20: Attitude to Christianity, Church, and Bible

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	x ²	p<
Christianity is an important part of life in Britain	49	40	27.1	.001
People can be Christians without going to church	78	76	2.3	NS
The church has no real message for us today	17	23	18.3	.001
Church is old fashioned	26	37	48.4	.001
It is important that young children learn about the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem	58	45	50.7	.001
The Bible has no real message for us today	17	24	22.8	.001
Some Bible stories have a symbolic meaning (an extra meaning for some people)	55	58	3.7	NS
To understand the Gospel stories you need to know about life and ways 2000 years ago	27	25	2.0	NS
The Bible has no meaning for today	16	21	15.4	.001

Table 7.20, 'Attitude to Christianity, Church and Bible', shows that Year 7 pupils were more positive in their attitude than were Year 9. Year 7 pupils selected Agree responses by between 78% and 16%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 76% and 21%. The highest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9

pupils was that people can be Christians without going to church (78% and 76% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that the Bible has no meaning for today (16% and 21% respectively). The closest scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to two separate statements, these were that people can be Christians without going to church (78% and 76% respectively) and that an understanding of the Gospels requires knowledge of the way of life in Jesus' Palestine (27% and 25% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that young children should learn about the birth of Jesus (58% and 45% respectively).

TABLE 7.21: Attitude to faith and affiliation

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	x ²	p<
Jesus can still help people today	34	32	1.7	NS
I have a religious faith	39	31	18.8	.001
I want to get married in a Christian place of worship eg church	52	50	0.9	NS
I want my children to be baptised	47	41	13.2	.001
My family encourage me to attend Church or a religious group	20	15	16.1	.001
I celebrate Christmas as a religious event	41	33	23.5	.001

Table 7.21, 'Attitude to faith and affiliation', shows that Year 7 pupils were more positive in their attitude than were Year 9 pupils. Year 7 pupils selected Agree responses by between 52% and 20%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 50% and 15%. The highest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was

that pupils want to marry in a Christian place of worship (52% and 50%); this also showed the closest scores between Year 7 and Year 9. The lowest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that their families encourage them to attend a place of worship (20% and 15% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that they celebrate Christmas as a religious event (41% and 33% respectively).

TABLE 7.22: Attitude to prayer

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	x ²	p<
Saying prayers does no good	19	24	11.2	.001
I pray in times of special need	45	39	13.2	.001
I pray before an important sporting event	26	20	15.7	.001
I pray when I am feeling lonely	28	18	45.0	.001
I pray when I am feeling frightened	37	28	26.5	.001
I pray when I am in trouble	39	31	20.9	.001
I pray when I am taking exams	38	28	35.0	.001
I pray when I am ill	25	20	14.3	.001
I pray when a member of my family is ill	58	51	15.1	.001
Sometimes I pray for fine weather	22	17	15.8	.001
Sometimes I pray for good luck	47	35	46.7	.001
Sometimes I pray to win the lottery	50	34	84.5	.001

Table 7.22, 'Attitude to prayer', shows that again Year 7 pupils were more positive in their attitude than were Year 9 pupils. Year 7 pupils selected Agree responses by between 58% and 19%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 51% and 17%. The highest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that pupils pray when a member of their family is ill (58% and 51% respectively). The lowest scoring response from Year 7 pupils was that saying prayers does no good (19%), although

conversely this indicates that Year 7 have a positive attitude to prayer. The lowest scoring response from Year 9 pupils was that of praying for fine weather (17%). The closest scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that saying prayers does no good (19% and 24% respectively). The greatest difference in scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that pupils sometimes pray to win the lottery (50% and 34% respectively).

TABLE 7.23: Attitude to forgiveness

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	x ²	p<
God punishes people who do wrong	15	16	2.0	NS
God forgives people who do wrong	47	35	50.8	.001
God forgives people only if they are sorry for doing wrong	45	37	23.9	.001
I try to punish those who hurt me	29	35	14.3	.001
I try to forgive those who hurt me	55	50	8.3	.01
When others do wrong against me I want to get even with them	42	49	16.9	.001
I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me	26	23	2.9	NS
I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me only if they are sorry	54	51	3.4	NS

Table 7.23, 'Attitude to forgiveness', shows that Year 7 pupils have a more positive attitude than do Year 9. Year 7 selected Agree responses by between 55% and 15%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 51% and 16%. The highest scoring response from Year 7 pupils was that pupils would try to forgive those who hurt them (55%), and the highest scoring response from Year 9 pupils was that they forgave others only if those people were sorry (51%). The lowest scoring response from both

Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that God punishes people who do wrong (15% and 16% respectively), and the closest scores occurred in response to this statement too. The greatest difference in scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the statement that God forgives people who do wrong (47% and 35% respectively).

TABLE 7.24: Attitude to RE teachers

	Yr 7 %	Yr 9 %	x ²	p<
I think all RE teachers should:				
have a sense of humour	83	84	0.1	NS
keep control of the class	75	73	0.9	NS
explain topics clearly	89	86	6.5	.05
encourage me to give my opinions	75	73	1.7	NS
be friendly	91	88	10.0	.01
help when I find the work difficult	92	89	10.4	.01
be strict	15	19	7.5	.01

Table 7.24, 'Attitude to religious education teachers', shows that generally Year 7 pupils were more strongly in agreement with the item statements than were the Year 9 pupils; indicating that Year 7 were more positive in their attitude than were Year 9. Year 7 pupils selected Agree responses by between 92% and 15%; while Year 9 pupils selected them by between 89% and 19%. The highest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that pupils wanted help with difficult work (92% and 89% respectively). The lowest scoring response from both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils was that pupils did not think teachers should be strict (15% and 19% respectively), and the greatest difference in scores occurred with this statement too. The closest scores occurred between Year 7 and Year 9 pupils in response to the

statement that teachers should have a sense of humour (83% and 84% respectively).

Findings

Attitude to religious education: in this section the boys within the full cohort showed a less positive attitude to religious education than did the girls. There were ten items listed, and there was no significant difference in the responses between boys and girls in three of the items. These were the liking of Bible stories (26% and 27% respectively), religious education and links with university (24% and 25% respectively), and religious education linking with a career (29% and 28% respectively). When comparing Year 7 and Year 9 pupils, Year 7 showed a more positive attitude to religious education. The exception was with the item concerned with whether religious education could help in getting a job, where there was no significant difference in the responses between Year 7 and Year 9 (27% and 29% respectively).

A point of interest was the difference in the responses to the two items 'I like RE' and 'I would like to take RE as a GCSE option'. Girls preferred each item more than boys (51% and 39%; 18% and 10% respectively for the two items). Year 7 preferred RE more than did Year 9 (50% and 39% respectively), but Year 9 were more positive toward RE as a GCSE subject than were Year 7 (17% and 11% respectively). A point of concern is shown in the difference in the percentages of responses between the two items, which show that although boys liked RE (39%) they only indicated a low interest in it as an examination subject (10%). Girls liked RE (51%) but only 18% would take it as a GCSE option.

In summary, girls were more positive in their attitude than boys, and Year 7 pupils were more positive than were Year 9 pupils in their attitude to religious education.

Attitude toward the content of religious education: within this second section the percentages were much higher than those scored in the first section, it would appear that pupils have a positive attitude toward a curriculum concerned with moral development linked to social issues. Boys were less favourably inclined toward the content than were girls. However, of the thirteen items listed there was no significant difference in the responses between boys and girls in four of the items. These were concerned with teaching linked with the environment (50% and 52% respectively); teaching about Christianity (24% for each); telling students what to believe (12% and 11% respectively); and considering moral problems (44% and 46% respectively). In each of the remaining items girls gave more positive responses than did boys.

Considering differences between Year 7 and Year 9, it shows that in the main Year 7 pupils were less appreciative of the content of religious education lessons than were Year 9. Year 7 were less positive than Year 9, about making their own decisions (76% and 81% respectively), or in recognising the importance of class discussions (66% and 74% respectively), or hearing the views of others (75% and 78% respectively), or thinking about the problems others face (69% and 74% respectively). There were thirteen items in this section, and there was no significant difference in the responses between Year 7 and Year 9 in five of the items. These items were concerned with teaching a range of religions (77% and 75% respectively); looking after the environment (52% and 50% respectively); considering the purpose of life (67% and 68% respectively); behaviour (56% and 58% respectively); and how to treat others (73%).

In summary, girls were more positive than were boys, and Year 9 pupils were more positive than were Year 7 pupils in their attitude to the content of religious education.

Attitude to assembly and festivals: with regard to pupil attitude to assemblies there was no significant difference in scores gained between boys and girls for the item concerned with daily assembly (7% and 6% respectively). Boys were more in favour of weekly assemblies (28%) than were girls (24%). Girls voted more highly in favour of only having occasional assemblies (boys 40% and girls 47%). Girls were shown to be less positive than were boys, and Year 9 were less positive than Year 7 in their attitude to assemblies.

There was no significant difference in the three responses, linked to attitude to festivals, between boys and girls. Year 9 supported two of the three items concerned with festivals, more strongly than did Year 7 (60% and 50%, 59% and 51% respectively).

Attitude to Christianity, Church and Bible: the overall percentage of pupils who agreed that 'Christianity was an important part of life in Britain' was 44%, there was no significant difference in the responses between boys and girls (44% and 45% respectively). However, Year 7 were more positive than were Year 9 (49% and 40% respectively), in response to this item. Girls were more positive toward the church and the Bible than were boys in their response to seven of the eight remaining items. The exception being that a knowledge of biblical history was necessary to understand the Gospels, where boys responded more favourably than did girls (29% and 23% respectively). Year 7 were more positive than Year 9 in their responses to six of the

nine items. The item 'Some Bible stories have a symbolic meaning' showed no significant difference between the responses of Year 7 and Year 9 (55% and 58% respectively). There was also no significant difference in Year 7 and Year 9 scores with the items concerned with life 2000 years ago, and Christians as church attenders (27% and 25%: 78% and 76% respectively).

Attitude to faith and affiliation: although only 17% of the total cohort of pupils said that their parents encouraged them to attend a place of worship, 50% said that they would like to marry in a Christian place of worship and 43% wanted their own children to be baptised. There are six items within this section and girls showed a more positive response than boys in three of the items, the remaining three items showed no significant difference in responses between boys and girls. Year 7 scored more positively on four of the six items than did Year 9; the remaining two items showed no significant difference in the responses between Year 7 and Year 9.

Attitude to prayer: scores from the total cohort fluctuated between 53% and 20% in this section showing attitudes to prayer. An interesting point is that in response to 'saying prayers does no good' 21% of pupils agreed, which indicates that a high percentage would feel that prayers can do some good. However, the remaining items which relate to personal prayer, show that pupils do not generally seem to pray. It would have been better to include other items such as prayer as worship, or praying to give thanks. It is unclear whether pupils recognise that prayer works for some people, even if they do not pray themselves very often, or it may be that pupils pray for reasons not given in the questionnaire.

There were twelve items within this section, girls were more favourably inclined towards prayer than were boys, in nine of the items. Boys responded more positively to praying before a sporting event than did girls (26% and 20% respectively), and prayed to win the lottery more than girls (46% and 38% respectively). There was no significant difference in responses to praying for fine weather (20% for both boys and girls). In each of the twelve items Year 7 were more positive in their responses than were Year 9.

In summary, girls were more positive than were boys, and Year 7 pupils were more positive than were Year 9 pupils in their attitude to prayer.

Attitude to forgiveness: percentages of the full cohort show that 41% of pupils regard God as a forgiving figure, but adding the proviso that the wrong-doer should be sorry. Just over half (52%) try to link forgiveness to their own attitude and behaviour, but nearly half want to gain retribution (45%). Less than a quarter of the cohort find forgiveness easy (24%), however, if the perpetrator of the wrong was sorry this aided the process of forgiveness (52%). Boys tried to punish those who hurt them more than did girls (40% and 23% respectively), and this was reinforced with boys wanting to 'get even' with those who wronged them, scoring 52% with girls scoring 39%. There was no significant difference in the responses of boys and girls to the item 'God punishes people who do wrong' (15% and 16% respectively). Year 7 pupils were more positive to the concept of forgiveness than were Year 9 pupils in five of the items. Three items showed no significant difference in responses between Year 7 and Year 9.

In summary, girls were more positive to the idea of forgiveness than boys; and Year 7 pupils tended to be more positive in their attitude than did Year 9 pupils.

Attitude to religious education teachers: pupils responded positively to this section with high percentages being scored, this indicates that pupils desire a secure classroom environment. Two of the items showed no significant difference in scores between boys and girls. With each of the remaining five items girls responded more positively than did boys, which perhaps indicates their preference for a reassuring classroom atmosphere. Year 7 scored slightly more positively than did Year 9 on four of the items, but the remaining three items showed no significant difference in responses.

The data shows that in seven of the eight sections girls were more positive than boys, and Year 7 were more positive than Year 9 pupils. From this it can be concluded that the most positive group would be Year 7 girls and the least positive the Year 9 boys.

Of what value is this research?

The findings clearly show that Year 9 boys are less positive toward religious education and religion than are the other groups surveyed. A starting point in considering the position would be to look at the responses to the item 'I like RE' where Year 7 scored 50%, and Year 9 scored 39%. Link these percentages with the responses to 'I would like to take RE as a GCSE option' (Year 7: 11%, Year 9: 17%) and it can be seen that religious education in the school does not appear to be in a very strong position. A consideration of the other information, on pupil attitudes, gained

from the questionnaire may help to improve this position.

Pupils agree that the teaching of a range of religions should be undertaken, but there seems to be some opposition to the dominance of Christianity. However, pupils may have meant either that Christianity should be treated the same as other religions or that religious education should deal with moral and social issues linked with religions in general. Pupils appear more appreciative of the value of discussing moral issues as they grow older.

Although there were high scores for 'RE should teach about things like "telling the truth"', nevertheless, the actual scores decreased between Year 7 and Year 9. Perhaps this indicates that the concepts of truth and trust are taken too much for granted by teachers, and that a consideration of such issues should be built in to the religious education curriculum. Similarly, concern for the environment was only appreciated as a religious issue by half of the pupils, with a slight decline in Year 9. Does this indicate that pupils consider religious education to be a body of external rules, opinions, suggestions and advice rather than being an internal state based on considered spiritual and moral issues?

Considering the very negative views on school worship, then this bodes ill for religious education if pupils associate religious assembly with religious education lessons, and especially if the school holds assemblies daily as the law requires. Both the church and the Bible continue to have meaning for pupils, although only 26% thought that a knowledge of life at the time of Christ was important. This may indicate that the original historical meaning may not be considered relevant, but only

those parts which are translated into a message for today.

Approximately a third (35%) indicated a religious faith, although more wanted their children baptised (43%) and to have a religious wedding (50%). In addition only 21% maintained that 'saying prayers does no good'. This indicates that a significant number of the pupils have religious sympathies and if religious education could be made more relevant to their lives and experiences then its importance in personal and social development could be recognised by the pupils. The concept of forgiveness is central to Christianity, however, our society continues to encourage its sons to 'stand up for themselves' and 'make sure nobody walks all over them'. Consideration of trust, honesty and the purpose of punishment needs to be incorporated into religious education. Perhaps the foundations of the religious education curriculum are not as strong as they need to be.

It was clear from the responses that most pupils advocated a classroom environment where they felt they were being encouraged and supported in their learning, they wanted to feel that the teacher was in control and yet responsive to them as individuals.

The value of this research, is that it shows that religious education continues to hold a weak position within the school, but that there is a substantial minority who have a sympathetic attitude to religious education and religion. In order to engage with this group more positively, stronger links need to be made between content and its relevance for pupils today. A more structured approach to the teaching of religious education needs to be established in order to develop the pupil's level of experience

and understanding.

CONCLUSION

Understanding

Attitude

Pupil Profile

Main Conclusions

Further Research

This study set out to examine the changes that take place, in the understanding of and attitude to religious education and religious issues, between Year 7 and Year 9. The main problem with which this research is concerned is the rejection of biblical teaching by pupils within Key Stage 3.

This present research shows that between Year 7 and Year 9 there is an increase in the percentage of pupils rejecting biblical material. The problem remains, however, in that it is not clear why biblical material is rejected. This study has considered three main areas in an attempt to help clarify this problem. The first is understanding, here a selection of interpretations was offered in answer to biblical statements which showed pupil preference for literal or symbolic interpretations or a rejection of such statements. The second, where the attitude of pupils to religious education and religious issues was considered. The third, where the profile of the pupils' religious affiliation was assessed.

Before considering the three main areas, as stated above, the various aims of religious education are discussed in chapter one. There have been a great many changes in the aims and in the delivery of religious education since the early twentieth century. The aims of religious education incorporate both the objective factors of learning about religions, and the more subjective factors of learning from religions. The question is, to what extent does the fundamental problem remain? That is, to what extent do pupils continue to hold negative views of religious issues and religious education? The changes and development within religious education have, to some extent, brought about new responses thus making original reasons for the rejection of the subject obsolete but replacing them with others. This can be seen through the research carried out by Loukes (1962) where pupils considered the subject matter to be interesting, but the 'chalk and talk' methods employed by teachers tended to encourage a negative attitude. However, although religious education has become

more pupil-centred and has incorporated a variety of method styles, pupils still hold a negative view of the subject. So just as the aims have evolved, perhaps too, has society and the opposition to religious education and religious issues.

Greeley (1992) has shown that although not irreligious Britain is less religious than Ireland and USA, with fewer believing in God or being affiliated to a denomination. Such an attitude held by British adults is bound to influence British adolescents. A possible reason for the difference in religious outlook between countries is that religion may be perceived as being interwoven with social and political power in both Ireland and USA. Whereas in Britain there is recognition that the Church works for the social good but has little political influence and is of insignificant importance in the real world. Therefore, the Church plays but a small part in the lives of many, perhaps simply reduced to marking important family and social events such as marriages and deaths.

It is not surprising with such a backdrop that the teaching of religious education has remained difficult despite the enlightened changes in approach. However, with the increase in the numbers of immigrants entering Britain a lack of understanding is likely to emerge between the host country as it moves away from formal religion, and a non-Christian but devout religious immigrant population. The host nation will increasingly be unaware of the importance and power of religious commitment upon which the immigrants' whole lifestyle and philosophy is based. Such a situation presents difficult hurdles for those developing the aims of religious education, but as Greeley stresses "the differences need to be taken seriously by anyone interested in the impact of political and social history, and existing social structures, on human culture and behaviour." (1992:69).

Understanding

Chapter two addresses the area of religious understanding, this is important because

appreciation of how pupils develop cognitively underpins all work done within the curriculum. A great deal of research has been undertaken to try to establish how pupils develop cognitively, and from this many educationalists have advocated stage theories. It is generally agreed that as pupils develop mentally, they move consecutively through three main stages, but some researchers hold that there can be regression. Piaget suggested that pupils may not always work at the level of their full potential and that a variety of factors could influence this such as tiredness and interest levels. There is still debate as to when pupils assimilate information and experience, and also what form such understanding takes.

Chapter four addresses the issue of symbolic understanding and its place within religious education and religious issues. The work of Hunt in the 1970s provided the opportunity for a new dimension to be introduced into the teaching of religious education, namely that of symbolic interpretation. His research showed that there was a definite sector of Christian believers who favoured a symbolic interpretation of the Bible rather than accepting a literal view.

There has been some attempt by researchers to link the preference for religious interpretation with cognitive styles or development. Van der Lans (1991) found that literal interpretation related to a low degree of cognitive flexibility, with single responses preferred. Metaphorical interpretation related to a more elaborate cognitive structure with a variety of responses preferred. Hutsebaut (2000) categorised cognitive styles in terms of interpretation. He presented four styles; two were literal interpretations, one of which was an option for religious believers and one for non-believers. A third style, where reliance upon the context is paramount, was an option for both religious believers and non-believers. The fourth style was a symbolic interpretation for religious believers. Hutsebaut was concerned to see if these four cognitive styles could be considered as a developmental process. He concluded that they did not constitute a linear development process, but rather that there were

moments of change peculiar to each individual and dependent on their contact with religion. McGrady in the 1990s, felt that there should be a clear structure within the teaching of religious education that helped pupils develop metaphorical thinking.

Empirical research on how pupils interpret biblical statements is addressed in chapter six. This present research is particularly concerned with formulating a measurement instrument to discover the extent to which pupils in both Year 7 and Year 9, accept or reject biblical passages. A further dimension was added, in that those pupils accepting the passages should be allowed to select either a literal interpretation of the biblical passage or a symbolic one. The findings indicate that Year 9 are less literal than Year 7 pupils, that Year 9 were more likely to reject biblical passages, and that Year 9 pupils selected symbolic interpretations more often than did Year 7. As pupils progressed through Key Stage 3, so their response to biblical passages changed. The concern is whether as pupils reject literal interpretation they simultaneously reject biblical teaching, or does symbolic interpretation replace literal thinking? Studies on cognitive development indicate that as children grow older so they move from literal thinking and develop a symbolic form of thinking. The findings of this research are that for Year 7 pupils the mean scores are shown to be quite different for the three possible interpretations, that is Literal: 7.4, Rejection: 4.7, Symbolic: 5.9. By way of comparison, for Year 9 pupils the mean scores are much closer together: Literal; 5.6, Rejection; 5.7, Symbolic; 6.7. This indicates that as pupils move from Literal interpretation in Year 7, they seem to divide themselves fairly equally in Year 9 between symbolic interpretation and that of rejection of biblical passages. Therefore, as pupils grow older they become less literal in their thinking, and they adopt a more symbolic interpretation of biblical material but also increase their tendency to reject it too.

Attitude

In general, research has shown that religious education is held in low regard by

adolescents, and the rejection of beliefs go hand in hand with negative attitudes. Various studies have been carried out to ascertain why this should be so, and to examine the factors influencing young people. It has been shown that parents, school and church have differing roles, and differing levels of influence on the adolescent. The attitude of the teenagers to religious education, and religious issues, is also strongly influenced by gender and individual personality.

Attitude to religious education and religious issues is discussed in chapter three. Research has shown that social factors also influence pupils' attitude to religion, one of the most important being the influence of adults, especially parents (Kay, Francis and Gibson, 1996). Today's society appears to have turned away from church attendance and formal religious allegiance. However, this is not to say that such a society is anti-religion, but their actions may indicate to the younger generation that religion has no real part to play in today's world. Religious education is much more reliant upon the pupils' experience than are other subjects in the curriculum. Factors such as gender, age and personality play important roles in ascertaining attitude to religious matters. Research indicates that girls with a more introvert personality have a more favourable attitude to religion than do boys or those with a more extrovert personality, and that Year 7 pupils are more positive than are those in Year 9.

Empirical research data, showing pupil attitudes to religious education and religious issues, is assessed in chapter seven. Less than half of the pupils (44%) said that they liked religious education, but they did think that religious education ought to be part of the school curriculum. The teaching of world religions was supported, as was the concept of honesty. Decision making, discussions, thinking about the purpose of life and consideration of others were supported too. The data clearly show that the link between Christian belief and church attendance was not essential, with many pupils indicating that church attendance was not a necessary criterion for being a Christian. Pupils were clearly supportive of religious education that dealt with social and moral

issues, but rejected some of the traditional forms of worship such as church attendance and prayer. The attitude of girls was more positive than was the attitude of boys towards a variety of factors, and Year 7 pupils were generally more positive to these factors than were Year 9 pupils.

Pupil profile

The research method discussed in chapter five draws out important issues from the study of earlier research and links them with the present research. Research within religious education also considers whether movement through the cognitive stages might be dependent upon a number of factors which contribute to cognitive development. One such factor might be the individual's experience of the real world; that is a knowledge and understanding of how and why people act and interact in the ways in which they do.

A profile of the pupils was established which considered such factors as church affiliation and the perceived importance of the teachings of Jesus. This profile of the pupils showed that they were unlikely to be church-attenders, which seemed very much in line with the church attendance practiced by their parents. Only a small percentage (15%) were likely to be confirmed or be members of a church, with a similar small percentage of pupils praying on a weekly basis. Personal reading of the Bible was unlikely, but the idea of passing on the teachings of Jesus to children aged seven to ten was supported by many of the pupils (60%). Traditional forms of the concept of God, for example as the Father of Jesus or a person who loves us, were favoured by just over half of the pupils. These results indicate that pupils are divided in their views on religious education and religious issues. However, there are still a substantial number of pupils who value Christianity, whether it be for religious, traditional or cultural reasons though is uncertain.

Main Conclusions

The main conclusions that emerge from this thesis are listed below.

- The aims of religious education established a pupil-centred curriculum in that studies should start from the pupils' experience and knowledge base. World religions being incorporated into the programme, and both objective and subjective approaches followed.
- Pupils develop cognitively through stages, but a range of factors influence this progression.
- Pupils' attitudes to religious education and religious issues are formed by their experience and proximity to a range of factors, not least the influence of adults with whom they come into contact.
- Research concerned with symbolic or metaphorical religious interpretation has shown that it is an important area that has yet to be fully developed within the religious education curriculum.
- Pupils move from a literal interpretation of biblical passages in Year 7, and there is an increase in both symbolic interpretation and rejection of such passages in Year 9. As boys grow older they become less literal and select rejection responses rather than symbolic responses. Girls also become less literal but select symbolic interpretations more, as they grow older, rather than rejection responses.
- Girls have a more positive attitude towards religious education and religious issues than do boys, and this positive attitude is stronger in Year 7 than it is in Year 9.

Further research

These conclusions show that an improved understanding of religious language and story might bring about a more positive attitude to religious education. A further dimension, that of a symbolic interpretation of biblical passages, could be selected by pupils. In order to ascertain whether this might be the case research is needed to

consider whether specific teaching in this area of biblical interpretation can make a difference. A questionnaire could be administered which gave biblical statements, followed by three interpretations. These represent the Literal, Rejection and Symbolic interpretations. This questionnaire should be administered before teaching on symbolism is undertaken, then at the end of the course the questionnaire should be administered again to the same cohort. Such a course might include reference to symbolism within the general teaching of a religion, that is, where symbolism does not form a major part of the module. In addition there ought to be a substantial element of the course emphasising the role of symbolism within religion. Here an awareness of both literal and symbolic interpretations can be fully explained through a variety of artefacts and religious writings. One part of the cohort should undertake the taught course as outlined above, the remainder to undertake religious education lessons with no particular emphasis on symbolism, beyond that which would be expected in the general teaching of that religion.

The questionnaire should not only indicate the age and gender of each pupil but their cognitive ability level too, possibly through the use of Standard Assessment Test results (SATs). SATs are administered nationally at the end of Key Stage 2 in Year 6, and at the end of Key Stage 3 in Year 9. These tests are held in English, maths and science; therefore, there are four possible statistics available if an overall total score is included. These statistics might show some relevant links with specific subjects, and research has indicated that those pupils who like science tend to be less positive in their attitude toward religion. They might also show whether the higher ability pupils are more likely to select symbolic interpretations.

A course explaining the role of symbolism could be taught if it were found that such a course was more successful than traditional teaching. The success of such a course being measured by there being less pupils selecting the rejection option after following such a course, than there were in the groups following a traditionally taught

course. Perhaps a measure of its success would be an increase in the number of pupils selecting religious education as a GCSE option. To strengthen such research it might be possible to establish a scale which would measure attitude to religious education.

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APPENDIX

The Questionnaire

THE IDEAS OF
YOUNG PEOPLE
ABOUT RELIGION
AND RE

This questionnaire explores what young people think about religious education and religious teaching, as well as their links with religious organisations.

There are NO 'right' or 'wrong' answers, please be honest and give your own personal views. Do not write your name on the questionnaire because this is a totally confidential survey.

Thank you very much for your help.

Susan Loman

University of Wales, Bangor

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION Questionnaire for Students

1 Name of school.....

2 The name of my primary/middle school was.....
.....

Please tick the appropriate boxes

3 In which Year are you?

Year	7	1
Year	9	2

4 Which gender are you?

Boy		1
Girl		2

INSTRUCTIONS

In this section there are some quotes from the Bible.
Each quote is followed by three comments.

Tick the comment which BEST shows your views about the quote.

For each question please tick ONE box only.

5 "He really was the Son of God!" (Mt27v54)

Jesus was really the son of God

1

Jesus was an ordinary human like everyone else
and certainly not God

1

Jesus was a person with an extra
special relationship with God

1

6 "Jesus went to Bethany, the home of
Lazarus, the man he had raised from
death" (Jn12v1)

Jesus really brought people back from
the dead

1

The writer of the story wanted to show
Jesus had power in this world and the next

1

Nobody can give life to a dead person

1

7 "Suddenly a strong wind blew up, and the
waves began to spill over into the boat,
so that it was about to fill with water.
Jesus stood up and commanded the wind,
'Be quiet!' and he said to the waves 'Be
still!' (Mk4v37,39)

The miracles recorded in the Bible
actually happened

1

Although not factually correct, the
miracles are interpretations of events

1

Miracles cannot happen, since they go against
scientific laws of nature

1

8

"As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my own dear Son.'" (Mk1v10-11)

Jesus was fully human and only had human parents

God announced that Jesus was his son, at his baptism

Jesus was the son of God in the sense that he was the most important messenger/prophet of God

1	
1	
1	

9

"he (Joseph) had no sexual relations with her (Mary) before she gave birth to her son" (Mt1v24)

Mary really was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus

Saying Mary was a virgin was a way of showing Mary's purity and the importance of Jesus

Mary could not have been a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus

1	
1	
1	

10

"When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened'" (Lk2v15)

The shepherds were working nearby and the angels told them what had happened

The writer was trying to show that Jesus would be especially close to the poor

The shepherds were working and not interested in a baby being born

1	
1	
1	

- 11 After Jesus' crucifixion "the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors ... Then Jesus came and stood among them" (Jn20v19)

Jesus came back to life and appeared to his disciples in a physical form

Jesus' followers felt he had communicated with them in a spiritual way after his death

Jesus had been fully human and after he died he could not communicate with anyone

1	
1	
1	

- 12 "As he (Jesus) was blessing them, he departed from them and was taken up into heaven" (Lk24v51)

This could not happen as heaven does not exist

Jesus' body left the earth and rose up into the sky to heaven

The writer wanted to show the disciples felt that Jesus would live on in power and glory

1	
1	
1	

- 13 "An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right of the altar where the incense was burnt" (Lk1v11)

Angels exist and are messengers of God

There is no scientific evidence for the existence of angels

The writer wanted to show how God uses angels to communicate with people

1	
1	
1	

14

"Jesus called them, and at once they left the boat and their father, and went with him." (Mt4v21-22)

The author shows Jesus' spiritual power by this immediate response, even if it didn't really happen

1	
---	--

The disciples really did leave everything without a second thought

1	
---	--

The disciples would not have behaved like this since they were responsible people with commitments

1	
---	--

15

"Then the three disciples saw Moses and Elijah (important Jewish leaders who had died) talking with Jesus." (Mt17v3)

This was impossible as they had died years before

1	
---	--

This was to show that Jesus was as important as Moses and Elijah

1	
---	--

This actually happened through the power of God

1	
---	--

16

"Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill these jars with water. Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast.' They took him the water, which now had turned into wine"(Jn2v8-9)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

1	
---	--

These events did not happen

1	
---	--

The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning

1	
---	--

- 17 Jesus "broke the (5) loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people" (about 5000 of them). Everyone ate and had enough. (Mt14v19-20)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

- 18 "They (wise men) brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him." (Mt2v11)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

- 19 "Between three and six o'clock in the morning Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water." (Mt14v25)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

20

"'Drink it (the wine), all of you,' he said;
'this is my blood, which seals God's
covenant, my blood poured out for many for
the forgiveness of sins.'" (Mt2v27-28)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them
extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

21

After Jesus died "the curtain hanging in
the Temple was torn in two from top to
bottom." (Mt 27v51)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them
extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

22

"Suddenly there was a violent earthquake;
an angel of the Lord came down from heaven,
rolled the stone away, and sat on it."
(Mt28v2)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them
extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

23

Jesus went "into the desert, where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was hungry when it was over." (Lk4v2)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

24

Jesus said to Simon "'..let down your (fishing) nets for a catch.'..Simon answered 'we worked hard all night long and caught nothing.'..They let them down and caught such a large number of fish that the nets were about to break." (Lk5v4&5)

This actually happened as described in the Bible

These events did not happen

The events were described like this to give them extra religious meaning

1	
1	
1	

INSTRUCTIONS

Please CIRCLE one response in each line

AS means you Agree Strongly

A means you Agree

NS means you are Not Sure

D means you Disagree

DS means you Disagree Strongly

Read each question carefully and think "Do I agree with it?"

If you Agree Strongly, put a circle round.....AS A NS D DS

If you Agree, put a circle round.....AS A NS D DS

If you are Not Sure, put a circle round.....AS A NS D DS

If you Disagree, put a circle round.....AS A NS D DS

If you Disagree Strongly, put a circle round.....AS A NS D DS

- 25 I like lessons about Bible stories..... AS A NS D DS
- 26 I like lessons about the Church and
its religion..... AS A NS D DS
- 27 I like RE..... AS A NS D DS
- 28 I would like to take RE as a GCSE option..... AS A NS D DS
- 29 I would like to take RE as an A level subject.. AS A NS D DS
- 30 RE could help in going on to university..... AS A NS D DS
- 31 RE could help in getting a job..... AS A NS D DS
- 32 The Government is right to encourage students
to study RE..... AS A NS D DS
- 33 Some RE should be taught in all year groups.... AS A NS D DS
- 34 Some RE should be taught every week..... AS A NS D DS
- 35 RE should teach about a range of religions..... AS A NS D DS
- 36 RE should teach about things like
"telling the truth"..... AS A NS D DS
- 37 RE should teach about things like "looking
after the environment"..... AS A NS D DS
- 38 RE should mostly teach about Christianity..... AS A NS D DS

- 39 RE should encourage students to make
their own decisions..... AS A NS D DS
- 40 RE should encourage class discussions..... AS A NS D DS
- 41 RE should encourage students to hear other
people's ideas..... AS A NS D DS
- 42 RE should encourage students to think about
the problems others face..... AS A NS D DS
- 43 RE should encourage students to think about
the purpose of life..... AS A NS D DS
- 44 RE should encourage students to think about
how people should behave..... AS A NS D DS
- 45 RE should encourage students to think about
how people should treat others..... AS A NS D DS
- 46 RE should tell students what to believe..... AS A NS D DS
- 47 RE should encourage a range of possible answers
to difficult moral questions..... AS A NS D DS
- 48 School should hold a religious assembly
every day..... AS A NS D DS
- 49 School should hold a religious assembly
at least once a week..... AS A NS D DS
- 50 School should only hold a religious assembly
occasionally..... AS A NS D DS
- 51 Christianity is an important part of life
in Britain..... AS A NS D DS
- 52 The main British festivals are linked with
Christianity..... AS A NS D DS
- 53 Many people take part in the festivals but
they do not believe in the religion..... AS A NS D DS
- 54 Some of the festivals are not celebrated as
religious events..... AS A NS D DS
- 55 People can be Christians without going to
church..... AS A NS D DS
- 56 It is important that young children learn
about the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem..... AS A NS D DS
- 57 The church has no real message for us today.... AS A NS D DS
- 58 The Bible has no real message for us today.... AS A NS D DS
- 59 Some Bible stories have a symbolic meaning
(an extra meaning for some people)..... AS A NS D DS

60	To understand the Gospel stories you need to know about life and ways 2000 years ago.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
61	Jesus can still help people today.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
62	Saying prayers does no good.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
63	The Bible has no meaning for today.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
64	Church is old fashioned.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
65	I have a religious faith.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
66	God punishes people who do wrong.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
67	God forgives people who do wrong.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
68	God forgives people only if they are sorry for doing wrong.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
69	I try to punish those who hurt me.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
70	I try to forgive those who hurt me.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
71	When others do wrong against me I want to get even with them.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
72	I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
73	I find it easy to forgive others when they do wrong against me only if they are sorry.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
74	I want to get married in a Christian place of worship eg church.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
75	I want my children to be baptised.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
76	I pray in times of special need.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
77	I pray before an important sporting event.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
78	I pray when I am feeling lonely.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
79	I pray when I am feeling frightened.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
80	I pray when I am in trouble.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
81	I pray when I am taking exams.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
82	I pray when I am ill.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
83	I pray when a member of my family is ill.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
84	Sometimes I pray for fine weather.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS
85	Sometimes I pray for good luck.....	AS	A	NS	D	DS

This school year

107 How many female teachers taught you RE?
(tick ONE box only)

None	0	
One	1	
Two	2	
Three or more	3	

108 How many male teachers taught you RE?
(tick ONE box only)

None	0	
One	1	
Two	2	
Three or more	3	

Last school year

109 How many female teachers taught you RE?
(tick ONE box only)

None	0	
One	1	
Two	2	
Three or more	3	

110 How many male teachers taught you RE?
(tick ONE box only)

None	0	
One	1	
Two	2	
Three or more	3	

The school year before last (2 years ago)

111 How many female teachers taught you RE?
(tick ONE box only)

None	0	
One	1	
Two	2	
Three or more	3	

112 How many male teachers taught you RE
the year before last?
(tick ONE box only)

None	0	
One	1	
Two	2	
Three or more	3	

During the past three years

113 Has the same teacher taught your
RE lessons?
(tick ONE box only)

for three years	3	
for two years	2	
for one year	1	

Did you regularly attend church services
(at least once a month) when you were:

- 161 5 - 6 years
162 9 - 10 years
163 13 - 14 years

Yes	No

Did you regularly (at least once a month) attend a religious
study group eg Sunday School, Crusaders, Bible study group,
Girls' or Boys' Brigade, when you were:

- 164 5 - 6 years
165 9 - 10 years
166 13 - 14 years

Yes	No

Did you sometimes attend (at least once every 2 months)
a religious study group eg. Sunday school, Crusaders, Bible
study group, Girls' or Boys' Brigade, when you were:

- 167 5 - 6 years
168 9 - 10 years
169 13 - 14 years

Yes	No

- 170 Have you attended any other Christian
meetings/societies?

Yes	No

- 171 Have you been confirmed or admitted
to adult membership of a church?

Yes	No

- 172 I go to church or other place of worship:
(Please tick ONE box)

Nearly every week
At least once a month
Sometimes
Once or twice a year
Less than once a year
Never

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

173 I pray by myself:
(Please tick ONE box)

Nearly every day
At least once a week
At least once a month
Occasionally
Never

5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

174 I read the Bible myself:
(Please tick ONE box)

Nearly every day
At least once a week
At least once a month
Occasionally
Never

5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

175 I belong to the following religious group:
(Please tick ONE box)

none
Anglican/Church of England
Baptist
Jehovah's Witnesses
Methodist
Roman Catholic
Salvation Army
Society of Friends
United Reformed Church
Buddhist
Hindu
Jewish
Muslim
Sikh
Don't know
Other (please state).....

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176 My mother/female guardian attends a Christian place of worship: (tick ONE box)

nearly every week
at least once a month
sometimes
once or twice a year
less than once a year
never
don't know

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
9	

177 My father/male guardian attends a Christian place of worship: (tick ONE box)

nearly every week
at least once a month
sometimes
once or twice a year
less than once a year
never
don't know

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
9	

HAVE YOU ANY HELPFUL COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE
ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE?