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**John McCann: A Theological Critique of Christian Education, with  
special reference to Developments in Northern Ireland since 1944**

**Ph.D. 1992**

**ABSTRACT**

The perspective adopted in this thesis is that of a Northern Irish Catholic Christian, a teacher by profession. The field is that of the theology of education. The thesis has three principal aims; firstly, to provide a justification for a confident Christian education in an increasingly secular and agnostic world; secondly, to evaluate the development and present status of Christian education in Northern Ireland in the light of its sectarian history and current situation of community conflict; thirdly, to consider the remit of Christian education and its rôle in promoting societal harmony. The thesis consists of eight chapters. Its overall design may be discerned in a general introduction and seven other chapters of which four engage the issue of Christian education in the Northern Ireland context. Of the other three, one chapter criticizes analytical philosophy and positivist influences in contemporary liberal education, especially where these have affected conceptions of religious education. The second attempts a validation of Christian education, and in addition promotes Christian apologetics as both a viable and needed response to relativistic agnosticism. The third consists of the conclusions to be drawn. The scope of the thesis embraces considerations of the assumptions and values of Christian education; the nature of religious education; theistic belief; the Christian tradition; the nature of confessionalism; Northern Ireland confessionalism; the influence of ideologies; the separate schools system; the question of integrated education; the historical background to the divided communities; the challenge of the great Christian imperatives of love and forgiveness in respect of community reconciliation and of implementing a Christian education fully alive to its responsibilities. The penultimate chapter confronts practical issues and suggests models and approaches in Christian education with outreach towards reconciliation.

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**A Theological Critique of Christian Education,  
with special reference to Developments in  
Northern Ireland since 1944**

by

**John McCann**

**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of Theology**

**The University of Durham  
1992**



12 MAY 1993

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## Declaration

The author declares that none of the material contained in this thesis, other than that duly acknowledged to other authors, has previously been submitted for a degree in this, or any other university.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, to investigate not only the theoretical basis, but the practical educational implications, of *pluralism*. Is Christian education a unique vehicle for exploring the intricacies, the divisions, the opportunities and the contradictions (real and apparent), in a world in which religious and cultural diversity are increasingly significant, or is it merely another instrument pressed into the service of denominational, sectarian interests? This is of special concern for those interested in Christian education in Northern Ireland. By examining what is done in the name of Christian education as well as the concept of Christian education, it may become clearer how an *authentically* Christian education assumes a distinctive and salutary rôle in both the social as well as the educational life of a society, which has hitherto been divided along sectarian lines. At the same time it should be possible to detect if the contemporary phenomenological pre-occupation with religious and cultural pluralism in education has, in practice, eroded the distinctive nature of Christian education, and not only in Northern Ireland.

Second, the study examines what influence *confessionalism* has had, and may still have, on education in general in Northern Ireland, and on *religious* education in particular. The analysis will call for an elucidation of *intentionality*, that is to say, for an inquiry into the motivation which initiates and sustains any given programme of educational activity that can be traced back to its ideological roots. In the light of what follows, this is an important methodological consideration, not least because a *confessional* approach to education (and particularly to *religious* education) is by no means limited to what is sometimes dismissed prematurely as a 'religious' commitment.

Third, the study has an essentially practical orientation in that it draws attention to some of the most pressing problems which beset teachers in their day-to-day work in schools where pluralism is recognized, and where tolerant attitudes to religious and cultural differences are encouraged. This aspect of the study is one on which it is natural that the present writer should concentrate. He has been a practising teacher in Northern Ireland for many years. More recently, he has had the time to review the experience of those years in teaching and to subject his thinking to closer scrutiny. With this experience in mind it is not surprising that his interest in the major issues already outlined is not purely theoretical. For this reason the study includes a number of 'models' for what might reasonably be described as Christian education at the present time. In the event, these suggestions may turn out to be the most controversial part of the thesis, but by including them it is his intention to help those most directly concerned to meet the challenge of pluralism in Northern Ireland. It may be added at this juncture that although a major focus of the study is Northern Ireland, it is hoped that both the theoretical analysis and the practical suggestions may be found useful elsewhere. The models discussed are conceived as elements in a paradigm which might well serve the interests of the wider pluralistic society. Some of these elements will be directly pedagogical. Others will be shown to have an organizational or a community dimension. Their usefulness, if any, will finally lie in any success they might achieve in assisting young people to come to terms, in a Christian way, with the challenges and dilemmas that await them.

## **1.2 Limits and scope of the study**

The present study is grounded in faith and informed by careful observation and experience. It is written from the standpoint of a believer in the objective truth of the Christian religion. The author is a teacher with a long involvement in religious education in a Catholic secondary school in West Belfast. The study examines both the concept of Christian education and its praxis in Northern Ireland. It should be stated, however, that Christian education has universal and inclusive implications. Though isolated in many ways, and for a variety of reasons, Northern Ireland - with all its problems - remains a part of the one human family. The *dis*-covery of Christian education in Northern Ireland as an instrument of social change in the community may be of interest, if not directly, to those who have a

concern for Christian education elsewhere, especially in situations of conflict where confessional differences are potentially, if not actually, divisive. It is obviously necessary to establish what is meant by *Christian* education and what is distinctive about *Christian* education. Again, if education has been influenced by explicitly confessional factors, is it sufficient to lay charges only against Christians? The contemporary attitude to confessionalism as a 'fallen concept' may be judged both premature and misconceived when the commitment of its critics to their own sets of values or forms of beliefs is brought into account. The validation of the assumptions and values which underlie Christian education is deemed essential, therefore, not only because of the contribution this will make to its justification, but also as a means of attempting to restore confidence in Christian education in an increasingly secular and agnostic world, the genesis of which may be traced to certain influences during the period of the Enlightenment and to the emergence of the empiricist and rationalist philosophies which grew out of it. The plausibility of the theistic world view, the nature of belief in God, the concept of religion, the historicity of Jesus, and the acceptance of the Christian religion as the authentic high point in God's relations with man - issues such as these are subsumed under the assumptions and values which support Christian education, and therefore, it is judged necessary to bring forward critical arguments to substantiate them.

In the confessional society of Northern Ireland it is frequently asserted that the root cause of the conflict is not *religious* but *tribal*. The attempt to identify the causes of conflict, or to shift the blame, is understandable but it may in fact be helpful. The problem is complex. The growing Catholic political compliance in the 1960s did not mollify Protestant opposition. Can the nature of Northern Ireland sectarianism be identified? What rôle is played by confessionalism in education? Given the overtly Christian confessional complexion of Northern Ireland society, this may be restated as an inquiry as to the extent to which confessional differences may have affected Christian education in the Province. A more precise understanding of what is meant by 'confessionalism' is required. 'Pluralism', similarly, requires the same careful investigation. With regard to methodology the following summary can be made. In approaching the topic for discussion the author has called first on his own accumulated experience of teaching and living in Northern Ireland. The conceptual framework is built out of the educational and theological concepts which have proved most useful in grappling with the various critical issues

that have emerged. The most important of these have already been mentioned: confessionalism (in its wider aspects), pluralism, Christian education; and then, the assumptions and values of Christianity, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the challenge of secularism. The analysis of these issues is attempted in a cultural milieu which is deeply (though perhaps not consciously) influenced by theological and philosophical relativism, by secularism and secularization<sup>(1)</sup> and by the kind of religious indifferentism which results in a form of 'faith' which is inaccessible to criticism, modification, or development. What have been called 'the faith of secular humanism' and 'the dogma of relativism' are cases in point. In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, there is evidence that competing ideologies have developed their idiosyncratic forms of confessionalism. Extremes of nationalism and unionism, that is to say, Republicanism and Unionism, have assumed a quasi-religious character. What effects have these ideologies had on education in the schools?

The author's early training in philosophy has led him to re-investigate the work of contemporary philosophers of education in order to evaluate their contribution to our understanding of the assumptions, the values, the aims and objectives, of education. With this in mind, the approach of Paul Hirst will be considered. This is because he, in particular, questioned the validity of *Christian* education, and re-assessed the rôle of *religious education* in the school curriculum. Admittedly, he conceded that the subject, treated in a strictly phenomenological manner, is concerned with a distinctive kind of knowledge, but the effect of this philosophical limitation has not been liberating. This consideration extends the *scope* of the present work to include a fuller treatment of the notion of *religious education per se*. While this has significance in Northern Ireland, its implications will no doubt be of interest to others involved with education in similar, if not so troubled, situations in other places. Finally, it should also be noted in this section on method, limits and scope, that the penultimate chapter of the study is specifically concerned with the practical issues that arise out of the foregoing chapters of theoretical analysis. Suggestions will be made which are intended to help practising teachers to explore what is often ignored because it is felt to be 'too controversial'. There is an incipient danger in this, of course, but the study would be less than complete if no attempt were made to introduce these practical suggestions, which are either based on personal experience or emanate from reflective thinking arising out of that experience.



### 1.3 Background to the study

Sectarian division in education:

The preparation for this study began over 30 years ago in St Thomas's Boys' Secondary School in West Belfast. The school was Catholic, for boys only, and situated in one of the nationalist areas of the city. All the schools in that area were Catholic, just as all the schools in the adjoining loyalist area were Protestant. Contact between the pupils of these different schools did not exist, at least on any significant scale. Catholic and Protestant school choirs would gape at one another at annual music festivals. The few participating Catholic choirs would feel it strange to be there at all since they more normally took part in their own culturally different festivals or *feiseanna*, with the set pieces usually sung in the Irish language. Contact on the sports field was out of the question because the schools concentrated on different games. Protestant schools for example, favoured association football and rugby football, while Catholic schools played hurling and Gaelic football.(2) At Christmas time, only a few Catholic schools might be represented at the carol singing in front of the City Hall in the centre of Belfast and even fewer Belfast Catholics would be there to hear them because this was an area traditionally denied them for public meetings.

In the writer's experience Catholic and Protestant teachers seldom or never met, particularly those who worked in the primary school sector. A minority of them in the secondary school sector would mix, fleetingly, at in-service courses. These were generally pleasant occasions since most teachers appreciate a break from the regularity of the daily school routine but most of the professional and social contacts made were tender plants with shallow roots which did not survive the ending of the course. School principals would possibly maintain intermittent telephonic contact on common administrative problems with their opposite numbers in the 'other' community. An apt description of the situation is provided by the title of a book by John Darby and others, *Education and Community in Northern Ireland: Schools Apart?* The book appeared in 1977. Apart they certainly appeared to be, not only in physical, cultural and religious terms, but even in terms of professional staffing. Protestant teachers taught in Protestant schools; Catholic teachers taught in Catholic schools. While there have always been some

exceptions in the grammar school sector (Rainey Endowed in Magherafelt and Dalriada in Ballymoney for example, both of which have Catholics and Protestants on their staffs and among their pupils), the overall reality is stated unambiguously by Darby (1976):

Despite slight improvements from the 1960s, most of them dictated by general educational trends, Catholic and Protestant teachers still operate within systems which have little or no contact with each other. (Darby 1976 130)

The failure of the attempt by Lord Londonderry(3) to establish 'mixed' education in the Province in 1923, had resulted in the setting up of separate denominational teacher training colleges in which more than two thirds (69%) of the teachers trained in Northern Ireland were prepared for the classroom exclusively with fellow-students of their own religion. The effect of this denominational division in the training of teachers was documented by Denis Barritt and Charles Carter (1962). Only two Catholics were among the 995 student teachers at Stranmillis Training College, while none of the 509 students at St Mary's and St Joseph's Training Colleges was Protestant.(4) The Teachers' Unions manifested a similar division. Prior to the establishment of Northern Ireland as a separate political entity in 1921, the vast majority of elementary school teachers had belonged to the Irish National Teachers' Organization (INTO), but in 1919 a number of loyalist teachers had become increasingly dissatisfied with what they perceived to be a growing relationship between the INTO and Irish nationalism. They broke off and formed their own Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU). Speaking at the 1920 Conference, its first president informed the assembled delegates that 'they were loyal before they were teachers and loyal they would remain.'(5)

The effects of such sectarian segregation in education in Northern Ireland, not only on pupils' social attitudes but upon the quality of their Christian education, is a matter of some importance for the present study. At the same time further questions arise as to the extent to which the schools in Northern Ireland not only reflect but might also be *reinforcing* the societal divisions which surround them. Because of historic patterns of demographic dispersal based upon religious affiliation the schools most often find themselves set in the midst of their 'own' community. St Thomas's first opened its doors as a secondary school in the Bal-

lymurphy district of Middle Falls in West Belfast in 1957.(6) The present writer was a founding member of its staff. Originally serving the combined parishes of St John's and St Paul's its pupil intake in the early years was in the region of 1,100 boys. St Paul's parish then built its own secondary school in 1966, as a result of which St Thomas's numbers eased to around 800. In September 1988, following a reorganization of educational resources, St Thomas's amalgamated with three other secondary schools in the area, all Catholic, to form the newly established Corpus Christi College. The fall in numbers which necessitated this amalgamation in the Middle Falls area reflected the growth of new 'Catholic' housing estates lying beyond Upper Falls and Andersonstown, at their extremities approaching the 'Protestant' areas of Dunmurray and Lisburn. The attribution of the terms 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' to describe physical areas may be thought strange by some but the concept of territoriality has important connotations for people in Northern Ireland, some of them having to do with the safety of life and limb, as well as freedom from the danger of being - in the local parlance - 'intimidated out of' one's home.

#### **1.4 The heritage of sectarian violence**

Sectarian violence is nothing new to Ulster. From at least the early 1830s serious riots have punctuated and besmirched the history of the Province. For the nineteenth century alone Andrew Boyd (1969) refers to 1835, 1843, 1857, 1864, 1868, 1872, 1884, 1886, and 1898 as years of the most serious rioting. Every decade from the 1830s in that century saw sectarian riots in Belfast resulting in deaths, serious injuries, intimidations and damage to property. For example, the defeat of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill (8 June 1886) was accompanied by four months of sporadic rioting (3 June - 25 October 1886) in the city during which 32 persons were killed, 371 injured and £90,000 damage caused to property. The riots of 1920-1922, however, which accompanied the setting up of Northern Ireland in 1921, have been described by Boyd as 'far more terrifying than all the disturbances of the nineteenth century'.(7) As Ian Budge and Cornelius O'Leary (1973) relate it:

Even before the establishment of the semi-autonomous state, sectarian violence had made an unwelcome return to Belfast. The Sinn Fein representatives on the City Council made no attempt to participate in

its activities, the IRA raids grew more daring and inevitably strong speeches were made during the 12th of July processions against the 'disloyal' and 'rebellious' element in their midst. Starting with the victimization of Catholic workers in the shipyard an intermittent campaign of arson and intimidation of Belfast Catholics lasted from the summer of 1920 until the spring of 1922 when the new Unionist Government was able to exert its control. (Budge and O'Leary 1973 141)

The incidence and endemic character of sectarian violence in Belfast is a matter of historical record and there is no dispute that it was the early decades of the nineteenth century which saw the beginnings of such violent dissensions in the city and the subsequent inception of an era, characterized by Budge and O'Leary as religious *apartheid* - which has extended down to the present day. The onset of such sectarian rivalry might be thought all the more remarkable when the liberal temper of the city at the end of the eighteenth century is brought into consideration. This was a period when Belfast rejoiced in the not undeserved reputation of being 'the Athens of the North'. Its citizens, the majority of them Presbyterian in religion, constituted a burgeoning middle class remarkable not only for a tolerant egalitarianism and a spectrum of interests much wider than the merely professional and mercantile, but also for a generous sympathy for the welfare of their Catholic neighbours that was 'founded entirely upon political morality and social rights.'<sup>(8)</sup> Following the abolition of the Test Acts in 1770 and 1771 the Presbyterian Convention had passed a motion rejoicing in their new freedom for both themselves 'and their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects.'<sup>(9)</sup> While it remained generally true, as Patrick Rogers (1941) has averred, that 'the Irish Protestant still remained a firm believer in the necessity for an essentially Protestant State', it was also true that it was the Belfast and largely Presbyterian Ulster Volunteers - part of the Irish Volunteers, the force set up to ward off the danger of a French invasion on the outbreak of the American War of Independence, in 1778 - who advocated the most liberal solution in the controversy that arose over the question of granting the franchise to Catholics.<sup>(10)</sup> This truly unique period in the history of Presbyterian-Catholic relations is discussed further in Chapter 2 of the present study. It is a period which shines like a beacon of light, in contrast to the darkening scenario of growing sectarian rivalry and conflict which came to characterize the greater part of the ensuing nineteenth century and beyond.

Thirty years into that century both the radical spirit and revolutionary principles of the Ulster Presbyterians - many of whom as members of the Society of United Irishmen had planned and taken an active part in the rebellion of 1798 - had all but disappeared.(11) Yet the liberal spirit persisted for some time. Indeed, 'until as late as 1830 there was enough goodwill and friendship between Catholics and Protestants to astonish, perhaps, the most enlightened ecumenist to-day'.(12) For example, when Dr William Crolly became Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor in 1825 'Protestant Belfast rejoiced' and the celebratory dinner which the bishop gave was attended by 'nearly all the principal merchants and Protestant ministers of Belfast. A few days later the same gentlemen, returning the compliment, invited Bishop Crolly to be their guest.'(13) Patrick Rogers (1934) comments:

This appears to have been the last public evidence of the liberalism once characteristic of Belfast, but which was already on the wane before the forces of reaction.' (Rogers 1934 37)

As has been said, the liberal spirit of the Ulster Presbyterians persisted for a time but by 1830 it was all but extinguished. It was a truly remarkable change. As Boyd (1969) puts it:

Within two generations of '98 the majority of the people of Ulster had completely abandoned their revolutionary principles. They embraced the policies of the Tories and developed a deep-rooted antipathy towards their Catholic neighbours. This transformation of almost an entire population is one of the most disturbing facts in Irish history. (Boyd 1969 2)

Boyd's judgment may be thought rather sweeping especially in relation to the rural areas where sectarian antipathies had long been strong and rival secret societies such as the *Peep of Day Boys* (Protestant) and the *Defenders* (Catholic) flourished amid agrarian unrest. The Volunteer movement itself contained exclusively Protestant companies a number of which were formed by the county authorities and encouraged by the Irish Government specifically to counter the growing Presbyterian-Catholic friendship among the Ulster Volunteers. The behaviour (including the singing of anti-Catholic songs) indulged in by such companies had the effect of provoking the emergence of rival groups.

In County Armagh in particular, open warfare developed between armed bands of Protestant and Catholic farmers which the magistrates

and the Government were not particularly anxious to put down since this dissension was the best antidote to the United Irish poison. (Budge and O'Leary *op. cit.*,11)

As well as this the rebellion, when it came, was largely confined to Belfast and the surrounding counties of Antrim and Down. Nevertheless, it is true to say that a whole climate of radical and liberal opinion, centred largely upon the significant and influential Presbyterian population of the North was turned around and emasculated. 'The forces of reaction' would appear to have been a wealthy landlord class 'determined to crush the liberals'; the government in London equally determined to prevent any effective union of Dissenters and Catholics which the Protestant Archbishop of Armagh and at the same time Ireland's Lord Chief Justice, Hugh Boulter, had warned early in the eighteenth century would mean 'farewell to the English influence in this country'(14); Dr Henry Cooke, the eloquent and determined leader of the reactionary party in the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster, of whom it was said by T. J. Campbell(15) (1941): - 'Dr Henry Cooke, in the first half of the nineteenth century, was the framer of sectarianism in the politics of Ulster. Before Cooke's day, sectarian riots were unknown in Belfast'(16); and, finally, there was the Orange Order, 'cornerstone of this reactionary alliance.'(17)

There were other factors as well.(18) There was a growing fear of the now burgeoning Catholic population as it increased in confidence in the new era of toleration, calling first for full Catholic Emancipation and following the granting of this in 1829, organizing mass demonstrations under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell for the repeal of the Act of Union of 1800. As the century progressed events such as these had the effect of forging an alliance between the Episcopalians and Presbyterians in a pan-Protestant combination(19) against what was perceived as the growing Catholic threat - an alliance which in conjunction with the Tory landed interest and the Orange Order saw, as has just been said, an increasing resort to sectarian bitterness and violence. The growth of nineteenth century Irish nationalism, exacerbated by the emergence of the Fenians (the precursors of today's IRA) undoubtedly added fuel to such fears and saw the rise of a Protestant and militant Ulster Unionism which would ultimately prove strong enough to deny an all-Ireland settlement to the Irish Free State which emerged from the Irish War of Independence in 1919, and to obtain separate control, in 1921, of the six north

eastern counties as the political regime called Northern Ireland. Having an in-built Protestant and Unionist majority, Protestant and Unionist hegemony was thus assured and determinedly maintained.(20) In 1920, Cardinal Logue, Archbishop of Armagh had expressed the widely held Catholic view, as Ambrose Macaulay (1970) puts it:

That on the establishment of a predominantly Protestant State, Protestant control of all organs of power would be strengthened and extended. (Macaulay 1970 27)

That the condition of the substantial Catholic minority population in such a state would not prove to be an enviable one, was soon enough seen to be the case in the systematic sectarian discrimination both at private and public levels to which they were subjected. Macaulay continues:

Government Ministers spoke freely and frequently of the preservation of the Protestant character of the state: the issue of the 1925 elections, declared Sir Dawson Bates, Minister of Home Affairs was - 'Was the Protestant religion worth fighting for, and their Parliament worth keeping?' Many of them went further and discriminated extensively against Catholics in public employment. (*ibid.*)(21)

The discriminatory policies of the Stormont regime were sometimes rationalized by equating Catholicism with disloyalty to the Constitution of Northern Ireland on the grounds that most Catholics were anti-Partitionist.

But Catholics have always maintained that the unification of Ireland by peaceful means was a perfectly legitimate political aspiration sanctioned explicitly by the British politicians who created partition and implicitly by King George V at the opening of the Parliament of Northern Ireland, and that by discharging the ordinary duties of citizenship and supporting a constitutional opposition which they had done since 1925 they were entitled to the same rights as their political opponents. (*ibid.*,18)

If it is true, as Martin Wallace (1971) remarks, that there has always been a strong element of fear of Roman Catholicism in Ulster Unionism ('fear of coming under an Irish parliament dominated by Catholics') then, as the same author continues, 'Unionism then as now appeared an inextricable mixture of religion and politics: Church leaders were closely associated with the Unionist cause'(22). Such fears, however, can never be justified grounds for vitiating principles of either

natural justice or - presumably highly relevant in the avowed circumstances of Protestantism and the State - of Christian equity. Yet the policy of the anti-Catholic Ulster Protestant League, formed in 1930, was typical of the prevailing attitude to Catholics:

Neither to talk nor walk with, neither to buy nor sell, borrow nor lend, take nor give, or to have any dealings at all with them, nor for employers to employ them, nor employees to work with them. (Wallace 1971 70)

As early as 1829 Dr Henry Montgomery, the Presbyterian leader of the defeated liberal wing of the Cooke-dominated Synod of Ulster, who left to found what is now the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, had described the illiberal sectarian situation that was then emerging in the following terms:

Our Church is now in a melancholy condition. Political and religious bigotry have mingled together; and those who foment the persecutions amongst us have made it their policy so to conjoin the two principles that scarce an individual is now held orthodox who is not also an enemy to the civil or religious rights of his fellow men.(23)

The same 'melancholy condition' might with truth be ascribed to the nature of the emergent Northern Ireland regime which Peter Gibbon (1975) has characterized as being one 'heavily dependent upon confessional particularism, discrimination and often repression.' (Gibbon 1985 167) The heritage of sectarian violence has punctuated and scarred the years from Northern Ireland's inception until Stormont was finally abolished and Direct Rule implemented in 1972. By that time, however, the tragic events of the late 1960s had already ushered in the present prolonged conflict which to date has seen over 3,000 people killed and many more injured. Sectarian so called 'tit-for-tat' assassinations have accounted for a substantial number of these. According to a recent report (BBC News, 28 January 1991) the two years, 1989 and 1990 alone, saw two hundred and forty seven of such killings in Northern Ireland. An even grimmer statistic is the twenty seven such murders that have been committed within the short period from 1 January to 21 February of 1992.

The bi-confessional nature of Northern Ireland society has commonly come to be regarded as an underlying cause of Northern Ireland's ills, necessarily affecting



all its institutions. One of these social institutions is education, the Christian education complexion of which is of special interest for the present study. At the same time, other views have been noted questioning the status of Northern Ireland as 'a Christian country'. Is its present status 'Christian', 'pre-Christian', or 'post-Christian'? Is it instead really a pluralist society? Or is it in effect a secular society? That it is *confessionalism* which is the seat of the social conflict is an view which requires close scrutiny. It will necessitate examining what is meant by confessionalism, and then, the nature of Northern Ireland confessionalism.

## 1.5 Segregated schools in the divided society

Since the onset of the present conflict in 1969 West Belfast has seen its population swell appreciably as families have gravitated into it either as a direct result of being physically intimidated out of their homes while living in a 'mixed' area, or because of threats, or simply to avoid any perceived danger of intimidation where they had been living. Once inside their own territorial 'enclave' they would feel happier. Although largely Catholic, West Belfast includes the completely Protestant area of the Shankill which runs parallel with the Catholic Falls area from which it is completely separated by what is called 'The Peace Line' - at many points by physical barriers. On either side of this 'line', particularly during periods of heightened tension, there can be danger. At a number of places the characteristics of what urban ecologists term 'shatter zones', that is, areas of contested territory between confessional boundaries, can be discerned in patches of waste ground and straggles of unoccupied houses. At other places a token barrier placed at the end of a street signals a point of community demarcation. From the Upper Springfield Road, down towards the centre of the city, a distance of several miles, there are five arteries for vehicular traffic between the two areas. On a few occasions Peace Marchers have used one or two of these. But it has been disturbances and inter-community conflict that the 'Peace Line' has more typically witnessed and the traffic arteries have proved on a number of occasions to be convenient routes for escaping assassins. The 'Peace Line' in West Belfast is one of the more obvious physical symbols of community estrangement but the Province is a mosaic of such physical entities of 'Orange' or 'Green' areas. Though not often so obviously delineated these area boundaries, whether in the rural towns or in the countryside,

are precisely known by the inhabitants of both communities and due care and circumspection is taken when the occasion seems to demand it.

Of the 150,000 people living in West Belfast (the area stretches southwards through the city from Ardoyne and New Lodge to Poleglass and Twinbrook) 110,000 or 73%, are Catholic. The educational needs of their children are served by 31 primary schools and 10 secondary level schools. These include the recently amalgamated Corpus Christi College for boys, St Louise's Comprehensive College for girls (with an exceptionally high enrolment of 2,300 pupils), St Dominic's High School, also for girls, run by the Dominican Order, and St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School for boys. As well as this, there is a growing number of nursery schools and play groups some of which are conducted through the medium of the Irish language, as is *Bunscoil Bothair Seoighe* (Shaw's Road Primary School), also situated in the area. In addition, there is St Mary's College, the only Catholic institution of teacher education in Northern Ireland, whose pre-service courses for intending teachers are validated by The Queen's University of Belfast. Each pre-service student also follows a course leading to a Certificate in Religious Education 'validated by ecclesiastical authority'.(24)

To rehearse these details of educational provision in Catholic West Belfast is to pay tribute to the determination of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland to retain control of its schools. This was achieved only at the cost of heavy financial sacrifice. The 1930 Education Act only granted 50% of the cost of approved capital works such as the building of new Catholic schools or necessary extensions to existing ones. It was not until 1947 that this figure was raised, and then only to 65%. In 1968, and referring only to the period 1947-68, the Catholic bishops stated:

A conservative estimate would indicate that since the passing of the 1947 Education Act the Catholic community has contributed something in the region of £20 million in present-day money values towards the erection and maintenance of their schools.(22)

In 1968, in return for a third of the seats on the management committees of Catholic schools being nominated by the local education authority (the '4 and 2 Committee' system resulting in 'Maintained' status for the Catholic schools) the maintainance of Catholic schools was paid for on the basis of 100%, and building

grants were raised to 80% and subsequently, in 1975, to 85%. Protestant schools, on the other hand, as the result of a combined and intensive lobby by the Protestant churches and the Orange Order to have their interests fully safeguarded, were enabled by the provisions of the 1930 Education Act to transfer completely to the state sector and thus to enjoy total grant support. Two of these provisions in particular are worthy of note for the way in which they removed earlier Protestant grievances. Firstly, 'transferrors' (by which was meant representatives of the management committees of the Protestant schools transferring to the state sector), usually clerical, were permitted to sit on the borough and regional educational committees and to have a considerable say in teacher appointments. Secondly - and it was this provision in section 4 of the Act which might be said effectively to have excluded any possibility of the Catholic schools 'transferring' - the education authority was required to provide Bible instruction defined as 'instruction based upon the holy scriptures according to some authoritative version or versions thereof, but excluding instruction as to any tenet which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination.' It was clear to everyone that the Catholic education authorities could not subscribe to such a definition. As David Harkness (1983) commented:

This was to skate over one of the great dividing lines of the Reformation (the Protestant interpretation of the scriptures by private judgement being opposed to the Catholic insistence upon a church interpretation) so that to the Catholic community the whole measure rendered the state school network, whether 'transferred' or 'provided', Protestant in character and inappropriate for Catholic children, further justifying its initial determination to retain its own voluntary schools. (Harkness 1983 64)

Thus two parallel school systems developed in the Province, the Protestant 'controlled' or state system and the Catholic voluntary (subsequently 'maintained') system. A genuinely segregated system obtains in consequence. 'The number of children attending schools of the other community is negligible. There is, it seems, a genuinely segregated system.(26) This corroborates a 1977 report of the All Children Together group (ACT) which stated that 'approximately 99.5% of Protestant children are in state schools and 98% of Catholic children in Catholic schools.'(27) A similar pattern of segregation is reflected in the area of teacher employment: only 29 out of 1,521 secondary (or intermediate) teachers were employed in schools

of a different religion than their own. In the case of grammar school teachers and primary school teachers the figures were 9 out of 480, and 3 out of 750, respectively.(28)

The following table shows the distribution of Protestant and Catholic schools and pupils in Northern Ireland. It will be seen that there are approximately *equal* numbers of pupils at controlled (that is, state/Protestant) and maintained (that is subvented/Catholic) primary schools, about 90,000 in each case; and approximately equal numbers at controlled and maintained secondary schools, around 50,000 each.

Number of Schools and Pupils by Management Type in 1986						
Type	Primary		Secondary		Grammar	
Number of	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
Controlled	516	90,014	89	50,362	21	13,280
and	mainly Protestant					
Maintained	481	90,762	88	48,883	0	0
and	mainly Catholic					
R.C.	Voluntary Grammar				31	22,661
Non-R.C.	Voluntary Grammar				25	17,731
Totals	626 Controlled schools attended by 153,656 pupils 569 Maintained schools attended by 139,645 pupils 4 Voluntary Primary attended by 311 pupils 31 R.C. Voluntary Grammar attended by 22,661 pupils 25 Non-R.C. Voluntary Grammar attended by 17,731 pupils					

The large number of pupils at voluntary grammar schools reflects not only the Catholic tradition but indicates a continuing Protestant tradition of these schools even in the face of the more comprehensive amenities offered by controlled status. In this context reference will shortly be made to the implications of John Greer’s remarks on the ‘loose way’ in which the ACT report apparently used the term ‘state school’ to include both the controlled and the (admittedly much smaller number of) voluntary-status Protestant schools. The table above is given by Greer in his article, ‘The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland’, in

V. A. McClelland (ed.), *Christian Education in a Pluralist Society* (London and New York; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988). The figures were provided by the Statistics Branch of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

## 1.6 State schools, *de facto* and *de jure* Protestant

The state ('controlled') schools are *de facto* Protestant schools because they are attended exclusively by the children of the Protestant community. Dominic Murray(1983) has argued that the statutory bodies in practice acknowledge that state schools are *de facto* Protestant schools. Protestant clergy, for example (but not Catholic clergy) are invited to serve on the management committees of new controlled schools. Murray comments:

It is of course possible that the Roman Catholic clergy would not wish to be consulted. That they are not, however, demonstrates an acceptance that State schools are *de facto* Protestant schools and are acknowledged as such by statutory bodies. (Murray 1983 142)

The controlled schools may also be said to be *de jure* Protestant schools because of the provisions of the 1930 Education Act which allow for Protestant transferror representation on controlled schools management. This situation was confirmed as recently as 1968 by an additional provision made to the Protestant Churches 'for the appointment of transferrors' representatives to the management committees of county primary schools in areas of new housing.'(29) The fact that the state schools in Northern Ireland are both *de facto* and *de jure* Protestant in character is an indication of the exclusively Protestant nature of the Stormont parliament which, until it was suspended by the imposition of Direct Rule by the Heath Government on 24 March, 1972, and abolished by the Northern Ireland Constitution Act, 18 July, 1973, fitted well the description accorded to it by Lord Craigavon when, during his fourth term in office as Prime Minister, he observed:

I have always said that I am an Orangeman first and a politician and a member of this parliament afterwards. ...All I boast is that we are a Protestant parliament and a Protestant state. (30)

The reality of this statement was to find reinforcement in a report of 1938 when senior representatives of the Home Office were sent to the Province to examine existing practices in education and employment, local government and local

elections. Their investigation, as Harkness (1983) puts it, was 'brief and cursory'. He went on:

They recognized that Northern Ireland was necessarily 'a Protestant "state" otherwise it would not have come into being and would certainly not continue to exist.' (Harkness 1983 80)

The 'Protestant State' ethos is a matter of some interest to the purposes of the present study especially within the context of its proposed consideration of confessionalism. There is a natural tendency for majorities to seek to protect their position *vis-à-vis* the rights claimed by minorities. The tendency becomes more pronounced when it is the case of a large minority perceived as threatening to political and social stability. When the sanctions of protectionism are, or appear to be, grounded in patterns of discrimination based on the religion factor, a more intractable element is added to the conflict. Not only that, but the impression may be given to outside observers that the religious beliefs of the parties to the conflict - and in the Northern Ireland situation these beliefs are Christian - are either demonstrably flawed, or that those who hold them have misconstrued and prostituted them in the pursuit of sectional goals. In either event, the cause of Christianity in its great imperatives on love for one's fellow man is inevitably weakened in the eyes of the outside world. The first century accolade 'See how these Christians love one another', then comes to be employed as an expression of irony.

In the case of Northern Ireland it is an inescapable fact of history that its border was drawn in such a way as to ensure a permanent Protestant majority. This majority was used by the leaders of the new regime from the very beginning 'to give Unionists a permanent hold on office and to leave Nationalists a permanent minority without hope of gaining power - at least by peaceful constitutional means.' Having made this comment Richard Rose (1971) proceeds:

The threat from within and without gave the leaders of the regime a strategy for maintaining some support as well as full compliance: identification with the Protestant majority. This the leaders of the regime were glad to do. Lord Craigavon himself spoke of the regime as 'a Protestant government' and called it 'a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people.' (Rose 1971 92)

It might be argued that Craigavon's descriptive remarks on the old Stormont regime crowned the development of Ulster Unionism as a religio-political ideology. It had its first solemn presentation as such, at the Ulster Convention of 17 June 1892, held in the grounds of the Botanic Gardens Park, in Belfast, before the serried ranks of many thousands of Ulster Protestant Unionists.(31) Since ideologies are cognates of confessionalism, this aspect of Ulster Unionism, no less than that of Irish Republicanism, is of critical relevance to any inquiry into the nature of Christian confessionalism that has to do with Northern Ireland, and will be discussed in some detail later. Given the 'Protestant state' status of Northern Ireland, recognized and acknowledged by the Home Office officials in their report of 1938, (referred to above), it is not surprising that in the context of a determination to preserve the Protestant character of that 'Protestant state', the state schools should come ultimately to possess the *de jure* Protestant character discussed above.

At this point an element of confusion seems to arise. Can a modern state school be confessional? In the Western world at least the claims of pluralism ensure that the question is answered in the negative. Northern Ireland would then appear to be an exceptional case; but a further element of confusion arises as to whether a state school which is *de jure* Protestant, as in Northern Ireland, can in fact exhibit anything more in the nature of religious character or ethos than state schools *per se* such as are in England, for example. Again, if in practice the English model is the one that in fact pertains in Northern Ireland state schools - which in many instances would appear to be the case - what grounds are there for the attribution of *de jure* Protestant status to these schools other than Protestant *control* of them with particular regard, it would appear, to the appointment of teachers?(32) It is true, as John Greer (1978) avers, that in Northern Ireland controlled schools, 'some excellent Religious Education goes on regularly and conscientiously'. As well as this, the majority of Northern Protestant teachers could be presumed to favour a confessional approach. The same author, however, writing on the state of religious education in state primary schools in Northern Ireland, also states that 'the evidence clearly suggests that as in England, at the grass roots, the subject is being eroded.'(33)

At the same time it must be said that with the high record of church attendance mentioned earlier, the Protestant people of Northern Ireland must be

presumed to be concerned for the proper religious education of their children, at least during the periods of religious instruction and at morning assemblies. But is this enough, as practice testifies, to give a genuinely Protestant character to their schools such as to justify the *de jure* description and make them different from merely 'state schools' commonly understood? The question that is being broached here has implications for Christian education in the Province in respect of the degree of Christian confessionalism that might with justice be attributed to the state *de jure* Protestant schools. Is there an 'imbalance' between the Protestant confessional community and its reflection in their schools? If so, to what extent is the Christian education of the children thereby weakened? Perhaps the answer overall lies in whether or not schools are voluntary in character. But might not the Protestant 'imbalance' be redressed by its traditions of Sunday school teaching and direct Church education of various kinds?

There is also a distinction to be made between controlled, that is, state schools and a certain number of Protestant voluntary schools - these more typically in the secondary grammar sector. Referring to the statement of All Children Together(34) that there was 'approximately 95.5% of Protestant children in state schools', John Greer remarks that the report appeared to use the term 'state school' in a loose way to include both controlled and Protestant voluntary schools.(35) At first reading this comment may appear to be somewhat confusing. Are they not all simply 'Protestant schools'? Greer appears to be making a distinction between Protestant schools whose denominational status is clearly apparent (as in the 25 Protestant voluntary grammar schools) and those other Protestant schools in the controlled sector (in numbers by far the majority), which lack a specific denominational affiliation but which nonetheless have a 'general' Protestant character attributed to them. He also remarks that 'no precise analysis of school type by religious denomination has been carried out which would indicate the affiliation of pupils attending (Protestant) Church related and controlled schools.'

It might seem from this that Greer is querying whether the denominations, which such an analysis would indicate, ought not to be more actively involved in the Protestant controlled schools to the benefit of a more adequate Christian education being provided for the pupils. The underlying basis of Greer's concern soon becomes clear as he turns to an evaluation of both Protestant and Catholic



educational systems. It is not that these are not impressive but that they have 'failed to contribute as they should towards the spiritual, moral and mental development of their pupils, and the community in which these pupils live';(36) that failure being all the more poignantly bitter in the 'divided and violent' society of Northern Ireland, the ground of a conflict waged since 1968 'with a ferocity and a cruelty that could not have been predicted or imagined.'(37) Clearly this is a subject of deep import for the present study, and the implications of Greer's remarks are examined in more detail specifically in the next chapter, (*infra*, pages 55-6) and in the penultimate chapter, (*infra*, pages 288-9).

In addition to this, the rôle which the Churches might pursue and the theme of reconstructionism form significant sources of concern for Greer - as they do for the present writer, or indeed anyone seriously concerned about the Northern Ireland problem. Whether Christian education as it relates to and interrelates with the confessional community and the wider society can be brought successfully to exercise its benign influence; whether the Northern Ireland people are sufficiently aware that their integrity as a Christ-confessing community of believers is under serious challenge; whether a desire for reconciliation and a willingness to engage in dialogue have any firm purchase in their minds and hearts particularly with regard to their children's future; these are issues which are deeply relevant and will be dealt with at some length in later chapters. It does not always follow that religious practice, high in Northern Ireland, is necessarily a reflection of depth of religious faith. In a divided society, the practice of religion might often enough be an expression, conscious or unconscious, of *cultural* loyalty to one's own community.

## 1.7 The theological emphasis

The Education Act of 1944, was a watershed not only in the development of education generally in the United Kingdom but also and especially with regard to religious education, a religious education which it was unequivocally understood should be Christian religious education, with the Christian faith the 'basis and inspiration' of the school in its general programme of preparing the nation's future citizens. Not only that but the Act provided the voluntary schools with a notable opportunity to - as Spencer Leeson remarked - 'play their full part in the educational life of the nation'. For these and other reasons which will shortly be

apparent, it seemed appropriate to include the year 1944 in the title of the present thesis as much as a useful *terminus a quo* from which to conduct developments in Christian education in Northern Ireland as a bench mark for a theology of education given encouraging impetus and opportunity by the 1944 Act. In Northern Ireland, most of the 1944 provisions were incorporated into the Education Act (NI) 1947. Not excluding the most recent Education Act of 1988, the Butler Act of 1944 has rightly been termed the most comprehensive measure ever passed by Parliament on education. The Act of 1944, however, has had a profound effect not least on what might be termed the development of the *theology* of education. In one sense it is this second element, namely the *theological* element, which takes precedence in the present discussion. That is to say, the present work is conceived as a contribution towards the development of a rather neglected subject, the theology of education. This is not to suggest that a great gulf is fixed between the educational and the theological implications of the particular Act in question, but it is to insist that for those whose aesthetic is derived primarily from a confessional position based upon an understanding of God's revelation, the distinction can never be held to be watertight. In the published edition (1947) of his Bampton Lectures, delivered in the Spring of 1944 before the University of Oxford, on the subject of Christian Education, Spencer Leeson praised the Act's provision for universal secondary education, in the following terms:

This is a much nobler and wider conception of secondary education - that full-time secondary education up to 15 and eventually to 16 should be the statutory right of every boy and girl, not the privilege of a favoured few, and that the education given should, so far as practical, be fitted to the child, not the child to education. (Leeson 1947 77)

The detailed provisions, not to mention the personal *interpretations* of the Butler Act (as exemplified in the extract just quoted), have had a direct influence on the development of education in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This is not in question. What is less immediately apparent, not least because the subject is seldom discussed, is the extent of the impact of this (and subsequent) educational legislation on the *theology* of education. One is tempted to put it the other way round as well, if only in the interests of objectivity, fairness, and balance. What contribution has the theology of education made (or been permitted to make) to the planning and implementation of educational legislation? It is prudent to

establish at the outset of the present inquiry that the educational issues will be discussed in the light of theological concerns. This means that the conceptual framework takes account of theological categories in the first instance, namely, that man is a spiritual being whose destiny embraces not only his life upon this earth but also the life to come; that we are all children of the one loving God who sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, to be the Redeemer and Saviour of all mankind; that our Christian beliefs should inform our lives not only in respect of the sure hope within us of the life to come, but also as to how we deal with our neighbour here and now in charity and love, and conduct ourselves in the affairs of this world; and that the education of our children should be pursued in the light of the distinctive assumptions of Christianity. Such an education, valid in itself and cogent in its philosophy and theory, prepares them to become valuable members of society, their way of life being based upon authentically Christian values. What emerges is thus conceived and intended to be a contribution to a contemporary theology of education. Given the cultural milieu in which the field work has been conducted this is not as inappropriate as might at first appear, for in Northern Ireland it is not possible to separate 'educational' issues from 'religious' beliefs and aspirations. In Northern Ireland, the Stormont government had in fact issued a White Paper in December 1944 promising major reforms along the lines of the Butler act. Following the Education Act (NI) 1947, these became operative on 1 April, 1948. For the Catholic community, whose commitment to the voluntary system in education had resulted, as has been said, in heavy financial expenditure, the introduction of secondary education for all had important consequences. John Darby (1976) states two of these.

The Education Act opened the doors of educational opportunity by introducing free secondary education, and the remarkable rise in the number of Catholics attending University was one measure of its effectiveness. Although the extent of these changes is often debated, there is no doubt that the 1950s saw a growing tendency for Catholics to see their future in terms of a Northern Ireland context rather than in an all-Ireland state. The most dramatic pointer to this change was the failure of the IRA offensive of 1955-62. Its defeat owed more to apathy than to the efficiency of law enforcement machinery, and this was recognized by the IRA in its statement formally ending the campaign. (Darby, 1976 13)

The reforms of the 1944 Education Act, important and far reaching in themselves, can also be regarded as one of a number of social factors in the post-war period which had the effect of promoting among the Catholic minority community in Northern Ireland a feeling that justice was being done and, consequently, a contentment (without prejudice to its aspirations for ultimate Irish unity), to accept its civic responsibilities within the context of Northern Ireland itself. This was a very significant development in the Catholic nationalist community which, from the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, had felt itself betrayed by the partition of Ireland and the establishment of Northern Ireland. Within the boundaries of the new political entity the Catholic community felt itself to be an alienated and disenfranchised minority. In England, the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act were equally far-reaching, going further than any previous measure in its recent history. The creation of what were termed 'special agreement' schools under the Education Act of 1936 had already permitted denominational teaching in elementary schools by agreement between the Local Education Authority and the promoters of such schools. At the same time, under the conscience clause and in all types of school, parents had the right to withdraw their children if they so desired from religious instruction of any kind, denominational or undenominational. The Education Act of 1944 now substituted for this the stipulation that in every State-aided primary and secondary school the day 'shall begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils' and that 'there shall be religious instruction given in every such school.'<sup>(38)</sup> While the Act now included teachers as well as parents in the conscience clause, the statutory stipulation for instruction and worship was, as Leeson put it, 'a new principle in modern English educational legislation.'<sup>(39)</sup> Earlier, he had commented:

Yet no Education Act had ever passed with a wider measure of assent. The religious clauses would have been enough even seven years ago to have wrecked any Bill; but this time all the parties interested were ready to make sacrifices in the cause of religion and educational progress. This new spirit of wise and constructive toleration and co-operation encourages us to hope for much in the long and difficult task of translating the Act into fact. (Leeson *op. cit.*, 223)

Spencer Leeson was not alone in expressing optimism for the future progress of religious education. When his Bampton Lectures came to be published in 1947, he thought it worth appending to his seventh lecture ('The Home, the School,

the State and the Church'), a copy of the statement issued by the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales on 12 February 1941, which later came to be generally known as 'the Archbishops' Five Points', and which bore the title, 'Christian Education: A Call to Action.' All the Five Points were later accepted and provision was made for them in the 1944 Act. For Canon Leeson, as he was then, 'the issue of the statement was one of the earliest indications of a turn of the tide, and the birth of a new desire for the strengthening of Christian education in the nation at large.'<sup>(40)</sup> The following quotations from the Archbishops' statement would appear to confirm that opinion:

What is involved is much more than 'religious instruction, though that is an indispensable part of it. Our concern is for Christian education - the training of future citizens in the Christian way of life. We make our own some words recently addressed by a County Education Authority to the headmasters of its secondary schools: 'Religious instruction should not be looked on merely as one of a number of subjects to be taught, but as the foundation of the education given at the school. Its purpose should be to influence a child's whole attitude to life, not merely to impart religious knowledge but to teach religion'... We know, too, that the teaching profession increasingly shares our convictions. Here we may call attention to a resolution recently passed unanimously by the Headmasters' Conference: 'That this Conference, representing schools containing members of various denominations of Christianity, expresses its strong conviction that the Christian faith should be the basis and inspiration of their work'... 'We believe that throughout the country Local Education Authorities are proving more and more anxious to fulfil their great responsibilities'... (*ibid.*, 200-201)

The Education Act of 1944, it seems clear, was passed in the context of a general and expressed desire that religious education be given in all schools; that it should be Christian religious education; and that the Christian faith should be the 'basis and inspiration' of the school in its general programme of preparing the nation's future citizens.<sup>(41)</sup> These were the issues as stated by the wide spectrum of ecclesiastical and educational opinion to which reference has just been made. Surveys of contemporary opinion had also indicated that the great majority of the population were in favour of religious education being given in the schools and, indubitably, that meant Christianity.<sup>(42)</sup> In the case of the County schools, the position was as has already been mentioned. For the voluntary schools, however, the act provided 'a great challenge and a great opportunity', which Leeson

summarized as follows:

It is now possible to set out the terms of the compromise, the general purpose of which is to enable the voluntary schools with their special religious tradition, and in some cases also a long and famous history, to play their full part in the educational life of the nation, provided they do not fall short, in respect of buildings and material equipment of all sorts, of such standards as the Ministry and the Local Education Authorities consider reasonable. (*ibid.*, 233)

The Act thus provided the 'opportunity' for the church schools to maintain and continue their tradition as confessional educational institutions. The 'challenge' lay both in their commitment and ability to do so. Underpinning this was their concept of confessional education both as understood and practised. The statement of the Archbishops and the other declarations to which reference has been made had restated the criteria and looked forward with confidence to the coming opportunities. In the light of subsequent developments particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s which saw the confessional principle in education subjected to progressive erosion, a number of questions might, with relevance, be raised. For example: What are the criteria by means of which it can be argued that confessional education is *uniquely* a problem either for religious education or church-affiliated schools? Is it not time that the basically confessional nature of 'liberal' education and the cognate ideological bases of pluralism be acknowledged?

In Northern Ireland the controversy which preceded the implementation of the educational reforms came from both sides of the divided community and, predictably, for different reasons. The increased financial aid to the Catholic schools had been disappointing. Instead of the 100% called for, the capital expenditure grant to voluntary schools was raised from the existing 50% to only 65%. Yet, when in 1949 the minister of education, S. Hall-Thompson, proposed paying the employers' portion of teachers' national insurance contributions in *all* primary, intermediate and county grammar schools, he was accused of making yet further financial commitment to Catholic schools in the first two categories. 'This proved intolerable to Mr Norman Porter's National Union of Protestants, and also, it transpired, to backbench Unionist and Grand Orange Lodge opinion'. Hall-Thompson was forced to resign.<sup>(43)</sup> The essence of the Protestant protest was embodied in the campaign of the United Education Committee of the Protestant Churches which

on that occasion set itself to the defence of the rules regulating religious teaching as found in the Northern Ireland Education Act of 1930, to promoting its own version of a proposed conscience clause permitting teachers to decline to give Bible instruction, and to attacking increased financial aid to voluntary schools. From the Catholic side came protests, also, although for different reasons. As Harkness (1983) put it:

Protestant protests were echoed by denunciations from Catholic pulpits and in episcopal pastorals in 1945. Fears, both of the financial implications of the raising of the school leaving age and the reorganization of secondary schooling, and of the spiritual implications of increasing state control, led to cries of religious freedom in danger and to demands for separate but equal treatment for Catholic children. (Harkness 1983 115)

Despite the initial protests, however, there followed a sustained building programme on behalf of both communities which, by January, 1961, had resulted in there being 84,128 secondary pupils attending 81 Grammar Schools (21 County and 60 Voluntary) and 100 Secondary Intermediate (or Modern) Schools (64 County and 36 Voluntary), with an additional 4,500 pupils attending 33 Technical (or Vocational) schools. The significance of the overall figure will be appreciated when it is realized that probably less than 10,000 pupils attended secondary schools prior to 1947. In 1921, the figure was only 6,237. All the voluntary intermediate schools together with about half of the grammar schools (but with only a third of the grammar school pupils) were (and are) attended by Catholic children, while Protestant pupils go either to the County intermediate or the County grammar schools.

While the reforms of 1944, as embodied in the Education Act (NI) of 1947, did make for significant and wide-ranging changes they left Northern Ireland's denominational divide in the schools untouched. It remains no less relevant, however, to raise questions both as to the nature of the education in the schools of that overtly confessional society and the quality of their response to the 'opportunity' and the 'challenge' proffered to Christian education by the new legislation to which Leeson made reference. It is true that the Province has always had a history of intractable political, social and religious problems and has been rent by a particularly serious conflict over the last twenty years, but this if anything makes the

answers to such questions a more urgent matter since Christian education properly conceived has, it will be argued, a unique contribution to make towards community peace. The fact that the polarized communities are both *confessedly* Christian is a disturbing additional dimension. How does Christian education function in such a society? What value does that society place upon it? What are the factors inhibiting its salutary influence and how might it be possible to overcome them? What is the nature of the relationship between education and confessionality in Northern Ireland? In the case of the segregated systems of education, accusations are not infrequently made against the churches that it is *power* rather than a simple devotion to the cause of religion which has been (and is) the motivating force. It may also be suspected that secularistic pluralism has made greater inroads in Northern Ireland than is commonly supposed and that what might be termed the genuinely religious temper of its people shows evidence of erosion. The long-continued and bitter conflict in the Province cannot be said to be a good augury that all is well. It points to the contrary. In the field of education this conflict, the only too obvious sign of inter-community tensions and dissension - a sign, it may be remarked, well read and absorbed by Northern Ireland's children - must be a fruitful source of uncertainty and confusion, if it is to be understood that educating Northern Ireland's children means providing them with what might be expected to be their birthright, namely, a sound *Christian* education.

## 1.8 Notes and references

1. The term secularization is taken to mean 'historical movements which entail a change from religious to this-worldly purposes.' The trend towards opening shops and engaging in business on Sundays is an example of the process. Secularism, on the other hand, is the ideology whose proponents explain everything *exclusively* in this-worldly terms. Finally, there is secularity, that is, having a *concern* for the this-worldly. It would be to misinterpret Christianity to claim that it lacks a proper concern for the world and its tasks. Christian writers on the theme of the theology of secularity make this clear. 'We are not asked to forsake man for the sake of the God. The Christian obligation is to transform the world, not renounce it.' See, for example, Gerard O'Collins (1974) *The Theology of Secularity*, pp. 12, 13, and 81.
2. This was the 1960s. The severity of the 'troubles' during the 1970s almost eliminated what minimal contact there had been. The end of the 1980s has seen an improvement as schools for example have begun to absorb and implement the



practical implications of one of the Ministry of Education's curricular themes, 'Education for Mutual Understanding'. This initiative is discussed further in Chapter 4. It has been largely due, perhaps, to the presentation on television of International and World Cup competitions, that many more Catholic schools now play soccer both informally, and in competitions which include Protestant schools.

3. The 7th Marquess of Londonderry (C. S. H. Vane-Tempest-Stewart), Minister of Education, 24 May, 1921 - 18 January, 1926. Following the failure of his attempt to provide a non-denominational primary system which, despite his hopes, 'flew in the face of educational history in Ireland and was accepted neither by Catholic nor Protestant authorities' (David Harkness, *Northern Ireland since 1920* p. 34), Londonderry returned to Westminster politics in 1926. In 1935 he became Lord Lieutenant for the County of Durham.

4. See Denis Barritt and Charles Carter, *The Northern Ireland Problem* (London, Oxford University Press, 1962) p.89.

5. See John Darby, *Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan: New York, Barnes and Noble Books:) p.131.

6. Ballymurphy was then, and is still, an area of major social deprivation with the unemployment index normally in the region of 40%. It was on a cemetery wall in Ballymurphy that the question 'Is there a life before death?' appeared in large letters during the 1970s.

7. See Andrew Boyd, *Holy War in Belfast* (Tralee: Anvil Books 1969) p. 176.

8. The comment is Brendán Ó Buachalla's (1968) in his book *I mBéal Feirste cois Cuan* (*In Belfast by the Lough*). Pointing out that the Catholic population in Belfast at that time was only something in the region of 6%, that economically speaking Catholics in the town could only aspire to 'retail trading' and that there was no danger whatever of their assuming the leadership of the town, Ó Buachalla continues: 'Ach is fíor leis, go raibh an bhá ag na Preispitéirigh lena gcomhshaoaranaigh bunaithe go hiomlán ar an moráltacht pholaitiúil agus ar an gceart sóisialta.' (p.9) ('It is nevertheless true that the Presbyterians' sympathy for their fellow citizens was based completely upon political morality and social rights.') This view is confirmed by John Dunlop (1984), himself a Presbyterian minister, in his article 'The Self-Understanding of Protestants in Northern Ireland', in Enda McDonagh (ed.) (1986) *Irish Challenges to Theology: Papers of the Irish Theological Association Conference, 1984*, pp. 8-20. 'Radical Presbyterianism took root in Belfast in social action and in demands for reform and the representation of all the people.' (p.13)

9. Under the terms of the Sacramental Test Act of 1704, for example, Presbyterians were debarred from taking office under the Crown unless they took communion in the Anglican Church at least once a year. 'And their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects': See John Barkley, (1960) *A Short History of the Presbyterian Church*

in *Ireland*, p. 35. The question of Catholic Relief was also in the air. A Catholic Committee had been formed as early as 1760 to that end, and in 1771, Lord Annaly had succeeded in having a relief measure (the Mortgages bill) returned by the Privy Council at Westminster to the Irish parliament where, however, it was defeated. The first major Catholic Relief Act came in 1778.

10. The solution, nevertheless, called for a '*gradual* extention of suffrage to our too long oppressed brethren the Roman Catholics, preserving unimpaired the Protestant Government of this country.' (Emphasis added) The Volunteers were persuaded 'by their timorous general, Charlemont', from pressing for full enfranchisement of the Catholics. See Ian Budge and Cornelius O'Leary (1973), *Belfast: An approach to the Crisis*, p.10.

11. Undoubtedly influenced by the success of the French Revolution and having come to believe that the dead weight of the landed interest was too strong to permit the Irish Parliament to reform itself, the Northern radicals founded the Society of United Irishmen in 1790 - 'the most important radical group ever to emerge in Ireland, dedicated to the setting up of a republic in which all Irishmen, Catholic and Protestant, would share the same national commitment and in which privilege would be abolished.' (Budge and O'Leary 1973 10) Although at its outset it had aimed merely at Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary reform, by 1794 it was committed to complete separation from Britain. The 1798 rebellion was put down comparatively easily although the rebels fought bravely at Antrim and Ballynahinch. Its aftermath was very severe on the Presbyterians. A total of thirty Presbyterian ministers were accused of taking part in the rebellion. Three were hanged, five fled to either America or France, at least seven were sent to prison and four transported to the penal settlements. In Belfast six of the Presbyterian rebel leaders, including Henry Joy McCracken, best known of them all, were hanged. See Boyd, *Holy War in Belfast* p. 2.

12. *ibid.*, p. 2.

13. *ibid.*, p. 4.

14. *ibid.*, p. 4.

15. T. J. Campbell, *Fifty Years of Ulster*, (Belfast: The Irish News Ltd., 1941) p.17. Newspaper editor, politician and barrister, T. J. Campbell assumed the leadership of the Nationalist Party following the death of Joseph Devlin, M.P., in 1934.

16. Dr Henry Cooke (1778-1868), evangelical Presbyterian leader and three times Moderator of the Ulster Synod, can fairly lay claim to being considered as one of the progenitors of 'Ulster Protestantism', a Protestantism, that is, in which the historic dissensions between Episcopalianism and Presbyterianism came to be overlooked in a common politico-religious policy of anti-Catholic sectarianism. Cooke's peculiar importance in this phenomenon lay firstly in the fact that, although a Presbyte-

rian he was an out and out Tory. Secondly, the victory of the evangelical party during the Arian controversy of the 1820s left Cooke in full control of a Synod characterized by, as Donald Akenson puts it 'bigotry and rigidity' and 'dominated by illiberal men and by reactionary attitudes.' (Donald Akenson (1970) *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century*, p.161.) In their extended discussion on religious riots in Belfast and their frequent incidence during the nineteenth century especially during parliamentary campaigns when 'the religious motif was obtruded', Budge and O'Leary refer to 'the increasingly important rôle of anti-Catholic clergymen of both the Episcopalian and Presbyterian communions in Conservative politics.' Referring to Cooke they comment that 'for nearly forty years, from 1830 until his death in 1868, he was not only the most formidable preacher in the Presbyterian Church, but also one of the leading Conservatives in the city'. (Budge and O'Leary, *Belfast: Approach to Crisis*, p.78)

17. Boyd, *op. cit.*, p.6. The Orange Order emerged in County Armagh, in 1796, 'as a militant and classless Protestant secret society which in its first public pronouncement included among its goals, in addition to the Constitution and the Protestant religion, the maintenance of the Established Church.' (Budge and O'Leary, *op. cit.*, p.11.) Boyd adds a further dimension. 'The Orange Order was set up to protect the poorer Protestant farmers and to terrorise Catholics who bid against them for land tenancies.' (Boyd, *op. cit.*, p.6). The Order's deeply anti-Catholic bias has always been highly influential and deeply divisive at the highest as well as the lowest levels of Northern Ireland society.

18. The change in the social temper of Belfast presently under discussion has not escaped the attention of historians. According to Budge and O'Leary, the prevailing verdict is that of David Owen (1921) in his *History of Belfast*, that it was O'Connell's campaign for Catholic Emancipation and the electoral implications of this which precipitated the deterioration of Catholic/Protestant relations from the 1820s; while more recently, J. C. Beckett (1967) in his 'Belfast: A General Survey', in J. C. Beckett and R. E. Glasscock (eds.), (1967) *Belfast: The Origin and Growth of an Industrial City*, has stated that it was competition for jobs between Catholics and Protestants in the 1850s which saw animosities really begin to develop. Budge and O'Leary, however, comment that all these writers 'appear to have underestimated the decisive influence of the Orange Order, and the possibility that to its development rather than to any of the causes assigned above may be attributed the growth, if not the inception, of religious rivalry in Belfast.' (Budge and O'Leary, *op. cit.*, p. 27.)

19. The phenomenon of Ulster Protestantism. The alliance was referred to in terms of 'a sacred marriage' by Dr Cooke when he attended a massive political rally organized by the Orange landlords at Hillsborough, 30 October, 1834.

20. At the setting up of Northern Ireland, 70,000 Protestants resided in the three excluded Ulster counties of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal. The Ulster leader Lord

Carson, however, counselled sacrificing them to avoid being saddled with 260,000 Catholics who resided in the same counties.

21. Macaulay (1970) instances the following:

In 1925 the Minister of Agriculture, E. M. Archdale, assured his Orange brethren that he had only 4 Catholics out of a staff of 109 in his Department and that three of them were civil servants 'turned over to him whom he had to take when he began.' (*The Irish News*, 28 February 1920)

In 1932 J. M. Andrews, Minister of Labour (and future Prime Minister 1940-43) refuted the allegation that 30 out of 31 porters in the newly built Parliament buildings were Catholics, by confidently informing an Orange gathering 'that one is a Roman Catholic, and he was only there as a temporary man' and went on to reassure them that neither of the gate lodges was occupied by a Catholic. (*The Northern Whig*, 13 July 1932)

With this approach to public employments went exhortations to exclude Catholics from private employment. The most notorious advice in this respect came from Sir Basil Brooke who was a member of the Cabinet from 1933 to 1943 and Prime Minister from 1943 to 1963. In 1933 he declared that 'he had not a Roman Catholic about his own place' and appealed to loyalists 'wherever possible to employ good Protestant lads and lassies.' (*The Fermanagh Times*, 13 July 1933)

In the following year when Sir Basil repeated this advice to the Derry Unionist Association and Nationalist M.P.s inquired at Stormont if this represented government policy, Lord Craigavon (Prime Minister 1921- 1940) replied that 'there is not one of my colleagues who does not entirely agree with him and I would not ask him to withdraw one word he said.' (*Parliamentary Debates, N.I.*, vol. xvi, col. 618, 10 March, 1934)

Ambrose Macaulay, 'Catholics in the North', in *The Newman Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1970, pp. 27-8.

22. Martin Wallace, *Northern Ireland: Fifty Years of Self Government*, (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1971) pp.66, 69.

23. See Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

24. *Catholic Directory 1990: Diocese of Down and Connor*, (Belfast: Shanway Press) p. 165.

25. See Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

26. S. Dunn, J. Darby and K. Mullan, *Schools Together?* (Coleraine: Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster: 1984) p. 38.

27. *ACT-LETT*, News from *All Children Together*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1977.

28. J. Darby et al., *Education and Community in Northern Ireland: Schools Apart?*

(Coleraine: New University of Ulster, 1977) p. 28.

29. Government of Northern Ireland *Local Education Authorities and Voluntary Schools*, (Belfast, HMSO, 1967) p.9.

30. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p.70.

31. Peter Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1975). Gibbon is illuminating on the aims of the newly created Ulster Convention of 1892 and on the Convention itself held in Botanic Gardens Park: 'The Convention was planned deliberately to be the embodiment of the main constituents of a new ideology which would purposely embrace and supersede the particularistic ideologies of the social forces the urban leadership was attempting to gain command of. The ideology was to receive the title that the political movement promoting it was now adopting - Ulster Unionism - and it was to centre around elaboration of the qualities purportedly distinguishing Ulster from the rest of Ireland. The Unionist Convention was held in Belfast on 17 June, 1892, in a wooden pavilion especially erected for the purpose in the Botanic Gardens. It was to be attended by over 12,000 delegates. According to McKnight another 150,000 were mobilized to wait outside where they were addressed from different platforms.' (Gibbon 1975 132)

32. See, for example, David Harkness, *Northern Ireland since 1920*, (Dublin, Helicon Limited, 1983) p. 64.

33. See John Greer, 'Religious Education in State Primary Schools in Northern Ireland', in *The Northern Teacher*, (Belfast, INTO, 1978) pp.7-11.

34. This group's contribution to the demand in some quarters for integrated education is discussed in Chapter 4.

35. J. Greer, 'The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland', in V. A. McClelland (ed.), *Christian Education in a Pluralist Society*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 139.

36. Greer, 'The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland', p.144.

37. *ibid.*, p. 144.

31. The Education Act 1944, 25 (1) and (2)

39. Spencer Leeson *Christian Education*, (London, Longmans, Green and Company, 1947) p.232.

40. Leeson, *ibid.*, p. 200.

41. *ibid.*, p.200.

42. See, for example, Edwin Cox's discussion on the 1944 Education Act in his *Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1983): 'That when the Bill said *religion* the word *Christianity* was to be read is

clearly shown in many of the speeches made in support of it in both Houses'. (p.5)

43. See Harkness, *op. cit.*, p.116.

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## Chapter II

# THE ISSUE OF CONFESSIONALISM AND THE CRISIS OF IDENTITY

In seeking to understand the particular Christian traditions in Ireland and their historical hostilities, the narrative takes precedence over the systematic... The narrative approach to the Irish Churches, their beliefs and theologies may first of all heighten the misunderstanding and hostility as the wounding memories of recurring political, economic and cultural quarrels intrude into the religious story. Yet that is a necessary first step. Wounds were inflicted: they need to be exposed and accepted if they are to be healed. The fuller narrative context can help to understand the wounding as it can in retrospect and prospect confront the believing but divided communities with an older heritage and a future horizon that may reveal possibilities of convergence... The medieval, the Celtic and the patristic roots are finally planted in the soil of the New Testament. This is our glory story, the story of Jesus and of the first disciples or Church. Reading our separate Church stories through the earlier history eventually confronts us with our originating story in Jesus... In Ireland, this confrontation for convergence could have the enormously liberated effect of releasing the Churches, of promoting their exodus from the Egypt of sixteenth-century religious and subsequent political, social and cultural confinement... Taking the Churches back to the story of Jesus can renew their sense of responsibility for the Kingdom and their sense of failure in recognizing and promoting it. Hostile Church affiliations, particularly in a society with active Church participation, constitute a counter-sign of the Kingdom and a betrayal of Jesus. (Enda McDonagh)(1)

### 2.1 The complexity of the issue in Northern Ireland

That Northern Ireland is a confessionally oriented society seems scarcely open to doubt - two communities, one Catholic and the other Protestant, a school system divided along similar denominational lines and a record of church attendance 'probably higher than anywhere else in the Western world - except the Republic of Ireland.'(2)

According to statistical surveys, Northern Ireland remains incurably religious. Over 80 per cent of the population claim to have an active connection with a Church, compared with 15 per cent in England and Wales and 37 per cent in Scotland. (Morrow 1989 448)



For Richard Rose (1971) Northern Ireland society in reality is best considered a *bi-confessional* society:

It is bi-confessional because nearly everyone identifies himself as either a Protestant or a Catholic. In the 1961 census, only 384 of the 1,457,000 persons enumerated described themselves as free thinkers, atheists or humanists. (Rose 1971 248)

Yet it has been disputed whether confessional differences account in any significant way for the conflict in Northern Ireland. John D. Stewart (1970) (himself a Presbyterian) in his review of Liam de Paor's (1970) book *Divided Ulster*(3) doubts whether in any real sense religion can be considered a causal factor in the Northern Ireland problem. He remarks:

I know, from long years of dutifully sitting under my father's Presbyterian pulpit and facing rows of empty pews, that only a small minority of Ulster's supposedly fanatical Protestants are acquainted with religion. Such churches as seem to thrive are either social centres and, in effect, marriage marts, or (as in the case of Paisleyism) crude political clubs. (Stewart 1970 53)

De Paor may himself be considered as representative of the Marxist view on Northern Ireland which sees the roots of the problem almost solely in terms of naked economic rivalry and self-interest in a developing and classical colonial situation. The Ulster Colonists feared for the security of the grants of land made over to them and were determined to hold on to them at all costs even should it mean 'joining the despised and ruffianly Orange Order' as Stewart puts it. Territory and privilege were what was at stake, even for the lower orders of colonist ascendancy. The roots of division were neither truly religious nor racial but economic:

The Orange peasants feared for their fragile tenancies. The landless Catholics, well conditioned to suffer privation, would underbid them at the cruel 'rent auctions' of the times. The landlords, tenants and peasants all began to talk of 'territory,' and it is a word applied to this day to every slum street of rented hovels in Belfast, in every town and village in the North. We never had a community here; we never had 'our country'; it was always 'us' and 'them ones'; from 1608 and before it right down to 1970 there has been no accepted community of interest. (*ibid.*,53)

On Stewart's analysis of Northern Ireland's long standing divisions the con-

fessional issue might be thought of no more than in terms of merely identifying the religious persuasions of factions already deeply split, or of being at most an aggravating factor in a conflict already joined on other grounds. It would appear, however, that the confessional issue has a more complex involvement than this. Reference was made in the Introduction to government ministers calling for the maintenance and defence of the Protestant State and it needs to be remembered that when the first prime minister, Lord Craigavon, professed himself as glorying in the name of Orangeman, the Orange Order of which he and the members of his Cabinet belonged was (and still remains) sternly anti-Catholic. In December 1959 for example, when, as Martin Wallace (1971) relates, the question of the possibility of Catholics actually becoming members of the Unionist Party was briefly raised by two senior Unionist politicians(4), both men were widely criticised in Unionist circles and a statement was quickly issued by the grand master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, Sir George Clark, asserting that under no circumstances would the suggestion that Catholics could be admitted to membership of the party be countenanced or accepted by the Orange Order. He said:

I would draw your attention to the words 'civil and religious liberty'. This liberty, as we know it, is the liberty of the Protestant religion....In view of this, it is difficult to see how a Roman Catholic, with the vast differences in our religious outlook, could be either acceptable within the Unionist Party as a member, or, for that matter, bring himself unconditionally to support its ideals. Further to this, an Orangeman is pledged to resist by all lawful means the ascendancy of the Church of Rome, abstaining from uncharitable words, actions and sentiments towards his Roman Catholic brethren. (Wallace 1971 72)

Sir George's views, comments Wallace, 'were not contradicted by the Party.'

The confessional element in all this is apparent, albeit deeply sectarian. Randolph Churchill was aware of this when, during the first Home Rule controversy of the last century, he came to the conclusion that 'the Orange card would be the one to play'.(5) Reference might also be made to the proselytizing propensities of the Anglican Church during the same century (and indeed earlier centuries) as a further ingredient in the historical confessional mix. In the present century the determination not to allow Catholic teachers to teach Protestant children was one of the professed considerations in the establishment of a segregated system of

education, while the constitutional loyalty of many Northern Ireland Protestants to the 'Protestant way of life enshrined in the Revolution Settlement of 1689 of William and Mary' remains a constant even today. There is also the question of Catholic particularism to be considered and the way in which political ideology and confessionalism may have intertwined in sections of that community. This will involve investigating the nature of ideologies in Northern Ireland - of Unionist as much as of Republican colour - and the rôle they might be playing in the general confessionalism matrix. While, as has been said, Stewart's analysis of the origins of division coincides with that of de Paor in seeing 'naked economic rivalry and self-interest' as the root of the problem, he cannot avoid characterizing as sectarian (as well as racial and colonial) the riots and pogroms which began to occur halfway through the last century. Indeed, the evangelical Presbyterian, Rev Dr Cooke, referred to in the following quotation from Stewart could hardly be called an economist. He was, however, bitterly anti-Catholic.

Sectarian - or racial, or colonial - hatred and strife took a new and terrible turn halfway through the last century. Belfast was just beginning to become industrialized, which meant, then, overcrowded and underpaid, when starving hordes of Catholics began to pour in off the poisoned fields.(6) Such people would live in any conditions, go barefoot, eat potatoes alone, and so live on wages impossible to the incumbents. The Unionist manufacturers, the Unionist landlords, looked to their own profit, and so the Catholics were seen as a real economic threat to Belfast's new proletariat. The riots and murders, the burnings and lootings, began in the 1830s with the Rev Dr Cooke's campaigns, and continued to break out at fairly regular intervals right down to 1969 and the Rev Dr Paisley. (Stewart *op. cit.*, 53)

The precise rôle which religion has played may be judged difficult to determine and is open to dispute; those however, who argue that religion has played no rôle (or only an incidental rôle) have to be pressed further to explain the sense in which they are using the word 'religion'. In specific doctrinal terms, for instance, it is not easy to see how religion enters the conflict as a significant factor. 'Religion', nevertheless, has been used as a convenient mechanism by demagogues, clerical and others, for sowing fears and rallying 'defensive' support for sectional ends. Some form of religious commitment in the community is being assumed; religious prejudice and fear are being exploited. Yet the extent to which these fears are genuinely religious may be called into question when other factors namely, tribal

loyalties, racial hatred, and the perceived imperatives of survival come to be taken into account. The exploitation of the 'religious' element, then, needs to be subjected to scrutiny since, wherever sectarianism is present, the work of demagogues is made that much easier. At the same time the 'no popery' anti-Catholicism of many Protestants continues to reflect genuine fear of Catholic hegemony. The measured continuation of Protestant institutions and polity is perceived to be in danger. 'Hearth and Home' stand under threat, although it can hardly be reasonably said that any form of radical displacement is likely. Nonetheless, 'No Pope here' slogans can still be seen to proliferate in some Protestant areas.(7)

The Catholics for their part were expelled from their lands by the Plantation.(8)

This was the great injustice upon which the plantation of Ulster was founded. The land was taken from the people. (Colles 1919 180)

Given the turbulence that has persisted in the North since that time and up until the present, this historical memory cannot be said to be exorcised since reconciliation was never effected between the two communities. As well as this, Catholic fears were only too frequently justified either by direct persecution, penal legal enactments or persistent attempts to proselytize.

What, it might be asked, is the rôle of religion in the Catholic community of to-day? Politically, the majority in the Catholic community aspires to ultimate national unity; presently, it still struggles against economic and social discrimination. Is its religion considered to be an important element in this struggle? Some might argue that it is not. The Catholic community's nationalist preoccupations are not *theologically* doctrinal. There isn't sufficient theological knowledge and understanding about for that. Their social and economic aspirations are sustained by a more modest philosophy of survival in the first instance. Nor would it be other than unrealistic to imagine and churlish to expect a Northern Ireland free from nationalist and Irish cultural influences. The *For God and Ulster* slogan of Unionism is matched by the motto *Pro Fide et Patria* ('For Faith and Fatherland'), which is the masthead of Belfast's Catholic daily newspaper *The Irish News*, while a Dublin newspaper still read by Catholics in the North, (*The Irish Press*), carries

the following Irish language inscription above its editorial column: *Do chun Glóire Dé 's Onóra na hÉireann*, 'For the glory of God and the honour of Ireland'.(9)

Yet the kingdom of God on earth, the incoming of which it is still, presumably, the common task of Christians to promote, cannot be identified either with a United Ireland or with a British Ulster. This is as damaging to Northern Ireland Catholic as well as to Protestant dreaming. The complexity of the elements that appear to be intertwined with religion, both in Northern Ireland Catholicism and Protestantism, lies at the heart of the 'crisis of identity' with which this chapter is concerned. Protestantism, it would appear, is the *British* phenomenon; Catholicism, the *Irish*. Could a good Ulster Protestant validly think of himself as Irish? Might a good Northern Ireland Catholic equally validly consider himself as British? Outsiders might answer these questions easily and in the affirmative. For Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics, however, to answer in the affirmative would be a difficult thing to do. Most of them would answer, it may well be suspected, in the negative. Further questions might be put. What is it that makes a 'good' Catholic? What is it that makes a 'good' Protestant? What is to be made of the fact that both 'good' Catholics and 'good' Protestants would doubtless see themselves as 'good' Christians in a Northern Ireland torn by bitter conflict between the two communities? Or of the fact that it is either as a Protestant or a Catholic that nearly everyone *identifies* himself in Northern Ireland, as Rose (1971) has rightly observed?(10) The confessional issue cries out for clarification.

In Northern Ireland the self-perceptions of the great majority of people would be very positively that they are Christian. Yet a characteristic of that society is division and conflict. Can the problematic plausibly be brought to such a fundamental level as to question whether Northern Ireland is a Christian society in point of fact? The question might be considered tendentious as well as unfair since there are thousands of practising and devout Christian people in the Province. Despite this, however, Duncan Morrow (1989) makes the following revealing observation on how the Christian Churches relate to one another:

Despite denials and speeches, the real degree of brotherhood between the Churches seems no greater than that between secular elements in society. The relation of the Churches to each other often seem no more characterized by love than the relation of political parties. Perhaps

before the Churches can preach about the attitudes of secular society we should put our own house in order. (Morrow 1989 449)

The anomaly of bitter division and conflict, clearly un-Christian, continues to raise questions as much regarding the integrity of Christian confessionalism in Northern Ireland, as its effectiveness as a motivating force for peace and reconciliation. Questions arise as to the precise nature of Northern Ireland society itself. The status of the relations between the Protestant and Catholic Churches in Rose's 'bi-confessional' society comes into sharper focus. How do they in reality regard each other? Do they consider each other in terms of being fellow Christians? If, as Morrow states, Presbyterian ministers are unwilling to engage in ecumenical services of worship because 'this might be construed as suggesting that Catholic practice was as Christian as theirs', and if, on the other hand, Catholics view Protestantism as 'another faith', rather than that the Protestant Churches are different varieties of the same Christian faith, then it would appear that Christians are permitting religious differences to promote division in an already volatile society. Morrow opines that:

Then there will always be competition and rivalry between them with the possibility that the more zealous members will turn rivalry into a reason for conflict and violence. (*ibid.*, 449)

In that case, Morrow concludes, 'the Churches will never be able to proclaim that the Christian way is different from the secular struggle.'

The implications for Christian education become equally problematical. How is the Christian case for brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ to be put before our young people in the schools with the degree of credibility it ought to have, when, between the Churches themselves there is rivalry, a rivalry which, at community level in Northern Ireland, easily degenerates into sectarian dissension? This is a characteristic of Northern Ireland confessionalism for which the Churches clearly have a particularly serious degree of responsibility. The heads of the various churches do meet on a regular basis and uniformly condemn the excesses that emanate from both their communities. The criticism has been made, however, that despite such meetings and other inter-community initiatives there is no great substance to any *real* day-to-day friendship-contacts between those promoting reconciliation. In the

case of the schools, and considering their potential for community outreach, questions arise as to the degree of their actual influence in a Northern Ireland where, while the attendance at Christian places of worship is the second highest in Europe, there nevertheless are serious problems in respect of inter-community contact. It might, therefore, be thought useful in the first instance to take some account of the influence of the school more generally.

## **2.2 The influence of the school and the wider community**

The issue has been receiving an increasing amount of attention from educational sociologists. Christopher J. Hurn (1985) for example, referring to the current debate on what he terms 'The Sociological Approach to Schooling', states:

The most important conclusion of that discussion is that what might seem at first to be strictly educational issues are on closer examination inextricably involved with larger social and political questions in the wider society. (Hurn 1985 1)

According to Hurn a relative paucity of reliable knowledge about the determinants of success in school, the effects of school on students and particularly 'about such global questions as the relationship between schooling and the wider society' permits widely different interpretations and theories that are 'heavily shaped by ideological convictions about the character of the social world and human nature'.<sup>(11)</sup> For Emile Durkheim (1956) the rôle of the school in society was considered as crucial in restoring some degree of cohesion and moral unity to a society torn apart by industrialization. Through the teaching of history and instruction in values and morality, schools 'tied students to the ideas and purposes of the nation-state. Schools and only schools could make citizens.'<sup>(12)</sup> A radically contrary view has been that expressed by Ivan Illich (1973) namely, that it is society which totally influences the school and deleteriously at that.

Unquestionably, the educational process will gain from the deschooling of society even though this demand sounds to many schoolmen like treason to the enlightenment. But it is the enlightenment itself that is now being snuffed out in the schools. (Illich 1973 31)

Illich's opinion might be said to find confirmation in the current neo-Marxist position adopted by authors such as Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976)

for whom schools are seen as 'channeling (*sic*) colonies', channeling the poor into careers appropriate to their abilities as defined by officially sanctioned tests.(13) A more pervasive view on schooling, however, is 'the functional paradigm' which, in Hurn's words, 'has long been part of the conventional wisdom of liberal intellectuals in Western society'. Schooling is stressed as being of crucial importance in modern society firstly, for the multiple and important functions that schools perform, such as the production of cognitive skills, the sorting and selection of talents and the creation of an informed citizenry; and secondly, schools are seen as meeting the requirements of industrial society 'for some minimal moral consensus and cultural homogeneity.' Yet, having said this, Hurn specifically adverts to the transmission of values and ideals in modern society 'through both implicit and explicit teaching.' What the author says is of particular interest given the inclination of some proponents of liberal education to lay charges of indoctrination against the presentation of values and ideals such as those proposed in Christian education. The basis for saying this is that different values and ideals inevitably emanate from competing conceptions or belief systems in the wider debate as to the purpose and end of man. The liberal society, also, it may be said, has its own system of basic beliefs. (The argument is pursued *passim* throughout the present study.) Hurn continues as follows:

It would be a great mistake to underestimate the importance of the transmission of values and ideals in the modern world. Contemporary societies, like all previous societies, can only persist if they successfully provide the young with the opportunity to share in and subscribe to the particular values and ideals that make each society distinctive....The organization of the classroom, the way students are evaluated, and even the demeanour and manner of the teacher convey implicit messages that teach students what kinds of conduct are appropriate....Modern societies take pains to ensure the fundamental values and ideals of the culture. We arrange and structure the experience of young people in order to achieve that goal. (Hurn 1985 5)

Theories such as these indicate a strong *belief* that schools can have an important influence on society. While the actual effects of schooling on society may not be as amenable to precise scientific evidence such as sociologists might demand, the belief itself empowers the school with a certain quality of influence *vis-à-vis* the wider society. That the school's influence upon its own societal constituency is



greater - both actually and potentially - than is often supposed will be discussed later in the study. Indeed, the influence of schools generally is potentially strong in society at large should they - the schools - decide to exert it. The influence of society on the school is clearly not in doubt, but it ought to be said that the quality of that influence in the secular world is often debatable especially in the sphere of moral values. Is the liberal 'minimal moral consensus' logically possible, however, even if deemed desirable? Are moral imperatives open to picking and choosing, and if so, how is the choice to be made and who makes it? The religious paradigm which informs the Christian-confessional school would appear to provide a more reliable guide in this crucial area, its values being based upon the teaching of Jesus Christ himself. In the Christian ethic, the influence of the school on the wider community is unquestioned. Few Christian or even non-Christian educationalists would disagree with the following extract taken from the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on Christian Education* of 28 October, 1965.

Among the various organs of education the school is of outstanding importance. In nurturing the intellectual faculties which is its special mission, it develops a capacity for sound judgment and introduces the pupils to the cultural heritage bequeathed to them by former generations. It fosters a sense of values and prepares them for professional life. By providing for friendly contacts between pupils of different characters and backgrounds it encourages mutual understanding. Furthermore it constitutes a centre in whose activity and growth not only the families and teachers but also the various associations for the promotion of cultural, civil and religious life, civic society, and the entire community should take part.(14)

## 2.3 Influence and rôle: the schools in Northern Ireland

What then of the schools themselves and their influence in Northern Ireland *vis-à-vis* the wider community? What contributions have they been able to make of a helpful nature in the situations of endemic community conflict which plague the Province.? Are the divided school systems actually contributing to the present conflict or are they merely 'neutral'? If the latter is the case ought they not to be positively attempting to exercise some sort of ameliorating influence? To what extent are the schools already attempting to do this? In which case with what sense of urgency are the various churches seeking to assist their schools in such endeavours? In addressing the question of what should be, and in practical terms what

might be, the rôle of the school in such a divided society as Northern Ireland, John Greer (1989) refers to the reconstructionist strategy of Malcolm Skilbeck (1973) as a possible mode of approach.<sup>(15)</sup> On the other hand, in referring to day-to-day practices in the segregated schools in relation to the community conflict, Dominic Murray's (1983) comment on the 'quite amazing dearth of qualitative rather than quantitative data'<sup>(16)</sup> points to a continuation of a trend towards self-containment practised by many schools. Questions and issues such as these arise for consideration. It is the writer's contention that the school has a potential for much greater influence than it generally exercises and that this potential could be realized - to significant effect - were the school so to decide. On the 'important occasions' in any school's calendar such as Prize Day, First Communion Day, Careers Guidance Conventions, Year Group Teacher-Parent meetings for example, the school's outreach into its own community is significant and its influence apparent. In addition, recent years have seen Home-Liaison schemes put into operation with the object of increasing and deepening teacher-parent contact. Instances such as these indicate the school's unquestioned ability to organize and pursue strategies for community contact in matters which it judges important.

Were it to happen, for example, that two schools, one from each tradition, informed parents that they were embarking upon a planned programme of inter-school co-operation and wished to initiate joint teacher-parent discussions over a number of meetings, the innovative influence of those schools not only in respect of their own parents and local communities but on the wider Northern Ireland climate of opinion would indeed be significant. Allowing for all the objections and caveats that might be made, including a likely accusation of 'wild improbability', in educational terms the proposal is quite unremarkable. In putative terms of practicality it poses no great difficulty either. Both schools would be well able to devise successful strategies for such inter-school-community outreach. Not only that, but the recent Education Reform Bill (1989) now puts an onus on grant-aided schools to promote what it terms 'Education for Mutual Understanding'.<sup>(17)</sup> The fact that initiatives of the type suggested cannot be said to have been got under way in a determinedly structured manner in Northern Ireland - and where initiatives of such a kind are greatly needed - requires explanation. There *have* been scattered instances of inter-school contacts but much fewer than commonly sup-

posed and of such a character as to deserve the appellation 'cursory'. As Seamus Dunn (1985a) has stated:

It would be possible, if somewhat misleading, to make quite a long list of events and projects that have been used by schools as a form of co-operation. The list would include limited curriculum contact, joint holidays, discos, concerts, plays, quizzes, sports days, visits to museums and so on. Sport for example is much referred to but often with reservations. Contact often involved a single game or match once or twice a year. Also, the fact that sport was competitive worried some. (Dunn 1985a 12)

However, in referring to findings of a recent study set up to investigate existing patterns of co-operation between state (Protestant) and Catholic schools (of which he was a co-author) Dunn (1985) makes the following comment:

Generally speaking it would be true to say that for most schools, cross-divide contact is very limited indeed. (Dunn et al. 1985(a) 12)

Among teachers, however, Dunn found it interesting 'how often there was the perception that a great deal was going on, when in fact very little could be found.' There were, however:

No examples of deliberate isolationism on the part of principals and very few among teachers. Almost all expressed, at the lowest, an aspiration towards the improvement of community relations through increased cross-community contacts. (*ibid.*,12)(18)

Nevertheless, while admitting the complexity of the whole situation, it may still be thought remarkable that over twenty years into the present conflict so little of note has been achieved in respect of any imaginative inter-schools co-operation. A possible explanation may be that to a greater or lesser extent the schools are the ideological prisoners of their respective communities in the sense that those ideological influences which characterize Northern Irish society may well be exercising influence equally in the educational community and, to a greater or lesser extent, inhibiting realization of the schools' *Christian* potentialities as effective agents for the promotion of community harmony. It might understandably be objected that it is asking too much of the schools to expect that it were otherwise. The schools, after all, are peopled by members - young and old - of that close-knit indigenous and polarized society which has been caught up in a still unresolved conflict that

has already seen several thousand dead, many more injured, massive destruction of property and the loss of thousands of jobs in a bad economic situation aggravated still further by adverse publicity. A 1983 report in *The Times* estimated that the previous fourteen years of the troubles alone (that is, from 1969-1983) cost £11 billion to the exchequers of Britain and the Irish Republic, caused the deaths of more than 2,300 people and injuries to more than 24,000.(19) Later in the study - particularly in Chapter 7 - further attention is paid to the question of ideological influences as they might relate to the schools.

Yet the potentialities inherent in and consonant with Christian education both can and ought to be realized. The extent to which they have not been realized must pose grave questions for educators in Northern Ireland since in spite of everything the Province remains avowedly Christian. Outside observers of the Northern Ireland tragedy are often swift to attribute a Christian complexion to the conflict, expressing their criticisms as to the irony of Christians on both sides being enmeshed in it. It is in this context that Greer's (1989) own criticism of 'a serious failure' may be cited. Himself a noted Northern Irish educationalist and an Anglican cleric, his criticism is as severe as, unfortunately, it appears to be true. After praising as a great achievement the success of the churches in a co-operative partnership with the state (albeit one that was often argumentative and in the experience of the Catholic church distinctly un-equal) in building, equipping and staffing a modern school system, he then proceeds to describe the 'serious failure' as follows:

The point which is being made is simply that those responsible for such destruction and savagery, those people of violence whose bodies lie in premature graves or who are serving sentences in prison or who continue their campaign of hatred intimidation and murder, have all been through the school system in one or other of its forms. They have lived in the distinctive ethos of the maintained (Catholic) school or the controlled (Protestant) school. They have received Catholic catechesis or Protestant bible teaching for eleven or twelve or more years, but despite this they have failed to learn basic human values such as respect for human life, or tolerance of political or religious beliefs they do not themselves hold. Brought up in one tradition of Christian faith or the other, they do not exhibit the spirit of Christian love and forgiveness. It does not really meet the criticism to say that only a small number of pupils is involved or to argue that the situation would

be even worse if it were not for the restraining influence of schools and teachers. Catholic and Protestant educators have succeeded in building impressive institutions which have the fabric, the physical structure and the facade of a humanising education but which, for whatever reasons, failed to contribute as they should towards the spiritual, moral and mental development of their pupils, and the community in which these pupils live. (Greer 1988 144)

The criticism is severe although expressed by Greer in a context of Christian charity and concern. That concern is about 'the rôle which the Churches might pursue in such a divided and violent society.' His reference to two crucially important initiatives which failed to develop as they should have indicates the frustration felt by many at the lack of *real* co-operation between the Churches in a truly vital area. One of these was 'an important attempt to embody realistic reconstructionist aims in teacher education in the Belfast colleges (Catholic and Protestant) of education.' The 'ambitious programme of co-operation' between the Church Colleges of Education and Stranmillis College was agreed by the Northern Hierarchy and the Board of Governors of Stranmillis in 1982. 'Unfortunately four years later in 1986 little progress appears to have been made....Nothing seems to have happened.'(20) Earlier, perhaps an even more important initiative was proposed in a report entitled *Violence in Ireland* (1976) produced by a working party set up by the Catholic Hierarchy and the Irish Council of Churches.(21) That initiative, crucially important and potentially revolutionary in the Northern Ireland context had it been implemented - in its pilot schemes, research projects and imaginative proposals for effective inter-schools co-operation - similarly 'failed'. These failures, which undoubtedly give a cutting edge to Greer's criticism, are examined in greater detail in Chapter 4, when the problem of integrated education and the ecumenical remit of Christian schools in the divided society are examined.

Yet the realities of that divisiveness in Northern Ireland are often so palpable and harsh in their effects that it might well be considered understandable that the schools should come to accept that their potential influence and quality of outreach in relation to the wider community is very limited. Their ordained rôle after all is to 'educate' the young. As well as this, there is a view influential among teachers in Northern Ireland that 'the school as an oasis', has long been fulfilling an important function in providing an atmosphere of order and relative calm for the young people

during the not inconsiderable periods of time when they are in school. The present writer can corroborate this from practical experience. On many occasions following riots or other disturbances of one kind or another which generated a continuing atmosphere of tension abroad in the community, the atmosphere of normality in the school that greeted the in-coming pupils can only be called remarkable. By mutual consent as it were, teachers and pupils got on with the business of education. Even in the senior classes discussion of untoward incidents which might have happened only the night before was minimal if it took place at all. At morning assembly and possibly during a religious knowledge period a prayer might be said for someone who had been killed. The school welcomed its children and taught them well with professional understanding and even with affection. In a society torn by political and religious divisions - of which the majority of the pupils were very aware - the school saw its responsibility as one of keeping the conflict outside the borders of its educational remit.

## **2.4 The rôle of the Christian school in the divided society**

While the schools in Northern Ireland deserve only praise for their undoubted and valuable contribution in maintaining a stable environment for the children they were educating, can it be said that they were operating to their full potential as *Christian* schools? The distinction between state schools, that is, ideologically 'neutral' schools and Christian schools is less easy to draw in Northern Ireland than for example in Great Britain. The state schools in the Province are in effect Protestant, as has already been said. Since, then, all the schools in Northern Ireland are either Protestant or Catholic the question remains : can it be said that they operate as *Christian* schools - and especially in the secondary and grammar school sector where the young adolescent will only too soon find himself or herself a young adult on one side or the other of a sectarian divide aggravated by a serious community conflict?

Reference has already been made to some of the ways in which the children of Northern Ireland often absorb the attitudinal stances of their elders in situations of heightened tension. Ecological factors such as the surrounding community and its environment, including the peer group of the street and the ethos of the district also act powerfully in forming attitudes and moulding beliefs. The home is the

most powerful influence of all. In the face of all this the school may come to be generally recognised as being of secondary importance as a factor of influence on the expression, the development, the reinforcing, and the modification, of religious and social attitudes. Yet the school's sheer physical presence in a given area is an inescapable symbol of an important source of influence. The teachers still possess considerable authority; and despite cynicism, the school is still the place where interesting things can happen, and where useful skills are acquired. As a social as well as a *socializing* institution it inevitably exercises a pervasive influence upon its pupils. 'Inappropriate' social attitudes are often enough to be identified as having emanated from the society itself before education becomes explicitly (or implicitly) instrumental in encouraging 'more appropriate' attitudes. Problems will arise in so far as the school community, being a microcosm, will inevitably mirror the attitudes and values of the wider society. In a professedly *Christian* society, the difference between the ideal and the empirical reality is sometimes sufficient to disqualify the ideal in the minds of pragmatists. But for the Christian school this option is not so easily accepted. The unquestionable declension from the ideal in practice provides the Christian school with its principal *raison d'être* and Christian teachers with an introduction to a neglected subject, namely, the theology of education. It is not surprising that when little if any serious attention is given to systematic reflection about the theological basis of Christian education the 'Christian' school begins to lose its distinctiveness and its rôle, especially in a society which is correctly described, not as 'pluralist', but as divided. It is here, surely, where the Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation need the most powerful and consistent advocacy, despite all the recurrent failures to live up to the ideals in question.

It can thus be argued that it is part of the function of a Christian school to espouse the cause of conservation in this particular way. That is to say, a Christian school will seek to preserve Christian values in an environment where such values are endangered. *Ought* the school to be consciously aware of such a challenge and that too, from an educational point of view? *Ought* it to incorporate a response in its school programme? In a society in conflict such as Northern Ireland and yet a society in which the profession of Christian allegiance is so public, the school ought at least to be aware of the challenges of environmental protection and of the opportunities for conservation. At the same time a more

authentic *Christian* education combines the particularity of confessionalism with an openness to alternative world-views, since inwardness and lack of respect for the sincerely held views of others is not a characteristic of truly Christian education. Such an approach would undoubtedly have much to offer in a society which has hitherto been divided along all too rigid sectarian lines. I Peter 3 15 provides a model which suggests both a programme and a methodology:

But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

When a critique of the theoretical bases of pluralism has been attempted it will be possible to clarify the practical implications which bear upon education. Furthermore, it will be possible to detect whether or not the distinctive character of Christian education has been re-invigorated, transformed, or eroded, by an approach to education as a whole which is essentially *secular*. At the same time the study will suggest that an authentic Christian approach to education can facilitate the exploration of religious and cultural diversity in a way which may be unique. Its distinctive contribution to the life of a divided community may be that of providing a trustworthy vehicle for exploring the uneven terrain of conflicting beliefs and opinions, the intricacies and apparent contradictions, in a world where diversity increasingly threatens the coherence of society - and not just in Northern Ireland. The justification of Christian education, *on educational grounds* is, therefore, an important element in the present study.

It has already been suggested that certain crypto-confessional or ideological influences characteristic of Northern Ireland society may be inhibiting the distinctive rôle in education in the Province which Christian education can play. If it is in fact the case that ideological influences emanating from within Northern Ireland society itself are impairing the effectiveness of Christian education, the general perception of that society as being Christian may need modification. In modern society it is the community which calls for the education of its young in the first instance, demanding that schools be provided, teachers trained, and 'proper' things taught. Inevitably, it would appear, it is society's values which permeate the educational community. In a secularized society there is a tendency for state schools to embrace these comprehensively. Church-related schools however, while



anxious to prepare their children for life in society, cherish value systems which inevitably conflict with the assumptions of a secular society. In Northern Ireland such a situation might be presumed unlikely where the general consensus of values is usually understood as being *Christian*. Yet clearly the Northern Ireland scenario is one that is both disturbing and contradictory and would appear to call such a presumption into question. While the schools attempt to proceed with the Christian education of their pupils they are confronted by the very obvious community divisions which surround them. Only too frequently these divisions are accentuated by incidents in the community that are clear signals of bitter conflict. All of this must confuse the inculcation of Christian beliefs and values and in the process undermine the teaching of Jesus Christ himself. It is for Christian education, however, to attempt to respond as positively and as amelioratively as possible to such difficulties as they inevitably face.

## 2.5 Children in the divided society

Community harmony in any event would seem, logically, to be a *sine qua non* in any society that professes to be a Christian one and particularly in respect of the education it judges worthy of its children. How does a divided society answer both the spoken and unspoken questions of its children as it proceeds with their Christian education? Since 1969, as Paul Arthur (1980) has put it, 'the dominant themes in the past decade have been death and destruction.' Arthur was referring to the decade up to 1980, but the 1980s and now the early 1990s have seen the litany of atrocities - including the carnage at Eniskillen (8 November 1987)(22) - continue to grow.

In the face of all this it is inconceivable that the young people of Northern Ireland, even the very young, do not either see or hear of deaths and serious injuries resulting from bombings, assassinations or other deeply untoward incidents. They may be down-town shopping with their parents to meet consternation, fear and confusion as a car bomb is discovered near some building and areas of the city centre are cordoned off. A 'door-step' assassination perhaps in their own street leaves them frightened and bewildered. On television they see a seemingly endless succession of reports of funerals of victims done to untimely death. In Catholic Nationalist areas they meet patrols of heavily armed soldiers every day. At the

interfaces of opposing districts they witness and may even be caught up in sporadic outbreaks of sectarian violence. They might well have relatives who were killed, wounded, beaten, intimidated, arrested or imprisoned. They may even have known or know of some young person killed or maimed in an explosion or wounded or (earlier in the troubles) killed by a plastic bullet at the periphery of a riot, for, disturbingly, children are to be found among those killed and injured. One of the first victims of the present troubles was a nine year old boy, Daniel Rooney, fatally wounded at Divis Flats in Belfast on the night of 15 August, 1969, by a Royal Ulster Constabulary bullet that penetrated into his family's council flat.(23)

Family relationships and connections of kinship are wide ranging in Northern Ireland and not unusually cut across different levels of social status. It is not uncommon for families of a lower socio-economic status to refer with natural pride to sons or daughters or uncles or aunts who have improved their position and are 'doing well'; or to speak with admiration of even distant relations - with whom they are 'connected' - on account of the economic or social success they have achieved. Reciprocally, an architect may turn up at the funeral of his unemployed cousin or a well-to-do businessman may acknowledge kinship with a nephew whom he seldom saw but who has just been killed. In such a closely-knit society where often one community or the other is convulsed by some dreadful happening, and where one atrocity often begets another by way of retaliation, the children cannot but be influenced by what they see and hear. They absorb the atmosphere of community revulsion and recriminatory expressions of condemnation all around them and in many cases arrive in school with opinions about and attitudes towards the 'other' community that are blunt, direct, uncompromising and demonstrably un-Christian. They are not to be blamed. They are young and impressionable. Quite simply they have been *scandalized* in the sense that they have been exposed to the sins of community division.

Where does the responsibility for this lie in a society commonly regarded as Christian? How does the education of these children proceed in such a society? What, if any, are the distinctively Christian *educational* responsibilities and contributions which may influence the situation for good or ill? What responses are suggested to the young to enable them to cope, in a Christian way, with the challenges to Christian love and forgiveness that confront them in their communities?

In respect of this, what degree of importance can Northern Ireland society be seen to be placing on the Christian education of its young people? Finally, what effect has the nature of Northern Ireland society itself had upon Christian education *in* that society, where education is carried on in the schools of two Christian communities, the one Protestant and the other Catholic, but in a situation where each community finds itself on opposing sides of a deep divide, a divide made even more entrenched by the sufferings both sides have had to endure as a result of the recourse to violence by extremists. It is beyond argument that the extent and depth of that suffering constitute a highly significant factor in the continuing bitterness of the conflict. Having said this, however, the Christian forgiveness shown so often by the families and relatives of the victims has been both deeply moving, highly exemplary and authentically Christian.<sup>(24)</sup> Here is a seed of hope planted by those who have suffered greatly. They have pointed the way to that mutual forgiveness which is integral to the process of Christian reconciliation.

## **2.6 The outbreak of open conflict in the divided society**

There had been grounds for hope of at least some improvement in community relations during the premiership of Terence O'Neill (25 March, 1963 - 30 April 1969) who had declared in 1964 that 'my principal aims are to make Northern Ireland prosperous and to build bridges between the two traditions.' Since socio-economic inequality characterised by deep seated patterns of discrimination against the Catholic population in housing and employment had been a feature of the Northern Ireland regime<sup>(25)</sup> - as well as mutual suspicion of each other's hallowed traditions in the society as a whole - these stated aims of Terence O'Neill, with the implication that the 'building of bridges' would also imply a fairer sharing in the prosperity to come, were not only novel but coming from the successor of former Northern Ireland prime ministers such as Lord Craigavon and Sir Basil Brooke, quite revolutionary. Were the mutual suspicions of both communities to be broken down and a more equitable level in socio-economic sharing even begun to be approached, the omens would surely have been good for Northern Ireland becoming a happier and more stable polity. Further, in a professedly Christian society, the resultant community harmony might even have made Northern Ireland a source of admiration in the wider comity of nations and begun to remove

its *causa scandalis* image. Initially, the nationalist community gave tacit support to the declared efforts of the government at bridge-building, some of which manifested themselves in O'Neill visiting a number of Catholic institutions, dramatically meeting the Irish *Taoiseach*, (Prime Minister) Mr Sean Lemass, in 1965, and in commissioning a series of reports on economic and regional development that seemed to promise change. In the context of Northern Ireland, O'Neill's programme proposed changes that *were* potentially radical for the Province, however bland they might have seemed to others. As a direct result of his meeting with Lemass, the Nationalist party in Northern Ireland agreed to become the official opposition party at Stormont - an historic decision in itself. Ironically, however, it was O'Neill's premiership that became the prelude to the present still unresolved phase of civil unrest, that has seen the return of both communities to a state of polarization deeper than ever before and characterized by the most appalling violence. The next chapter will include an examination of the social and political background to that crisis. As to what has come to be called 'the failure of O'Neill', however, that is, the failure, as it transpired, of the O'Neill administration to translate its intentions into practice, the following two views may be judged of complementary interest.

There were many warning signals, remembered in retrospect but under-rated in the exuberant optimism of the 1960s, that basic attitudes had not altered significantly...The traditional Ulster values, which would have been threatened by reconciliation may have been in temporary hiding, but they soon emerged with banners flying...The murder (in 1966) of a Catholic in the *Malvern Arms* public house, and the apprehension of the murderers, revealed the existence of the UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force) which saw itself as the Loyalist equivalent of the IRA. The pressure for change in Northern Ireland society had produced defenders of the *status quo*. (Darby 1976 14, 15)

Republicans could see no attraction in amelioration, for if successful, it would only strengthen the Border that divided the North from the Republic. Many Catholics did not regard economic growth as their only or prime concern. Catholics waited and waited in vain, for the reformist Prime Minister to take steps to give Catholics, whether or not loyal supporters of the regime, more effective rights as citizens, especially in local government. The reaction of Unionists in Parliament and Paisleyites on the streets emphasized that little could be expected. (Rose 1971 101)

O'Neill's programme of reform finally resulted in the mobilization of Unionist opinion against him and a series of bombings carried out by the UVF in the early part of 1969 forced his resignation on 28 April of that year, three days after the last explosion. Civil Rights marches for basic reforms such as 'one man, one vote' resulted in Loyalist counter-demonstrations and increasing confrontations at which the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) were seen to be acting in a partisan way against the Catholics. The most notorious example of this at the time, occurred on 4 January 1969 at Burntollet Bridge, an isolated beauty spot 11 miles from Derry City, when a Civil Rights march that had left Belfast on New Year's Day was ambushed and subjected to violent attacks by 400 waiting Loyalists. The RUC, who did little or nothing to protect the marchers, were later accused of knowingly leading the march into the attack, a charge given substance by earlier sights of members of the RUC talking amiably with the Loyalists at various roadblocks on the way and even on occasions joining them in their taunts at the marchers. It went further than this, however, as Barry White (1983) reports:

Members of the 'B Specials', the exclusively Protestant police reserve, were involved in the attack on the student marchers and this was the prelude to days and nights of rioting in Derry - and in Newry a few weeks later - which left permanent scars in both communities. (White 1983 184)

John Darby has concluded that 'the violent opposition to the marchers at Burntollet Bridge destroyed any hopes of non-violent protest.'<sup>(26)</sup> Yet other and even more serious events in 1969 saw Northern Ireland slide inexorably to disaster. The month of August saw a pitched battle between the Catholics of the Bogside in Derry and the RUC that was only ended by the deployment of British troops and the RUC's withdrawal on the evening of the 14th. The trouble spread to Belfast, however, where, as Rose (1971) puts it:

News of events in Derry led Catholics in Belfast to fear that another pogrom would be launched against them. Reciprocally, Protestants feared a rising by Catholic rebels. Tension was greatest in the Falls and Shankill roads area of West Belfast. (Rose 1971 106)

When, according to Paul Arthur (1988) a police station on the Falls Road was attacked by a Catholic mob as part of a plan to draw the RUC away from the

Bogside, 'the police chose to see this as an IRA plot.'(27) Max Hastings (1970) then a reporter in Belfast described the scene:

The RUC had by now convinced themselves that they faced something approaching a Catholic revolt. Fantastically, in Great Britain, their senior officers had permitted the calling out of armoured cars mounted with heavy machine guns. Many RUC men also had 9mm Sterling machine guns as personal weapons. There was the absolutely clear feeling among the police that they faced a direct threat...the police would loose off burst after burst of sub-machine gunfire at something - or nothing. And the armoured cars began to career the length of the Falls Road emptying belts of heavy calibre ammunition in the direction of any supposed threat. (Arthur 1980 110)

That same night of 14 August, Protestant crowds invaded the Lower Falls area of West Belfast, burning houses and intimidating Catholics from their homes. The Catholic enclave of Ardoyne was similarly attacked. By the end of the night dozens of houses had been fire-bombed, sectarian clashes had taken place at interfaces between the Shankill and Falls and between the Shankill and Ardoyne and five people had been killed, four Catholics and a Protestant. British soldiers were deployed on the Falls Road on the evening of the following day (15th August) but were not in time to prevent the burning of a whole row of Catholic homes by a Protestant mob attacking Bombay Street earlier in the day. They were welcomed by the distraught Catholics of the Belfast ghettos as a protection against further incursions by the police and the Loyalists. 'By Saturday 10 August the official death toll had risen to eight, the injuries numbered many thousands and hundreds of homes were either destroyed or badly damaged.'(28) Arthur concludes:

It was the Catholic communities of the Falls and Ardoyne areas which bore the brunt of the attack in the most serious rioting since the 1920s. Intimidation added to their problems. Over the next four years between 30,000 and 60,000 people were forced to leave their homes in the greater Belfast area in what the Community Relations Commission considered to be the largest enforced population movement in Europe since 1945. (*ibid.*,111)

## 2.7 Inequality in the confessional society

As has been seen in the previous section one cause of the descent to violence in the late 1960s was the strong Unionist opposition to the moderate reform

programme of Terence O'Neill on the one hand and the violent treatment of the civil rights marchers on the other. Some have argued that an equally contributory factor was the decision of the student-organized People's Democracy to stage the fateful Belfast to Derry march of January 1969 which was ambushed at Burntollet; this was a decision of those who 'were ready to test Protestant patience to destruction'.(29) The issue inevitably arises, however, as to the nature of the Northern Ireland regime, and its demonstrable unwillingness since its foundation to grant social equity to the minority Catholic population. There are admittedly deep-seated factors in the phenomenon of anti-Catholic discrimination which stretch back to the earliest beginnings of the Ulster problem. The question of the 'disloyal' minority in their midst was the most common counter allegation brought forward by Unionist leaders after Northern Ireland was established. Yet Rose (1971) has commented that the support of the Catholics 'was neither sought nor obtained.' 'This caste division', he continues, 'was simple, easily understood and entirely consistent with the Orange version of Irish history.'(30) Rose continues as follows:

Whether the Unionist policy be viewed as cause or consequence of Catholic disaffection is a matter of faith, not historical scholarship. The important point is that the Unionists, from the very foundation of the regime, did not seek to make it fully legitimate by attracting the support of Catholics. Protestant solidarity sufficed to give the Unionists a permanent hold on office and to leave the Nationalists a permanent minority without hope of gaining power - at least, by peaceful constitutional means. (Rose 1971 93)

It is deemed necessary to discuss the discrimination problem however briefly since it has poisoned relations between the two communities and made a major contribution to the alienation of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. In terms of Christian confessionality it raises serious questions as to the nature within Northern Ireland of adherence to the great principles of love, forgiveness and forbearance. In terms of Christian education it presents a picture of non-love and non-forgiveness to the young who soon enough learn the partisan characteristics and practices of the society they have been born into and come to realize that the great injunction to 'love your neighbour as yourself' is apparently subject to many exceptions. How, then, do Christian teachers approach the issue of social justice in their more senior classrooms? How do they answer the penetrating questions which are sometimes asked by the young people? Or is the subject scarcely touched upon

or perhaps even avoided? The point which is being made is that the presence and persistence of discrimination in the society is clearly erosive of the great Christian principles which it is the duty and privilege of Christian educators to present to the young.

Despite repeated revelations and documentation of discrimination against the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, and, more recently, despite the steps taken by government to combat it (notably in the field of employment) the discrimination continues. A recent report by Vincent McCormick and Joe O'Hara (1990) published by the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) shows that Catholics continue to be more than twice as likely as Protestants to be unemployed in Northern Ireland - the report claiming that recent legislation to combat job discrimination falls far short of what is necessary.(31) The NCCL chairman, Andrew Puddephatt, after criticising successive British governments for failing to tackle the discrimination - 'which is deeply embedded in the structures of Northern Ireland'(32) - commented on McCormick and O'Hara's report as follows:

The book points out that twenty years ago Lord Cameron identified discrimination as a major cause of unrest in Northern Ireland. Failure to deliver equality of opportunity will jeopardize any attempt at progress with tragic consequences.(33)

Discrimination is notoriously difficult to prove but in view of the considerable amount of evidence which exists to substantiate allegations of anti-Catholic discrimination in employment not only in the private but in the public sector as well (the Civil Service, the Fire Service and the Electricity Board have among others been mentioned), it is curious to find Dr Paul Compton (1988) of the School of Geography at Queen's University, Belfast, claiming in his paper 'The Conflict in Northern Ireland' (which he delivered to a conference on ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka) that Catholics suffer from disproportionately high rates of unemployment because of where they live, their social class and their large families, and not because of overt discrimination.(34) Dr Compton's views were shortly afterwards rebutted by the chairman of the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Agency, Mr Bob Cooper:

It's a nonsense to say Catholic unemployment has nothing to do with discrimination. It has everything to do with discrimination.(35)



In his statement to the press dealing with Dr Compton's claims, Mr Cooper commented that the paper would reinforce the prejudices of those who preferred to believe there was no active discrimination against Catholics. He continued:

The reason why Catholics are under-represented in skilled jobs is because of indigenous discrimination in industry. It is also a fallacy for him to suggest that Catholics cannot afford to educate their children because they have bigger families than Protestants and that this imposes an additional financial burden. The reality is that Catholic youngsters tend to stay at school longer than Protestants because they know they are unlikely to get a job at 16.(36)

Dismissing Dr Compton's view that one reason why an employer might favour a Protestant to a Catholic worker was because Protestants might be perceived to be better workers, Mr Cooper replied:

We have researched this notion of the so-called Protestant work ethic and we found there are no grounds to distinguish between Catholic and Protestant attitudes to work. Dr Compton has again elevated a myth to a serious argument.(37)

It might be thought ironic (although, in fact, it is deeply disappointing) to find that in Dr Compton's own university, The Queen's University of Belfast, a survey carried out by the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Agency (FEA) as recently as 1989 showed substantial discrimination against Catholics at almost all levels of the university's staff.(38) The FEA's 74 page Report was based on the university's workforce at the start of 1987 when the survey was undertaken. The survey found that the composition of employees at Queen's University was 79 % Protestant and 21 % Catholic - while the population ratio in Northern Ireland and in the Belfast City Council Area was about 65 % Protestant and 35 % Catholic. Of the top 117 administrative posts only 6 were occupied by Catholics at the time of the investigation. At the same time there were 4 Catholics occupying the posts of professor, reader, or senior lecturer. In all, 74 of these senior posts were held by Protestants. 423 Protestants were employed as cleaners, janitors, domestics, porters, drivers, boilermen, tradesmen, groundsmen, gardeners and in general maintenance. 80 Catholics were employed in the same positions. Of the overall total (which included nearly a fifth, that is, 556, who were born or received primary education outside Northern Ireland) - out of almost 3,000 employees, 478

were Northern Ireland born Catholics. At the same time, 1,836 Northern Ireland born Protestants had jobs on the campus.

In its Report, The Fair Employment Agency, which is a statutory body, said that the university had undertaken a number of measures during the course of the investigation to develop its equal opportunities programme both through the establishment of its Equal Opportunities Unit and involvement with the Department of Economic Development's Fair Employment Support Scheme. While welcoming these initiatives the Agency felt that there were still a number of improvements to be made and recommended a Programme of Action which the university had agreed to implement.(39) At a press conference conducted jointly by the chairman of the Agency, Mr Bob Cooper and the University's senior Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor John F. Fulton, on the day after *The Irish News* had published the Report, Professor Fulton said that the previous 18 months had seen a significant change take place in the staffing imbalance at Queen's University. He said that Queen's 'regretted' the imbalances. It was difficult, he said, to explain the imbalance in simple terms; it was partly due to the make-up of society, partly caused by 'factors involved in the institution itself' and partly due to the way these were perceived.(40) The editorial in *The Irish News*, however, accurately reflected the view of its Catholic readership - and indubitably the view of many others in the wider society - when it referred to 'the quite appalling and totally unacceptable fact that there is religious discrimination practised against Catholics in the workforce of this leading educational institution.'(41) That anti-Catholic discrimination on a wide scale always has and still does exist in Northern Ireland, then, cannot with any credibility be denied. A paradoxical situation clearly exists between this phenomenon and the overtly Christian confessional society. Speaking to the annual Methodist Conference in Derry (20 June, 1989) on the occasion of his inaugural address as President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Reverend George Morrison referred to 'a huge credibility problem' which Northern Ireland has in the eyes of the world. He went on to explain:

Ulster has one of the most concentrated enclaves of Christian piety (Roman and Reformed) in the world today. Yet we are notorious for the depth and bitterness of our bigotry and sectarianism. People in Northern Ireland are friendly to other nationalities but practise indigenous racism in the form of sectarianism. It's just as wounding and divisive

as any brand of racism on earth. Because we have lived in a climate of sectarianism for so long, we fail to appreciate what a hideously evil thing it is. It has tarnished our social life, our politics, our religion, our industrial scene and the educational process. Our culture is riddled with it.(42)

The Reverend Morrison's reference to Northern Ireland sectarianism as the outer form of what he terms an 'indigenous racism' is an instructive contribution to the present discussion. It might be paralleled by the description given over a century earlier, in 1886, by the Reverend and later Bishop Tohill of Down and Connor, of the religious hatred and treatment of his Catholic flock 'whose existence, he said, was ignored in every department of public life in Belfast and who were treated as if they were an inferior and conquered race.'(43) The same theme is taken up by Steve Bruce (1985) in his recent book on militant Protestantism in Scotland. It will be remembered - and Bruce makes the point elsewhere in his book - that Scottish Protestantism has traditionally had close connections with, and strong influence in, Ulster. Speaking of anti-Catholicism he states:

Although there are arguments about the proper use of terms like racial and ethnic conflict, I will describe anti-Catholicism as a species of ethnic conflict and argue that one needs two quite distinct things for sustained ethnic tension. One needs an ideology, a set of beliefs that picture the others as devalued in some way: ignorant, evil, easily led or whatever. But one also needs actual contact and competition with the others. There is a crucial difference between theoretical and practical racism. (Bruce 1985 242)

On the specific issue of the 'religious' aspect of the Northern Ireland conflict Bruce refers to the importance attributed to religion as an identitying factor in the conflict.

When two groups are in conflict and they use certain of each other's characteristics to justify that conflict, then it becomes important to members of the groups to maintain those characteristics. Ulster has not become secularized to the same extent as the rest of Britain because religion is crucial to both sides in maintaining their identity and justifying their continued conflict. This is not to say that the civil war in Ulster is a 'religious' war but only to say that, as long as religious affiliation is a discriminator of the two sides, then there are strong personal and social pressures to maintain the religious identity. (*ibid.*, 246)

But what kind of society is Northern Ireland? Is it one people or two, or is it both of these at the same time? Is it Irish or is it British or is it both Irish and British? It is Catholic and it is Protestant but how Christian is it? Is it irredeemably sectarian or might it come to adopt a mollifying ecumenism? What is the calibre of its confessionalism in the face of the motivating power of its ideologies? Questions such as these indicate the roots of a deep-seated crisis of identity that lies at the heart of Northern Ireland society. Some of the indicators of the unequal society have been mentioned namely discrimination, sectarianism, indigenous racism; the confessional issue is pervasively involved together with cognate religio-political ideologies such as Ulsterism and Nationalism.

It must be said also that the religious convictions of large numbers of Northern Ireland Catholics and Protestants are genuine and piously held. They *are* a devotional and religious minded people. Most of them, one suspects, would be affronted by any suggestion that they attend to their religion for the reason that it is crucial for them to maintain their religious identity in the present conflict. The reason why secularization has not impinged so much upon Northern Ireland may also be the same as that for the Irish Republic - a religiously committed people. Opposition to homosexuality and abortion, for example, is as much a characteristic of Northern Irish conservative Protestants as of Irish Catholics. At the same time, Bruce's comment perceptively indicates an important aspect of Northern Ireland's bi-confessional identity, namely, the extent to which the present conflict may have affected confessional integrity by a conflation with ideological elements. In a conflict characterized by dissension and scarred by violence, it may be thought not improbable for a Christian people caught up in such a situation to have worries as to whether or not their religious commitment stands the test, in aggravated circumstances, of their Christian scrutiny.

The complexity of the identity issue is further underlined at the cultural level. Reference was made in the Introduction to the cultural division in the schools which was deep indeed when the present writer was teaching, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. Yet there have always been exceptional cases such as the tradition of some Irish language teaching at the (Protestant) Royal Belfast Academical Institution. Again, when a project on Anglo-Irish culture was carried out in 1973 by graduate students from Queen's University with sixth formers in

Belfast's Methodist College - a large voluntary grammar school - the subsequent evaluation showed that while at the beginning of the project only 22% of the sixth formers felt deprived by their lack of contact with Irish culture, when it ended 90% felt that more Anglo-Irish culture should be taught in schools. A typical comment by one of the sixth formers stated:

I think I am more aware of Gaelic culture now, which before was something associated with politics. I think most Protestants fear Gaelic culture as a political instrument to push them towards a United Ireland.(44)

In his inaugural address (mentioned above) the 1989 Methodist President, the Reverend George Morrison, gives a further indication of the complexity of the problem of identity by telling the conference that he had 'never been quite able to understand why our Protestant people in this part of the country have largely rejected their Gaelic culture and heritage.' He continues:

One of the rich strains in my own heritage was acquiring an elementary knowledge of the Irish language, playing traditional music on the fiddle and the occasional game of gaelic football. I never found any conflict between that and my Methodist evangelical tradition. On the other side, why does the Republican tradition keep insulting the Protestant majority with the sick old slogan of 'Brits out', with the clear implication that all those who call themselves British are somewhat alien on Irish soil? (45)

It is clear that any blending of the cultural characteristics of both communities would be an important factor in assisting a resolution of the identity problem. It would clearly lead to a better understanding of one community by the other and a lessening of those stereotyped images which foster fear and facilitate the resort to violence and thoughts of coercion. A subsequent statement by Father Denis Faul, President St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon, might be regarded as responding to some of the things the Reverend Morrison said. Having referred also to sectarianism as 'the root cause' of Northern Ireland's problems, Father Faul proceeded to urge that there should be no coercion of Unionists, in the following terms:

Any expression of threat or coercion against the Unionists is a denial of Irish patriotism and of the essential teaching of Wolfe Tone, the founder of Irish Republicanism.(46)

Father Faul, it would appear, was addressing those in the Catholic community who continue to subscribe to the Republican 'physical force' tradition by utilizing the powerful symbol of Wolfe Tone to promote communal peace. His reference to Wolf Tone ('the father of Irish republicanism') implicitly subsumes Tone's declared aim 'to unite Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter, under the common name of Irishman.' Father Faul's statement, it is submitted, bears interpretation as an attempt to clarify a certain crisis of identity which many young and not so young Catholic men and women nationalists in Northern Ireland undergo as to what constitutes a good Irishman or Irishwoman in perceived conditions of injustice to their community and nation. Violence, wrong in itself, will certainly not unite Catholic, Protestant or Dissenter. The problem of violence - endemic in the Northern Ireland conflict - does not merely concern the paramilitaries from both communities who perpetrate it. The sufferings which both communities have endured from the 'other' community can often result in an ambivalent attitude to the violent acts that emanate from one's 'own' community. This ambivalence manifests itself in a tendency not to excuse but to 'understand'; on the one hand to condemn, while at the same 'remembering' the terrible act last committed by the 'other side'. It embraces the condemnatory force of one's Christianity on the one hand, while allowing considerations such as those just mentioned to wield an opposite influence - as one violent incident follows another.

This situation is well described by Bishop Cathal Daly. Speaking at the Requiem Mass for 63-year-old Catholic Davy Braniff, assassinated in his home by a Loyalist murder gang in North Belfast on 21 March, 1989, the bishop said:

The two campaigns of killing, Loyalist and Republican, feed on one another. Each provides a pretext and an excuse for the other. Loyalist gunmen claim to be retaliating for IRA killings, then the IRA retaliate for Loyalist retaliation killings; and so the mad dance of death goes on, leaving behind a trail of broken hearts and broken lives.(47)

Protestant church leaders have spoken in similar terms on many occasions when they have had the unhappy duty of presiding at the funerals of their co-religionists murdered by the IRA. On the occasion of Mr Braniff's murder, Bishop Daly spoke as follows:

The Loyalist murder gang who did their foul deeds here in North Belfast may call themselves Protestants. Catholics know that they do not rep-

resent the Protestant community or the Protestant faith, and that true God-fearing Protestants condemn them, reject them and feel insulted by their abuse of the Protestant name. Nevertheless, the vile actions of these Loyalist gangs come out of a background of religious bigotry, based in part on sheer religious ignorance but also based in part, sad to say, on malign and mischievous misinformation about Catholic practices and beliefs which, to our shame, still characterize some pulpits and some publications in our society. It is imperative that the Churches face resolutely up to this pernicious phenomenon of religious bigotry, which should have no place in any Christian society in these closing years of the 20th century. Churchmen must have the courage to be 'valiant for truth' against the evil of sectarianism.(48)

Bishop Daly then proceeded to warn Catholics, as he had often done previously, that they could not 'partly sympathize', condone, or 'at least refuse to condemn' murders committed by Republican gunmen. 'We must unequivocally condemn all violence from whatever side it comes.'(49)

It is hoped that sufficient has been said in this chapter to illustrate the multifaceted nature of the identity crisis which confronts Northern Ireland, and the all-pervasive influence of the dominant confessional issue throughout multiple aspects of Northern Irish life. From the standpoint of the theological perspective adopted in the present thesis, it might already be accepted that the great issue for confessional Northern Ireland may be how validly it can be identified as an authentically Christian society. In the next chapter, an historical elucidation of the origins of the confessional issue as it has developed in Northern Ireland, and with particular reference to the perennially vexed question of education, will throw further light upon the theological crisis which informs Northern Ireland confessionalism and which, as a result, impairs the progress of an authentic Christian education in the Province.

## 2.8 Notes and references

1. Enda McDonagh, 'An Irish Theology and the Influence of Particulars', in Enda McDonagh (ed.) *Irish Challenges to Theology: Papers of the Irish Theological Association Conference 1984*, (Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1986), pages 124 and 125.
2. See Richard Rose, *Government Without Consensus: An Irish Perspective* (London, Faber and Faber, 1971) p. 264.

3. The review is in *The Newman Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, Summer, 1970, pp. 52-54.
4. Sir Clarence Larmour, then chairman of the standing committee of the Ulster Unionist Council and Brian Maginess, Attorney-General.
5. See T. J. Campbell, *Fifty Years of Ulster* (Belfast, The Irish News, 1941). 'Lord Randolph Churchill wrote to Lord Justice Fitzgibbon on the eve of the first Home Rule Bill (February, 1886): *I decided some time ago that if the G.O.M. (the Grand Old Man - Gladstone) went for Home Rule the Orange Card would be the one to play.*' (p.53)
6. An evocative description of the Great Irish Famine of the late 1840s when the potato crop failed over a number of years with terrifying results for the Irish population.
7. More apparent since the outbreak of the present 'troubles', however, are the graffiti and wall murals of the paramilitaries - from both sides of the conflict.
8. The sense of loss of land is still strong or can easily be brought to mind among many Irish Catholics. In the Irish clann system all shared a sense of territoriality as to the lands occupied by the clann. A person called O'Neill, for example, will have a feeling of nostalgia for the county of Tyrone, the historic patrimony of the O'Neills.
9. One or two newspapers span the sectarian divide. In Belfast the moderate Unionist and evening newspaper *The Belfast Telegraph* is read by both communities.
10. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
11. Christopher J. Hurn, *The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling* (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1985), p.38.
12. See Hurn, *ibid.*, p.84.
13. *ibid.*, p. 88.
14. See Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1975) p.730.
15. See John Greer, 'The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland', in V, Alan McClelland (ed.) *Christian Education in a Pluralist Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) pp. 146- 7. Malcolm Skilbeck's view on reconstructionism in education (see his paper 'The School and Cultural Development', in *The Northern Teacher*, Winter issue, 1973) is referred to later in the study in Chapter 7.
16. Dominic Murray, 'Schools and Conflict', in John Darby (ed.), *Northern Ireland: The Background to the Conflict* (Belfast and New York: Appletree Press and Syracuse University Press, 1983) p.144.



17. Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. Its controversial provisions for integrated education are discussed in Chapter 4.
18. In actual practice, however, a quite extensive degree of isolationism with respect to schools from the 'other' community clearly obtains in too many cases. Currently there has emerged evidence in a number of instances of reluctance by Protestant schools to pursue initiatives in *Education for Mutual Understanding* in a logically realistic manner. A number of such cases have come to the present writer's attention. Hopefully, however, the evaluation currently in progress at the University of Ulster will come to indicate evidence of a more generally encouraging kind.
19. The statistics are given by Greer in 'The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland', in V. Alan McClelland (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.144.
20. *ibid.*, p.148. Stranmillis College is the state, and, in practice, Protestant College of Education. Following recent reorganization the two Catholic Church Colleges of Education, St Joseph's (for men students) and St Mary's (for women students) have been amalgamated into one College on the St Mary's site and called St Mary's.
21. *ibid.*, p.149.
22. Eleven people were killed and dozens more were injured by the explosion of an IRA bomb in the centre of Eniskillen. The touching words of Christian forgiveness uttered by the father of one of the victims, Gordon Wilson, whose only daughter lost her life in the explosion made a profound impression upon everyone. 'His words prevented many acts of retaliation by Protestant extremists and moved many Catholics, laity, priests and Bishops to unprecedented acts of reconciliation.' (Father Denis Faul, writing in *The Irish Catholic*, 5 May, 1988)
23. See Rose, *op. cit.*, p.107.
24. Gordon Wilson has been mentioned but there have been many other grieving relatives, Catholic and Protestant, whose Christian response in calling for no retaliation has been moving and exemplary.
25. The extent of anti-Catholic discrimination was, in fact, very extensive. See, for example, the extended account by 'Ultach' ('Ulsterman') in *The Capuchin Annual* (Dublin, The Father Matthew Office, 1939) pp.284-361. 'Ultach' concluded that 'the persecution of Catholics' was 'an essential feature of the regime'; a necessary condition of continued Unionist ascendancy.
26. See John Darby, *Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1976), p. 21.
27. Paul Arthur, *Government and Politics in Northern Ireland* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1980), p.110.

28. *ibid.*, p.110
29. See Barry White, 'From Conflict to Violence: The Re-Emergence of the IRA and the Loyalist Response', in John Darby (ed.) *Northern Ireland: The Background to the Conflict* (Belfast, The Appletree Press, 1983) p. 184.
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## Chapter III

### THE EMERGENCE OF AN EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE: THEOLOGIES IN CRISIS

True education is directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his final end and the good of that society to which he belongs and in the duties of which he will, as an adult, have a share... All Christians - that is, all those who, having been re-born in water and the Holy Spirit are called and in fact are children of God - have a right to a Christian education. Such an education not only develops the maturity of the human person in the way we have described, but is especially directed towards ensuring that those who have been baptized, as they are gradually introduced to a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become daily more appreciative of the gift of faith which they have received. (*Declaration on Christian Education*, Vatican Council II.)(1)

#### 3.1 Preliminary observations

Northern Ireland as a political and social entity has been in a state of almost continuous crisis since its establishment in June, 1921. Geographically speaking it is an artificial construct partitioned off from the rest of the island of Ireland and whose border politically speaking was drawn in such a way as to ensure that there would be a permanent Protestant and Unionist majority. Socially speaking, divisions and conflict have been its most characteristic features affecting in one way or another almost every aspect of life including education. The ways in which education in the Province has been affected by the religious divisions which have been there from the outset and by the political, economic and social consequences of such divisions call for discussion and comment. The extent to which it is reasonable to speak of a *crisis* in education also needs clarification. These issues provide the chapter with its particular focus.

The use of the term 'crisis' might at first sight seem open to the charge of exaggeration. In the United Kingdom there is much talk of an educational crisis precipitated (as many would allege) by governmental fiat and parsimony. That crisis, whatever its cause, is perceived by many of those most intimately connected

with education as real enough. It has been articulated recently by Edward Hulmes (1989) as being perceived in the following terms:

How is an adequate educational service for the community to be maintained at a time when social and economic pressures threaten to damage what has been achieved in education during the past hundred years and more? (Hulmes 1989 vii)

For Hulmes, however, the crisis in education is not primarily social or economic but is compounded as much by a shortage of ideas as by a shortage of resources - both human and material.(2) Northern Ireland has not escaped the effects of this general crisis, but there are other factors which have to be taken into account. It is true that the schools in the Province are open and functioning. It is the case that the children are being taught by professionally qualified teachers. Curriculum development proceeds here as elsewhere. Courses of study are being followed and candidates are being prepared for the rigours of public examinations. Educational research in Northern Ireland also makes valuable contributions to professional theory and practice. The schools, however, are undoubtedly segregated along sectarian lines. Even so, as Dominic Murray (1983) has pointed out, it has yet to be shown that such segregation is *intrinsically* divisive.(3) Segregated schooling exists uncontentiously, at least in other countries - as, for example, in the United States of America. Mixed education, on the other hand, has been found to have only 'a weak ameliorating influence' on reducing political discord - a finding by Richard Rose (1971) that would appear to be confirmed by other studies.(4) In the meantime an educational regime is functioning throughout the Province as normally as possible. Then what *is* the crisis?

It is not only impartial observers from outside who see the reality of an educational crisis in the Province. Those most directly concerned, namely, the professional educators in Northern Ireland are only too aware that all is not well. Yet it would be too easy to blame those who are trying to make the best of a difficult situation. The present study is in no sense intended to deny the praiseworthy efforts of particular individuals and groups. At the same time important critical questions have to be raised in a study of this kind. There are several problems and difficulties which, though not immediately apparent perhaps, will undoubtedly be familiar to practising teachers. The sectarian divide in the teaching profession in Northern

Ireland presents itself as one of these. It may not only be useful but necessary to quote at length a report on some of the complaints which this particular division has occasioned. Denis P. Barritt and Charles F. Carter (1962) have been credited with directing attention not only to the segregated nature of structures in the Province but also to its ramifications especially in respect of effects upon children attending religiously and culturally segregated schools. They state:

We have had numerous complaints from both sides of derogatory and slanderous teachings about the other group, imparted in the classroom. These complaints are usually vague; but some no doubt are justified, for among ten thousand teachers there are bound to be some irresponsible bigots and fanatics. Protestants have told us that Catholic children are deliberately taught to look on all Protestants as wrong and wicked, and are carefully trained to be anti-British Irish nationalists; but Catholics deny that they teach hatred of Protestants. Catholics have complained to us that Protestants are taught to hate the Catholic faith and to distrust Catholics as persons; but on the other hand many Protestant teachers claim it to be their duty to encourage tolerance and to try to counteract some of the bigotry which children absorb from their homes. Obviously there is no way of drawing up a fair account; but on balance it is very likely that the teaching profession, composed of educated and reasonable men and women, is an influence against bitterness rather than a stimulant of it. In so far as this is not the case, it is because everyone in Northern Ireland is to some extent caught by the bonds of past history whose importance in education we have shown. (Barritt and Carter 1962 92)(5)

There is, however, more than one 'sectarian' divide when it comes to educational theory and praxis. There are cognates of confessionalism which may lie concealed beneath the ideology of pluralism for example, or behind attempts to employ education in the service of inducing tolerance - tolerance, that is, not in its universally accepted meaning of fairness and forbearance towards the sincerely held views of others but rather a conceptually structured 'tolerance' of all views and commitments, bespeaking a philosophical indifferentism. Further, since any historical account will show that education has been a source of continuing controversy in Northern Ireland, it is reasonable to question whether the effects of community divisions in the Province on education have been deeper and more extensive than the mere *existence* of the two school systems. Are there connections between segregated schooling and community conflict? Donald Akenson (1973)

states as 'a judicious conservative conclusion':

That it is highly probable that the segregated schools do nothing to neutralise hostile and prejudicial attitudes between religious groups, and that it is probable (but by no means proven) that the segregated school system exacerbates inter-group frictions. (Akenson 1973 200)

Barritt and Carter report: 'Many Protestants have spoken to us of separate education as a basic cause of friction and division'.(6) Murray gives it as his opinion that an even stronger argument is 'the harmful educational and cultural consequences of such structures.'(7) Alan Robinson (1971) suggests that Protestant and Catholic children hold very different views of the society in which they both live. J. Russell's (1972) survey of children in Northern Ireland has suggested that Catholic children are more likely to demonstrate negative attitudes towards the Northern Ireland Government. A study by John Salters (1970) however, found that Catholic children were more tolerant and no less civic-minded than Protestant children. Findings such as these would seem to indicate that there is a crisis in Northern Ireland which is qualitatively different. Furthermore, it is an *educational* crisis not least because the educational process itself appears to perpetuate societal divisions in Northern Ireland. This has serious implications for those who look to 'Christian education' to help solve the fundamental problem. After all, no less than 74% of Northern Ireland people have recorded their opinion that it was 'very important' that theirs should be a Christian country.(8) Yet at the same time a situation of endemic conflict obtains that has left no segment of the social fabric in Northern Ireland untouched.

### **3.2 Factors which contribute to the educational crisis**

The factors which contribute to the present crisis in Northern Ireland are generally well-known if not always fully understood. There is the dominating, seldom less than explicit, cultural divide between the various groups in the North and the South of Ireland which has assumed a distinctive ideological character. Society is divided culturally and religiously. This has had noticeable influence on the way in which education proceeds in the different schools linked to each of the two major cultural groups, Catholics and Protestants. The school system is divided, and it shows. It shows first of all, as has been mentioned earlier, in the absence of almost any effective contact between the schools themselves.



Some secondary pupils from both traditions do attend courses at state technical institutions such as the Belfast College of Technology on one or two days a week, but while there, they are under the supervision of their 'own' teachers whose special care is to ensure not only that they attend the classes provided but also that they behave themselves in the unusual 'mixed' environment. Nevertheless the situation is the highly unusual one of Protestant and Catholic pupils sitting in the same classrooms together. As one who helped to pioneer this project in respect of a section of more senior pupils in his own (Catholic) school in Belfast, the present writer is in a position to testify that the amount of socialization between the two groups, including the teachers, was very limited. Yet it is only fair to add that the project did point the way towards making friendly inter-school contacts something more of a reality.

Until the more structured efforts of recent times it would be difficult to enumerate instances of inter-schools co-operation since the beginning of the present phase of civil unrest in 1969. There had been limited co-operation between some schools prior to that date though it was more a matter of engaging in competitions than at any significant level of social co-operation. In the case of the writer's school a few small groups would visit one another's schools to engage in chess and football competitions. The relevant inter-school groups would meet in the controlled atmosphere of the host school and have their competition after which, with a minimum of socialization, they, with their teachers, would depart. The teachers themselves would engage in affable but sporadic conversation with their opposite numbers and then shepherd their charges back to their own school and district. Dominic Murray (1983) gives an illuminating example of teacher reaction upon coming into contact with the cultural ambience of the 'other' school, quoting the following observation by a Protestant teacher:

We play 'St Jude's' often in games and visit their school regularly. I never fail to be impressed by the plethora of religious pictures and icons staring at you around every corner. It's hard to escape the view that a special show is being put on for our benefit...This doesn't just apply to 'St Judes' of course, but they must know that these are the very things that we object to, yet still they are flaunted everywhere. (Murray 1983 146)

Murray makes the point that the problem 'lies not predominantly in the

fact that they (the schools) reflect different cultures but rather in the meanings which are attributed by observers to the overt demonstrations of such cultural affiliations.'(9) He refers to the requirement by The North Eastern Education and Library Board that controlled schools fly the Union Jack daily outside and goes on to cite a general reaction from staff in an adjoining Catholic school:

They fly the flag down there to show that they are more British than the British themselves. It's also to let us know that they are the lords and masters and that we (Catholics) should be continually aware of it. (*ibid.*,146)

As Murray puts it:

The two dominant cultures are so mutually antipathetic that any demonstration of one is perceived as an assault on the other. There is no doubt that the two separate systems of schooling do reflect the two dominant cultures in the Province. (*ibid.*,146)

The two cultures emanate from and are indicative of the different ethnic origins and historical experiences of the two communities which comprise Northern Ireland society. Broadly speaking they may be described as Ulster/British on the one hand and Irish/Nationalist on the other. The values and traditions of the former are redolent of the Protestant English/Scottish complexion of the Ulster Plantation of 1609 from whose first settlers the present Unionist and Protestant population is largely descended. The Catholic community's values and traditions are steeped in an Irish heritage that embraces both ancient Gaelic origins and devotion to Catholicism since the arrival of St Patrick on the island of Ireland early in the fifth century A.D. The interactions between both communities from the time of the Plantation have been such as to drive them and keep them wide apart. One result has been the almost inviolate separateness of the two cultures so much so in point of fact that the mutually exclusive divisiveness finds expression in claims that to be Catholic is to be Irish, whereas to be Protestant is to be British.

These claims are too glib, however. They ignore, for instance, the existence of an indigenous Irish Protestant tradition which is by no means intrinsically anti-Gaelic. The ministry of the distinguished Anglican scholar and fluent Gaelic speaker, Canon Coslett Quinn, provides a case in point. The slogans also ignore

what might be termed the British orientation in elements of Irish Catholic society, elements which traditionally reflect a certain disposition of Catholics to accept British administration in return for a measure of peace and stability. More recently an Irish Catholic, Dr Gerard B. Newe, served as a junior minister in the Unionist administration of Brian Faulkner, the last Northern Ireland Prime Minister before Stormont was prorogued in 1972. For this, however, Newe was derided by many as a 'Castle Catholic'.

Yet the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' are both subsumed in the more important designation 'Christian'. Given a fuller understanding of this common *Christian* matrix there is reason to expect as well as to hope that rapprochement between the mutually antagonistic groups may finally take place. Supporting that hope is, surely, a collaborative *educational* task for all teachers. Further, the Swiss system of cantonization demonstrates that tribal antipathies need not be permanently divisive even if they cannot be wholly removed. A political solution to the Northern Ireland problem along these lines has never been seriously considered: yet it might be worth taking account of such a model since Protestant fundamentalist opinion in Northern Ireland inclines towards parallel rather than fully integrated community development.(10)

Any recounting of the historical background to the Northern Ireland conflict will show that polarization between the two communities, total at the time of the Plantation, was bound to remain acute given the rivalries, dissensions and disturbances that have punctuated all subsequent history. Yet it should not be forgotten that there were one or two occasions when the possibility of community harmony emerged.(11) One such occasion was the relationship that developed between Catholics and Presbyterians towards the end of the eighteenth century. In 1782, for example, at a convention in Dungannon, of the then exclusively Protestant Irish Volunteers (a body aimed at creating greater Irish independence from Britain) the following resolution was passed:

That as men and as Irishmen, as Christians and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the Penal laws against our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. (Darby 1976 5)

That same year the Belfast Volunteers, 'Protestant to a man', formed a guard of honour on the occasion of the formal opening by Father Hugh O'Donnell

of the first Catholic Church in Belfast, St Mary's in Chapel Lane and the Protestants of the town, predominantly Presbyterian, contributed £84 towards the cost of the building. Another though fleeting occasion of inter-community solidarity occurred in Belfast in 1932, when severe unemployment and deprivation united the poor of the Protestant Shankill and the Catholic Falls in protest. It was a short-lived and restricted occasion. Riots took place on the Shankill in support of hunger-marchers on the Falls who had been baton-charged by the police; but it witnessed the wholly exceptional phenomenon of Protestants and Catholics of one mind and in support of one another. Again, it might be said that the 1960s which, as has been stated earlier, saw developments in the direction of reform 'persuaded many contemporaries and not a few later observers to regard the 1960s as an age of tolerance reminiscent of the 1780s and 1790s.'<sup>(12)</sup> Darby's (1976) own comment (which follows here) however, challenges this popular view of 'the tolerant sixties', especially when the failure of Terence's O'Neill's attempts at effective reform are considered:

The traditional Ulster values, which would have been threatened by reconciliation, may have been in temporary hiding, but they soon emerged with banners flying. (*ibid.*, 14)

The use of the words 'which would have been threatened by reconciliation' is instructive. What are 'the traditional Ulster values' which would be thus 'threatened'? Is it the implication that reconciliation between the two communities is impossible? Reconciliation is a basic Christian imperative emanating directly from the command of Jesus Christ: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' (Mt 23: 39) How can the traditional values of a Christian people be threatened by reconciliation? What is the nature of such values? What is the perceived nature of the threat? Can Christian education be carried on with credibility in a community that eschews if not the concept of reconciliation, its practical implementation?

That the Protestant people of Northern Ireland feel threatened even though they are in a considerable and permanent majority is often stressed by writers in evaluative analyses. For F. S. L. Lyons (1971) for example, the essence of discord in Northern Ireland lies in fundamental differences both in politics and in religion:

We are driven back then, as in Northern Ireland one is always driven back, to the fundamental divisions - Catholic versus Protestant, Na-

tionalist versus Unionist. As we have seen, it was the threat from the large Catholic-Nationalist minority that caused the majority most anxiety and it was this threat that was used with monotonous regularity by the Unionist leaders to maintain conformity and discipline within their own ranks. (Lyons 1971 710)

The rôle of demagogues in heightening such fears and maintaining tensions has traditionally and greatly contributed towards exacerbating that situation and further reference is made to this later in the present chapter. As early as 1886, however, when giving evidence to a Commission of Inquiry into the serious spate of rioting which had occurred during that year, Father John Tohill (later to be Bishop of Down and Connor) could tell how:

The *remote* cause of the riots was the incitement from the Orange and Protestant press, pulpit and platform, producing religious hatred of Catholics and arousing the worst passions, especially of the lower portion of the Protestant community.(13)

Recently, Steve Bruce (1986) has provided a perceptive explanation for the involvement of religion in the politics of Ulster Unionists by referring to ethnicity and the need for a secure identity. An identity as 'British' is fundamentally threatened by British attitudes. 'Ulster Protestants are well aware that the British public is largely indifferent to their efforts to preserve themselves and entirely uncomprehending of their history, attitudes and culture.'(14) Stating that 'the first step towards understanding the political behaviour of the Protestants of Northern Ireland is to see them as an ethnic group', Bruce continues:

Although overt commitment to religion (measured, for example, in church attendance rates) may be weaker among Protestants than Catholics, loyalism depends on its religious base. As will be argued, beyond Evangelical Protestantism, no secure identity is available. (Bruce 1986 258)

For Northern Irish Catholics on the other hand 'national identity has become so secure that it can be separated from its religious base.' While for a long time the Catholic Church was almost the sole carrier of Irish identity, this progressively ceased to be the case during the Home Rule movement of the last century and the creation of the Irish Free State (later the Irish Republic) during the present century. These developments have given Irish nationalism such a strong base that it can 'dispense' with Catholicism. Bruce concludes:

This can be clearly seen in those parts of the Republican movement which have gone so far as to adopt positions actively hostile to the Church and its hierarchy. The position of Loyalists is quite different. (*ibid.*,258)

A 'Loyalism which depends on its religious base', however, is simply a political ideology making use of religion. It can hardly be equated with an authentic Christian confessionism. As can often be the case with commitment to the ideology of Republicanism, so too, commitment to a Loyalist ideology, or any other ideology, can become so strong as to erode a person's Christian commitment. Where ideologies permeate a community - and the education establishment is part of the community - there clearly is the danger that the Christian education of the children may also become attenuated especially in a close-knit society such as Northern Ireland where the schools themselves are already divided. This problem of ideological influences, as well as that of stereotypic thinking and attitudes, are discussed at some length in the penultimate chapter since it is fair to assume and the evidence, in fact, shows, that parents and educators are no more immune from such influences than anyone else in the society. At this juncture it is not being unrealistic to caution that those concerned with Christian education in the schools should be cognizant of the possibility that personal ideological inclinations and habits of stereotypic thinking could be inhibiting the quality of the Christian education offered the children they teach. (15)

The hostile ideology of Irish Republicanism is deeply challenging to Irish Catholic/Christianity. The challenge is further compounded by the responsibility to respond to the Northern Ireland conflict in an optimally Christian way, which includes adopting structures in education which the methodology of an authentic Christian education might suggest. The same is true of Irish Protestant/Christianity, especially where evangelical Protestantism forms the base for Ulster loyalism, as Bruce has suggested. Can such a Northern Protestantism respond in effective ways to the demands of an authentic Christian education which, by its nature, is one of Christian outreach in love and neighbourliness to the wider society? For both theologies, Catholic and Protestant, Christian education throws down a challenge. At stake is the quality and effectiveness of the Christian education offered to the children of Northern Ireland; and the salutary Christian values with which these

children will seek to inform their lives when, as young adults, they begin to take their place in the divided society which is Northern Ireland. The educational challenge is both stark and real. To the extent to which the two Christian communities fail to make adequate responses - and the reasons for this - lie the grounds for the attribution of the term 'crisis' to their theologies. The continued, unresolved conflict between the two Christian communities is undoubtedly one such factor, pointing to the same crisis. It is a crisis, however, which, given the history of the communities, cannot be abstracted from the interplay and complicated interactions of ethnic division. In the following section, therefore, it may be deemed useful to discuss some aspects of this phenomenon which, inevitably, has had its repercussions in education.

### **3.3 The origins and consequences of ethnic division**

The following paradigm offered by David Martin (1978) succinctly and illuminatingly presents the European focus.<sup>(16)</sup> Northern Ireland is seen in terms which suggest what might be called peripheral protest. The paradox is that the greater the centralized, undeveloped political power (in Westminster, for example) the less controllable are the local events at the periphery of government responsibility. In European terms the Irish are seen as people of the centre in the sense that traditionally they have belonged to the Roman Catholic centre or sphere of influence, as opposed to areas of Protestant hegemony which followed upon the Reformation. Ireland's connection with continental Europe stretches back over the centuries. The city of Galway was a flourishing centre of European trade in the Middle Ages, for example. Centuries before that, its monastic schools such as Bangor, Clonmacnoise and Clonard had hosted and taught students from all over Europe. While situated on the very edge of Europe it has had, nevertheless, a tradition of looking towards and feeling a sense of affinity with the continent. In what might be termed a context of evaluating the ebb and flow of European confessionalism Martin 'places' the Northern Ireland conflict as follows:

So Ireland like Poland is the hard circumference of the Roman centre of the circle. Since Ireland is indeed peripheral to England and England defines its marginality in relation to Europe through Protestantism, Ireland is strengthened in her Catholicism and in relation to England's historic enemies, Catholic Spain and France. This in turn

strengthens the fear and prejudice of Englishmen with regard to Popery, and justifies repression. Indeed, it justifies the 'planting' of a Protestant people from another periphery, Scotland, on the N.E. periphery of Ireland. Once there the plantation dominates *and* needs the local population. And when this situation leads to partition as in 1921, the local Catholics in Northern Ireland find themselves a people of the centre still pushed to the social periphery of a periphery. The historical scene is set for violence, intransigence, fear and religious bigotry. (Martin 1978 150)

The origins of communal discord in Northern Ireland are long-standing. They stretch back through the generations to the Plantation of Ulster in 1609 when the native Irish inhabitants were forced off the land they had owned and worked from time immemorial and were reduced to the state of being outlaws in the bogs and mountainous regions of their own patrimony. The newly dispossessed saw their land parcelled out to an incoming flood of English and Scottish colonists whose culture, way of life and patterns of religious belief and worship were alien. The Battle of Kinsale (1601) had been a disaster for the Irish and for the Ulster chieftains in particular whose great leader, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, had led a nine years' war against the English. Had O'Neill's efforts been successful, it has been speculated that Ireland might have been welded into a nation state under him.(17) But after Kinsale the Irish cause was in complete disarray. Ulster chiefs such as O'Neill and O'Donnell left the country for the continent in what subsequently came to be known as 'The Flight of the Earls' in 1607. The once proud and impregnable Province of Ulster was, finally, defenceless.

The Plantation of Ulster, unlike earlier attempts at colonising in other parts of Ireland, was both comprehensive and intensive. The advice of James I's Solicitor General (Sir John Davies) was followed carefully. There was a conscious attempt to supplant an entire native community and to replace it with English and Scottish colonists. Not unnaturally the Ulster Irish were resentful. The memory of that unhappy time is still strong among their descendants many of whom even today can point to the lands from which their forebears were driven. Planter and dispossessed native Irish, then, were the two mutually irreconcilable communities that inhabited Ulster at the time of the Ulster Plantation. The years between then and now have seen many changes. The stark disparities of the earlier period have disappeared but the succeeding centuries have been marked by conflict and



dissensions scarcely less bitter as the two communities lived fractiously together on 'the narrow ground'(18) of the disputed and disputatious Province. Planter and Gael rivalry has always been a sharp and persistent feature of life in Ulster. As Darby (1976) has put it:

The deep resentment of the native Irish towards the planters, and the distrustful siege mentality of the planters towards the Irish, is the root of the Ulster problem. (Darby 1976 3)

Gable walls in Belfast are often daubed with exhortations to remember this or that date in tribal history. 'Remember 1690!', or, 'Remember 1916!' will serve as two of the more common examples. Both these exhortations serve to trigger the responses of folk-memory in opposite ways. Each slogan encourages one community whilst simultaneously provoking the other to wrath, though the law of diminishing returns ensures that over a protracted period - when all but a few are wearied by violence - the slogans lose much of their effect. Nevertheless, the rallying calls can recover their potency. The past, however dimly remembered in fact, bears its continuing significance in the collective consciousness of each community. For many Northern Irish Protestants William of Orange's victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 is not just an event 'of glorious and immortal memory' but a powerful symbol of Protestant hegemony that must at all costs be defended and maintained. For many Northern Irish Catholics the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916 bespeaks the gallant and successful efforts of the Gael to throw off the toils of English rule in over three quarters of the country and reminds them that 'Mother Ireland' still lacks her 'Fourth Green Field'. This metaphor for the historic nine-county province of Ulster is pregnant with meaning for Irish nationalists.

The Northern Irish Catholic typically cannot bring himself to refer to Northern Ireland as 'Ulster'. He may call it 'Northern Ireland' on more formal occasions but ordinarily refers to it as 'the North' or, 'the Six Counties'.(19) For the Northern Ireland Protestant however, the term 'Ulster' means 'Northern Ireland' and slogans like 'Ulster is British' are to him not only politically factual but, geographically speaking, impeccable. A similar present-day verbal indication of the historical legacy of division reaching into the present can be observed in the two names given to Northern Ireland's second city, on the river Foyle. Protestants call it 'Londonderry'. Catholics call it simply 'Derry' (or even *Doire Colmcille*,

its ancient Gaelic name.) Nomenclature in Northern Ireland has a number of other interesting and telling features. Catholic institutions are invariably named after saints, for example, 'St Mary's College of Education' or 'St Gall's Primary School'. Protestant institutions survive without explicit saintly assistance, for example, 'Stranmillis College of Education' or 'Ballygomartin Primary School'. With only a few exceptions (such as naming the two universities) simply to state where one was educated in the Province is sufficient to identify one's personal affiliation to one or other of the divided communities. This can have (and frequently has had) serious consequences - in applying for employment, for example. Catholics in particular have long complained against what they understandably consider to be bigotry in the case of employers who deny them work (so it is alleged) purely on the strength of having first established the name of the school to which the applicant went.

Family and personal names can also indicate the 'side' to which one belongs.(20) A 'Fergal O'Connor' (both ancient Gaelic names) 'could only be' a Catholic; a 'Mervyn Craig' would 'have' to be a Protestant. At the wrong time and in the wrong place in Northern Ireland the disclosure of one's name (as well as place of residence) can have serious consequences for one's personal safety. At the same time family surnames are not an infallible guide because down through the years there have always been 'mixed marriages', that is, inter-marriages between members of both communities. As a result of these most of each community's typical surnames are to be found scattered throughout the other's. Despite this fact the prejudice retains its power. An interesting phenomenon not infrequently manifests itself in such families with regard to the giving of Christian or first names. These are often noticeably characteristic of the community to which the family has 'come over'. For example, the son of a Protestant family called O'Connor would tend to have a 'softening' first name like 'Wesley'; the son of a Catholic family with the typically Protestant name of Craig might well be given an unambiguously Irish first name such as 'Eamon'.

Neither community has looked with much favour on its sons or daughters marrying into the 'other' community and often enough those doing so have been disowned by their families. As well as this, mixed marriages have been a fruitful

source of contention between the churches, the Protestant churches being particularly critical of the Catholic Church's *Ne temere* decree, whereby Protestants marrying Catholics are required to give an undertaking that any children of the marriage will be brought up as Catholics. In times of serious conflict such as the present, the incidence of mixed marriages slackens off appreciably, firstly because of the extreme polarization of the communities and secondly because of the inherent danger of becoming a target for a retaliatory assassination attempt.

In relatively quieter times, however, although both communities strongly dislike any of their members entering a mixed marriage and going to live in the 'other' community, the 'host' community often enough will exercise a degree of tolerance especially if the 'interloper' changes or ceases to practise his or her religion or at least keeps a low social profile. On the other hand, the friends and family in the abandoned 'home' community regard the 'mixed-marriage' son or daughter as somehow 'lost' to them. Visits to them can only be infrequent and wary. And if they have not already abandoned the practice of the faith they were brought up in, there is the danger that inevitably they will. This can be a source of real distress to the parents and shamefacedness to the rest of the family. It has seldom happened that a mixed marriage in Northern Ireland has succeeded in bridging the communal divide, that is, in uniting the Protestant and Catholic families concerned. Given the love which the young Catholic and the young Protestant would obviously have for each other it is indisputably tragic that the social *mores* of both communities inhibit the growth of community harmony at an occasion - when it occurs - which holds out such promise.

Since Vatican II the Catholic Church's 'stiffness' towards mixed marriages has softened somewhat, especially in cases where the non-Catholic partner is a baptized Christian. Though the Protestant Churches feel they still have justifiable cause for complaint on this vexed matter there are now greater opportunities than before for celebrating mixed marriages in a more open manner. ('With regard to the liturgical and canonical form of [mixed] marriage, Ordinaries [that is, bishops] can make wide use of their faculties to meet various necessities').(21) The families from the two communities can now if they wish witness together the marriage taking place in the church itself. It will be a notable development

when, following this, it becomes the normal thing for all to proceed together to a celebratory reception.

### 3.4 The influence of stereotypes

The influence of stereotypes which one community has of the other needs some consideration. Personal observation and experience inclines the writer of the present study to the view that a much larger segment of the Northern Ireland population than might be supposed is victim to quite a surprising degree to stereotypic thinking especially in relation to conceptions of its past history and present perceptions of the 'other' community. That educated people in Northern Ireland can give vent to what can only be described as bigoted utterances is among other things a reflection upon the nature of the education they have received. Allowance may be made for the length and severity of the conflict which leaves most people understandably quite distraught. As well as this the polarized communities themselves, locked within their enshrined traditions and communal dreams, can hardly be viewed as fertile ground for divergent thinking or calm appraisal. Yet until the mould of each community's stereotypic perceptions of each other is broken and a Buberian acceptance of the validity and integrity of 'the Other' is achieved, hardened attitudes will prevail and so will the conflict.(22) The responsibility of educators in such a situation is to seek ways of treating and correcting the stereotypes of their students. But can the physician heal himself? Reference has been made earlier to the divide in the teaching profession itself in Northern Ireland, a divide which is not only denominational but also, it might be thought, to a greater or lesser extent, ideological. It might appear, then, that the outlook for any change in attitude is bleak, were it not that hope might be seen to reside in the matrix of a Christianity to which both communities are reputed to subscribe. In the Christian ethic, such stereotypes (that is 'unduly fixed mental impressions') must give place to the universal reality of brotherhood in Jesus Christ.

E. E. O'Donnell (1977) in his investigation into Northern Irish stereotypes and how they come to be formed suggests that it may well be in Northern Ireland that people think and behave in the way they do because of misconceptions of what others think of them, in this case 'others' being people of the 'other' religious persuasion. Communication across the sectarian divide does occur but according

to O'Donnell it is each community's stereotypic perceptions of each other which are communicated, thus motivating problematic responses that both inhibit reconciliation and help to perpetuate the conflict situation. O'Donnell opines that until both communities come to *experience* each other differently within a new and more accurate framework of perceptions little or no progress will be made.(23)

The sources out of which Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics form their stereotypes, each of the other, are said to comprise five categories of community opinion described as emanating from (i) tradition (ii) parents (iii) teachers and educators (iv) the mass media and (v) extremists. These source categories are crystallized by O'Donnell into lists of descriptive terms typically used by each of these groups. Of these sources of stereotyping his results indicate that the terms emanating from the parental and the traditional categories, taken together, account for over two thirds of the stereotypic images. The words used by educators and the mass media account for only one sixth while those usually employed by extremists are hardly used at all.(24) This would appear to lend support to the view that it is the home and the community at large, the aggregate of these homes, that constitute the decisive influence in terms of traditional attitudes that are passed on. Atrocities when they occur, serve to harden these attitudes towards an acceptance of extremist terminology generative of coarser stereotyping.

An interesting and helpful feature of this work is the presentation of 'real' as against 'supposed' stereotypes. The latter are suppositions by one community as to how the 'other' community regards itself. The 'supposed' stereotypes that Catholics hold of how Protestants see themselves are very similar to how they actually see themselves. Reciprocally, Protestants choose many of the same favourable words such as 'decent', 'fine people', 'ordinary people' for their 'supposed' stereotypes of how Catholics see themselves. It is here that O'Donnell finds hope for possible progress by, as he puts it, 'reframing the problem' based upon these mutual 'supposed' stereotypes.

The mutual (supposed) stereotypes show that a new framework is possible, that there is every reason for each side to see itself, and the other, as competent, good and worthwhile...At present the situation is framed in terms of the traditional attitudes passed on by parents to their children for generations. For communication to break the pattern

does not mean that Protestants and Catholics should *start* communicating (communication *is occurring* while still the bitterness persists) but that each side should start to experience the other side differently. (O'Donnell 1977 155-6)

The difficulty is, that it is the attitudes communicated between Protestant and Protestant on the one hand, and between Catholic and Catholic on the other, which determine what is being communicated to the other side. Hence it is that O'Donnell stresses that communication and subsequent adjustment must occur, at least initially, at *intra-group* levels and preferably with small groups. He reports the findings of his investigation as tending to support the theory of the Californian authors, Else Frenkel-Brunswick and R. N. Stanford (1945) that some groups are disliked because they are like us and therefore constitute a threat to us; and goes on to state that it may be possible to use this theory as a tool in the reduction of antagonistic attitudes.(25)

Both groups see themselves as decent, fine, ordinary people, but see each other as bitter and brainwashed. When individuals realize, through the process of self-revelation of stereotype perception that they are not free to be themselves, a drive towards change may be sparked. Ideally, this self-revelation should be a group process. (*ibid.*,165)

A further result of the investigation may be referred to as having particular point for the third stated purpose of the present thesis in its proposed practical orientation towards pedagogical models for what might reasonably be described as Christian education. The evidence shows that children form stereotypes from a surprisingly early age. Speaking of the implications of this for primary school teachers O'Donnell comments:

The results presented here indicate that their pupils are already forming stereotypes. At this early age, the influence of teachers must surely be potentially significant if not decisive in either encouraging or correcting the picture presented at home. (*ibid.*,164)

O'Donnell, however, is well aware that the teachers themselves may not be immune from similar influences. 'Teachers and educators' concerned with reconciliation are advised to start by 'reframing the problem' themselves since 'they, too, think in terms of stereotypes; in this case stemming from the same sources as their

students, the parental and traditional ones.'(26) Thus it is clear that, as with ideologies, the influence of stereotypes can come to have a deleterious influence upon Christian education unless steps are taken to correct the invariably distorted and often insulting images of the 'other' community they encourage - a fruitful field for promoting hostile attitudes. It needs, therefore, to be accepted perhaps more openly and in a more structured way than heretofore, (the problem is discussed further in the penultimate chapter) that Christian teachers and others concerned with the Christian education of our children, should engage in some form of self appraisal to discover if, perhaps unconsciously, their own attitudes and teaching style may not be as fully consonant with an authentic Christian education as they would wish.

While it might be argued that stereotyping, as such, is not necessarily to be confused with the incidence of community prejudice, it is remarkable that the sub-groups (by age, sex, socio-economic class and geographical location) in O'Donnell's sample of 1,680 persons responded to his questionnaire with a pronounced similarity as to critical/negative stereotypes they possessed in respect of the other community. This clearly has implications for any proposed investigation into the cognates of confessionalism throughout Northern Ireland as a whole, including their incidence among the professional classes and the educational segment. The homogeneity of Northern Irish society and the long-standing resistance of the conflict to significant ameliorative change point to deep underlying factors that affect the whole of the society. The frequently made assertion that the root cause of all the trouble in Northern Ireland resides solely in the activities of the paramilitary groups which afflict the Province may require a more stringent analysis. The murders and atrocities are undoubtedly condemned by the vast majority of Northern Ireland people. Yet something in the nature of an enigma emerges. Despite the genuine 'distancing' which takes place on all sides, the UVF's declared devotion to 'the cause of Ulster' cannot but strike a chord deep within the Ulster Protestant psyche, as must the IRA's declared devotion to a United Ireland speak to the innermost desire of most Northern Irish Catholics. Spokesmen for the Churches and the political parties in both communities unequivocally and publicly condemn atrocities committed by these groups when they occur, and the generality of decent people is undoubtedly appalled by the savage acts which take place. Again, as has already been remarked, the invariable willingness to forgive and the calls for no

retaliation from families of murdered victims have been touching and exemplary. Yet still, the conflict drags on and the acts of barbarism do not cease.

### 3.5 The failure to find consensus

Were there a *consensus* in the population as a whole that such acts *must* cease, then surely it might plausibly be postulated that they *would*. If one accepts that there *is* such a consensus, then what is preventing the people's will from being realized? Does the answer to this question lie in the very *fact* of bi-community division? Given the chronological length and the depth of this division, does this mean that there is to be no foreseeable end to the conflict, to the killings, to the bitterness, to the marred quality of life, to the blood-stained heritage that will be handed down to succeeding generations of Northern Ireland's children? Is there not something stronger and more puissant in Northern Ireland's societal soul than the trammels of division? Why cannot the general acceptance of the Christian ethic that is said to pervade the Province become the primary motivating source whereby a Christian consonance of outlook is generated as to how each community comes to regard the other - as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, that is - even in the face of severe contradictions and trials?

Whatever its genesis, the present conflict, it might be thought, must present itself as deeply un-Christian to the religious consciousness of a people generally regarded as being notably religious. Arguably, it must be a cause for great concern to them that so many Christian values are being subverted in a conflict the duration and severity of which is affecting not just certain sections but the whole of their society and not least the young people. The fact that it has continued for so long a period of time prompts questions as to the effectiveness of such Christian response as there has been from a people of whom the 1971 census returns reported that out of a population of 1,519,640, only 510 considered themselves to be atheists and 1,200, agnostics.(27); while more recently around 80% of the Northern Ireland population has been recorded as claiming membership of one or other of the churches.(28) Such a statistic would certainly accord with the sociological view that societies where religion has occupied a significant rôle ethnically or politically, are more inclined to remain traditionally religious despite the pluralistic/secularizing tendencies of modernity. Northern Ireland is clearly such a society.



Having said this, however, it seems equally clear that questions need to be asked as to the nature and quality of the underlying religious commitment to Christianity. Were it the case that that 80% were devoted and practising Christians it must be inconceivable that this most un-Christian conflict were not already brought to an end - even allowing for all the faults and failings to which Christians are as much prone as anyone else. It can also be accepted, however, that membership-claims by no means either logically or in fact imply either attendance at worship, or actively working for the incoming of God's kingdom in the surrounding society. Bruce, for example, has commented that many working-class Protestant men do not attend Church but 'still display a considerable knowledge of religious ideology and retain enough of a commitment to a Protestant faith to encourage their wives and children to attend Church.'(29)

On the other hand, a recent survey (1991) carried out in a Belfast Protestant secondary school showed that 'in an average class of 25 pupils only five attended Church - and only two of these went without parental pressure.' The Rev Derek Poots, secretary of the Presbyterian Church's Board of Education told the General Assembly that this was 'not an untypical picture.'(30) In the case of the Catholic Church, while it is 'very well attended and virtually the entire community is baptized and has regular links to the Church', it has been stated in a recent report (1991) that 'the violence has put serious strains on the institutional authority of the Church' and that, in addition, a number of 'disintegrative factors' could be found in an increasing incidence in family break-up in Catholic areas and in an ignoring of the Church's teaching on contraception and family planning. In respect of Sinn Fein (and of its support for the violence of the IRA) 'the Church is the centre of local opposition to Sinn Fein'(31) - a rather odd way of referring to the Catholic Church's sustained and unequivocal condemnation of all violence, especially that of the paramilitaries both Catholic and Protestant, and particularly that of the IRA which emanates from the Catholic community. (Equally odd is this report's interpretative description of the Church's understandable adherence to and articulation of Catholic teaching on divorce, birth control and abortion, as being 'engaged in propaganda to stop the spread of modern ideas regarding' these serious issues just mentioned.)(32)

Referring to the largest Protestant denomination, the Presbyterian Church, the authors of the report point to a 'gap between the Church as an institution and its ability to influence its members'; that is, where Protestantism is defined 'in terms of domestic politics rather than in terms of the Churches.' The 'Presbyterian Church' as institution (as opposed to the congregations which comprise it) 'becomes identified by default with the response to violence.' Indeed, the Protestant Churches as institutions 'have somewhere disappeared into oblivion; the Churches seem unable to extricate the faith of the Church from the desire to defeat the IRA.'(33) Referring specifically to the Presbyterian Church the authors state:

The result is the worst of all possible worlds for the Presbyterian Church. The Church is now enmeshed in the political conflict and the largest Protestant church is powerless to act as an institution in the situation. Conversely, religion can now be blamed for the conflict and the Presbyterian Church cannot act to stop this. (Morrow, Birrell, Greer, O'Keefe 1991 114-5)

The authors refer in similar terms to the Church of Ireland:

The Church of Ireland has, like other Protestant denominations, also failed to draw any clear distinction between Protestantism and Unionism. It too is characterized by weak institutions and its media presence is dominated by funeral orations. (*ibid.*,116)

It is true that the Protestant community has suffered grievously at the hands of the IRA. It is true also that the Catholic community has suffered grievously at the hands of Protestant paramilitaries. During the period of this conflict now in its twenty third year both communities have been visited by atrocities and heartbreak. While their perspectives may be different their common experience has been one of having to endure violence and comforting the heartbroken in devastated families - and all the while the divisions in the society become more bitter and the polarization more complete. Adverting to his finding that '*at the level of society as a whole* there are major variations in political outlooks by religion' Rose (1971) concludes unambiguously:

Protestantism and Catholicism have created and maintained a division into two communities. (Rose 1971 274)



Rose's judgement on the Churches is severe. In respect of his 'have created' comment, it must be said that there clearly are other factors as well - historical, ethnic and political - which also need to be taken into account when considering the phenomenon of the divided communities. There is perhaps, more to be concerned about in the second part of Rose's comment - 'and *maintained* a division into two communities'. Coming at the end of his chapter pointedly entitled 'Two Bodies in Christ', it may be regarded as deeply challenging to Northern Ireland's divisive bi-confessionalism. Indeed, the virtual disappearance of the Protestant Churches as institutions - adverted to by the report referred to above - might also be exemplified in the following comment from Eric Gallagher and Stanley Worrall (1982) on the failure of promising ecumenical initiatives in the 1960s. They refer to the church leaders being 'always forced to look over their shoulders to see how far they were isolating themselves from their own flocks':

Christian leaders were making constant appeals for moderation and reconciliation, but were always forced to look over their shoulders to see how far they were isolating themselves from their own flocks. For generations their predecessors had been content to sow the wind of denominational rivalry and mutual disparagement; now, when supremely the need arose to speak Christ's reconciling word, they would reap the whirlwind. (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 38)

Is it then futile to look for any effective response from religion in the Northern Ireland situation if religion in the Province is seen as part of the problem itself? On the other hand it must be accepted that there are many Christians in the Province genuinely concerned for the Christian education of their children. What are the implications of this? The concern itself is a crucially important thing. It bespeaks a desire to prepare our children as *Christians* to assume the burden of responsible citizenship on their becoming adults in our very troubled Province; and if, to this end and reciprocally, it also indicates a determination to work for a peaceful and more Christian society than that which presently obtains, then with God's help, Christian education could turn out to be the path leading out of the abyss. The Christian way is the only sure basis for a lasting solution to the deadly contrarities of the Northern Ireland situation. An authentic Christian education is an integral part of that way. A somewhat deeper investigation into religion in the Province seems called for. How did the religious differences develop? To what extent was education involved? Can the genesis of today's educational challenge be discerned?

An historical perspective will provide evaluative assistance in understanding more clearly and appreciating at least some of the complexities and difficulties of an inherited and intractable problem.

### **3.6 The religion factor: the historical background**

While it is a truism to say that sectarian violence is nothing new to the North of Ireland it is often denied that religion is a cause of the present conflict. Geoffrey Bell (1976) for example has stated: 'Religious affiliation is merely a manifestation of the divisions in Ireland, not its cause.'<sup>(34)</sup> Yet in a recent study Steve Bruce (1986) categorically states the opposite: 'The Northern Ireland conflict is a religious conflict.'<sup>(35)</sup> Bruce's view that 'loyalism depends on its religious base' has just been discussed above. It is beyond dispute that political and social antagonisms have been major factors in the conflict as well as the fear each community has of the perceived threat to its integrity and welfare posed by the other. The assertion that religious factors also are not causatively involved, however, requires further examination. What is to be made of statements by conservative Protestants defining their loyalty to Britain specifically in terms of their devotion to 'the Protestant way of life as enshrined in the Williamite Revolution Settlement of 1689' and copperfastened by the Act of Settlement (1701) - vesting the succession after William and Mary in Protestant heirs to the throne? Stating precisely this on *Radio Eireann* (Irish Radio) some years ago<sup>(36)</sup> the Rev Ian Paisley, Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church, went on to remark that he could at best envisage the two communities living peaceably in Northern Ireland - but separately. While not, it would appear, having in mind the extreme introversionist response of communitarian groups such as the Hutterites (total separation from the secular world) the comments made serve to illustrate the truth of Bruce's (1984) statement that:

To a large extent conservative Protestants inhabit a world that is separated from that of either the liberal Protestants or the rest of us (Bruce 1984 87)

It appeared also that it was separation from the Catholic community of Northern Ireland that Dr Paisley had in mind. Yet, as Bruce further remarks: 'It is worth remembering that Protestantism of any form is, in essence, an anti-Catholic movement.'<sup>(37)</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647, for example

( still, in 1992, on the Statute book) - which identifies the Pope with the anti-Christ - is recognized by most Presbyterian Churches as being their doctrinal standard. Bruce's following comments are both interesting and apposite:

The assumption that it is the open anti-Catholicism of Paisley and not the ecumenical stance of liberal churchmen that needs to be explained, can only be made by someone who knows little, and understands less, of Protestantism...My point is the simple one that opposition to the Catholic Church (and all other faiths that are not conservative Protestant) follows quite simply from a commitment to Protestantism as it has been conceived *until this century*. Now this opposition *may* be further promoted by a personal hatred for Catholics...Thus bigotry may be involved...(Bruce 1984 164)

Historically, religion has been a major strand in the complex genesis of the Irish conflict from the time of the Tudor era. Bell remarks that the ancestors of the present-day loyalists 'were planted not to convert Ireland to Protestantism, but to hold Ireland for England'.(38) But the policy of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I in relation to the Irish had been from the beginning to make them Protestants as well as English speaking. Admittedly, one of the purposes of the policy was that by being Protestant - and English speaking - they would become loyal subjects. The Act of Uniformity (1560) made attendance at the state church on Sundays compulsory for all on pain of a fine of one shilling. It can hardly be disputed however that Henry VIII was deeply committed to the spread of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland of which, in England, he was the author. Many Tudor Acts were passed for the setting up of parochial and diocesan schools judged to be essential for the spreading of the new religious ideas and of the English language. Rebellion, however, as Maureen Wall (1961) put it, 'must first be crushed, and plantations firmly secured before an all-out effort could be undertaken to spread the doctrines of the Reformation in Ireland.'

From the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) until the treaty of Limerick (1691) religion took second place to politics in the Irish policies of successive English rulers. Rebellion must first be crushed, and plantations firmly secured before an all-out effort could be undertaken to spread the doctrines of the Reformation in Ireland. By the beginning of the eighteenth century it seemed that, politically, Catholic Ireland had been finally subdued; Protestant ascendancy was firmly entrenched and the time had arrived, it seemed, for embarking on a programme for Protestantizing the population of Ireland. (Wall 1961 1)

Early in the seventeenth century and shortly after Elizabeth's death in 1603, the appointment of Sir John Davies as James I's Solicitor-General in Ireland saw the imposition of English statute law on Ireland, one of the purposes of which was 'to promote compliance in Ireland with the religious reformation in England.'<sup>(39)</sup> As well as this, the relation of Ireland to the conflict between Charles I and Parliament later in the century throws further light on the religious question *vis-à-vis* England and Ireland. When Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, raised an army of 9,000 men in Ireland in 1640 (most of them Irish Catholics) to serve the king's cause against the Scottish covenanters should the need arise, he had given the Old English (that is, the Gaelicized Anglo-Normans)<sup>(40)</sup> and other Catholic landowners a strong bargaining position to recover some of the losses they had sustained during the plantations. Following the dramatic success of the Scottish covenanters in extracting concessions from the king by force of arms, however, the position which subsequently obtained was that it was a predominantly Catholic force which was left in Ireland. Many of its commanders were Old English and Gaelic landowners who both saw and took their opportunity. During the ensuing period of insurgency which followed the uprising of 1641 in Ulster, the Ulster leaders were joined by the Catholic landowners of south Leinster and Munster, and formed together a Confederation - the Confederation of Kilkenny (1642- 1649)<sup>(41)</sup> - to bargain with the king for full freedom of religious worship and a guarantee that Catholic landowners would enjoy undisputed title to their lands.<sup>(42)</sup>

While throughout its existence the Confederation had emphasised its loyalty to the English monarch and while it might be accepted that from the Catholic Ulster landowners' point of view, what they sought was both understandable and reasonable, the implications of their aims being realized were such as to render them impossible of achieving. The implications of the religion factor emerge once again - the continuance of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland - and are explicated by Nicholas Canny (1987) as follows:

But if we accept that this was the extent of the objectives of the Ulster landowners who led the rising of 1641<sup>(43)</sup> we must allow that the fulfilment of these objectives would have represented a major break with the past and would have been politically impossible for the king to concede. Any interference with the Ulster settlement would have been regarded by Protestant leaders in Ireland and Britain as a betrayal of the one concrete British achievement in Ireland during the previous

half century...A blanket guarantee to Catholic landowners that their titles would be no longer subject to question would have been recognized as a tacit admission that the Protestant Reformation should proceed no further in Ireland, and this concession had always been opposed by the existing Protestants in the country. The association of such a concession with a grant of full religious liberties to Catholics would, of course, have been unthinkable for Protestants in Britain and Ireland and was without parallel anywhere in Europe at this time. The suggestion that what was involved was no more than what was conceded to the Scots was, of course, ludicrous because the Scottish covenanters were committed Protestants who were seeking no more than a form of church government and a doctrinal emphasis that were different from that obtaining in the English Protestant church. That such concessions had to be extracted under duress should have been sufficient evidence for the Ulster lords that no such liberties would ever be granted to Catholics in Ireland by an English Protestant monarch who wished to retain his crown. (Canny 1987 208)

The rising of 1641 was an attempt by the existing Catholic landowners to effect at least a partial reversal of the plantation in Ulster and to ameliorate 'their real grievance over the political disabilities that were associated with their being Catholic, and the dire economic circumstances in which they found themselves at this particular juncture.'<sup>(44)</sup> But from the outset the leaders lost control of the movement they had unleashed.<sup>(45)</sup> What took place was not a series of limited military actions such as Sir Phelim O'Neill, Conor, Lord Maguire, Rory O'Moore and the others had conspired and envisaged but 'a spontaneous outburst by the natives against the settler community which quickly spread to the other provinces as well.' Widespread disturbance of the Protestant settler community resulted during the winter months of 1641-2 and revenge killings by dispossessed tenants as well as other atrocities took place.<sup>(46)</sup> The religious dimension - always explicit in the seventeenth century - further complicated the situation. As Canny puts it:

Many local priests, who would have known of similar popular disturbances from their continental experience, were concerned to exercise some restraint on the insurgents, and they believed that the rising was only justified because it was in defence of Catholic liberty. To give purpose to this they directed that all British settlers should be offered the opportunity to convert to Catholicism and should only be expelled when this opportunity had been rejected. (*ibid.*,211)

In the panic exodus of the settlers from those parts of the country where protection was not assured, many more died; and while it now seems clear that the stories and depositions of those who were witnesses to what had occurred 'were invariably exaggerated in the telling'(47):

The fact that some thousands of Protestants had lost their lives in a short few months was sufficient to arouse the entire British nation, royalist, parliamentary and covenanter, to a universal call for revenge. (*ibid.*, 210 )

That revenge, in the event, was exacted on Ireland in the shape of the 20,000 strong parliamentary army which assembled in Dublin under the command of Oliver Cromwell, on 15 August 1649, and proceeded to wreak a terrible retribution in 'blood, carnage and destruction' on the country.

The severity and brutality of that punitive expedition has burned itself into the folk memory of the Irish Catholics, counterpointing the Protestant folk memory of the 1641 massacres, but probably with better reason. The massacre of the garrison of Wexford was one of the worst atrocities. The Governor had actually agreed surrender terms, as set out in a letter from Cromwell himself. (Magnusson 1978 36)

The religion motif, once again, was a crucially motivating factor. Cromwell's army was, as Canny states:

The product of a revolutionary process that had just taken place in England, and both officers and men, who were imbued with an implacable hatred of Catholicism, were determined to take revenge for the massacre of Protestants that they believed had taken place in the Autumn of 1641. This assumption is sufficient to explain the notorious excesses associated with the taking of Drogheda (September 1649) and Wexford (October 1649), but the leaders of the campaign were also bent on destroying the position of Catholicism in Ireland at one fell swoop so that a repetition of what they believed had happened in 1641 could never recur. (Canny *op. cit.*,217)

The Restoration of Charles II in 1660, however, saw the failure of the Cromwellian reform endeavour and the re-establishment of an episcopal form of state church. After Cromwell, there was a reaction in England. It was compounded of a rapid growth of indifferentism in matters of religion on the part of government and people and ushered in what is sometimes called the 'ice age' of English Protestantism.



The reign of William III (1688-1702), however, and the Great Revolution Settlement of 1689, ensured the predominance of the Protestant religion in the public life in Ireland. Laws for the suppression of Popery - the Penal Laws - were, from 1703, passed by the Irish Parliament; and in 1711, the Convocation of the Established Church met to plan a great scheme of compulsory education for the 'popish natives':

Schools were to be set up in every parish and all Catholic parents were to be compelled, under penalty of a monthly fine, to send their children between the ages of seven and twelve for a stated period each year (the poorer classes for four months, the richer for six months) to these schools where they were to be 'taught *gratis* to speak and read the English language, and to be instructed in the principles of the Christian religion.' (Wall 1961 4)

Over a hundred years on from Henry VIII and Elizabeth, this was another attempt to bring about the long-delayed conversion of the Catholic population by protestantizing the schools. The scheme, however, as Wall informs us, like so many others, was never put into operation. This time it was the unharmonious relations between the Established Church and the House of Commons which nullified success. 'Churchmen were unwilling or unable to finance it themselves and the House of Commons was opposed to any scheme which would entail additional taxation.'

It was not until the nineteenth century, when the state began to assume responsibility for the education of the masses that such a policy could hope to achieve success, and by that time the Catholic Church was in a position to defeat the State-aided missionary effort undertaken by the various Protestant organizations. (*ibid.*,2)

It might be deemed useful at this point to inquire into some of the characteristics of England's colonial relations with Ireland that had to do with the question of religion with a view to obtaining insights which may be of some contributory relevance to the present situation in Northern Ireland. While military considerations were always predominant, it can also be said that at least from the time of the Tudors, religious intolerance and evangelical zeal were concomitant as well as typical characteristics of Britain's colonial policy in Ireland. The extirpation of the Catholic religion and the Protestantizing of the Irish people were clearly judged to be essential, and persistent and forcible attempts were made to accomplish both

of these aims. The accession of James I in 1603 not merely confirmed but intensified the policy. In the proclamation which he issued in October, 1605, formally promulgating the Act of Uniformity (the second piece of legislation of the reign of Elizabeth) the king went out of his way to stress that he had never intended 'to give liberty of conscience or toleration of religion to his subjects in the Kingdom of Ireland contrary to the expressed laws and statutes therein enacted'.(48) He declared that he would never do any act to 'confirm the hopes of any creature that they should ever have from him any toleration to exercise any other religion than that which is agreeable to God's Word and is established by the laws of the realm'. In saying this, he was scotching rumours at the start of his reign that he was about to grant toleration:

For it had been pointed out to his majesty by Cecil and others that to be a Catholic was to be a rebel, anxious for the dethronement of the King. (Colles 1919 150)

In England, the Guy Fawkes Plot had left James feeling that his own person was now in jeopardy from the Catholics and with regard to Ireland, as Ramsay Colles (1919) remarks, he doubtless was perturbed by such reports as those to the effect that the country swarmed with 'priests, Jesuits, seminaries, friars and Romish bishops.'(49) But as well as this it is also relevant to state that James himself had been brought up as a Presbyterian 'and was a Calvinist of a most pronounced type.'(50)

During the punitive war (1595-1601) between Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and Elizabeth, the Old English Catholics - or Gaelicized Normans - had increasingly come to embrace the counter-reformation movement, and had looked forward to James, a son of Mary Queen of Scots, permitting Catholics to enjoy freedom of worship. The government's increasing difficulties during that war led them to the 'boldest breach of the official position'. On the announcement of Elizabeth's death, in 1603, the citizens of Cork and Waterford 'expelled the serving ministers from their midst and refused entry to the representative of King James until they had been assured that private Catholic worship would be tolerated in their communities.'(51) O'Neill had earlier astutely proclaimed himself the champion of Catholic liberties. In Ulster, however, the Gaelic poets had hailed *Rí Séamus* - King James

- as the rightful king of Ireland - until, that is, James failed to meet their expectations. Whereupon they immediately drew a distinction between offering allegiance to the person of the monarch and rendering support to his government.

The change in government management which occurred in 1604 had seen the in-coming of Sir Arthur Chichester as Lord Deputy and Sir John Davies as Solicitor-General. The former was 'a strident critic of government policy in Ireland' while the latter was determined to impose the full rigours of English statute law throughout the land. A long-time opponent in the field of O'Neill, Chichester's appointment caused great satisfaction to the servitors, those, that is, who had campaigned in the army and now held land. Chichester's reply to the remonstrations of Sir Patrick Barnswell (Tyrone's brother-in-law and representative of the great Old English families in Ireland) against the severity of the Uniformity provisions is instructive in the emphasis placed upon the Catholic *religion* as the main cause of Irish disaffection:

We have endured the misery of the war, we have lost our blood and our friends, and have indeed endured extreme miseries to suppress the late rebellion, whereof your priests, for whom you make petition, and your wicked religion, was the principal cause. (Colles 1919 150)

That religion was a major factor in the European conflicts of the seventeenth century is a matter of history. In Ireland it was so inextricably mixed with the politics and the conflicts of conquest and rebellion that on both sides it came to be identified as a precipitating cause in the conflict. 'If there be not speedy means to free this kingdom of this wicked rabble,' said Sir Robert Cecil, (he meant the clergy and bishops of the Irish Catholics), 'much mischief will break forth in a very short time.'(52) For the Irish, for their part, from the time of Henry VIII the very presence of the English sounded the tocsin, as it were, as much for the defence of their hereditary faith as of their homes and their lands. On both sides confessional commitment was intense, just as it was also intense on the battlefields of seventeenth century Europe. But the *cuius regio eius religio* compromise finally accepted on the continent, was, uniquely, never the case in Ireland.(53)

### 3.7 Proselytism, sectarianism and particularism

Reference has already been made to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The nineteenth century saw education becoming a more acute source of contention when a national system of mixed education, the System of National Education, was established by the government, in 1831. It might plausibly be held that the system had been created as a response to the Catholic bishops' stated grievances of 1824, when they had petitioned the House of Commons on the lack of grants to Catholic schools, the activities of the proselytizing societies, the substantial amounts from the Lord Lieutenant's education fund to support proselytizing schools, and the large grants to the Kildare Place Society.(54) . Indeed, the proselytizing activities of these Protestant education societies - funded as they were by government money - had long been a cause for alarm among the Irish Catholic bishops. As Ronald Akenson (1970) put it:

During the last years of the eighteenth century and the first three or four decades of the nineteenth, a 'second reformation' was attempted in Ireland. The Protestant denominations made a concerted effort to wean the Irish from Romanism. Bible societies and all manner of missions to the popish Irish flourished. Most important for our purposes were the Protestant education societies. (Akenson 1970 80)

In the event, it had become ever more progressively clear that the setting up of the National System had not by any means removed the danger of proselytism. It soon emerged that influential sections of the population were bent upon changes being made in the National System which ensured opposition from all the Catholic bishops, on the grounds that the faith of the Catholic children under their care was in danger. One such change was the right granted to Presbyterians in 1840 to hold bible classes at any time during school hours, and to exclude clergy of other denominations, particularly, it appeared, Catholic priests, from schools under their management. Another relieved managers of the onus of excluding children of one denomination from attendance at religious instruction conducted for another denomination. That the desire to proselytize had still not been exorcized is evidenced by Ambrose Macaulay (1970) when he refers to the publication in 1866 of the *Life* of Dr Richard Whately, the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin. From 1831 to 1853 the Archbishop 'had been one of the most industrious and influential members' on the National Education System's board. It became a matter for bitter controversy, therefore, when it was revealed that Dr Whately had expressed his opinion that mixed education:

Was gradually undermining the vast fabric of the Irish Roman Catholic Church...and if we give it up, we give up the only hope of weaning the Irish from the abuses of Popery. (Macaulay 1970 22)(55)

It is hardly surprising, as Macaulay remarks, that the Catholic bishops should react with a strengthened determination 'not only to obtain greater safeguards against danger to the faith of Catholic children but also to ensure an atmosphere conducive to their spiritual development.' The bishops' subsequent demands in 1866 that in schools exclusively Catholic or Protestant, all restrictions on religious education be removed, were shortly afterwards met by the Powis Commission (1870)(56) as a result of which, the National System of Education became virtually denominational. Subsequent to this development, and as the number of Catholic national schools continued to grow throughout the country, attention was then directed towards removing the disabilities Catholics suffered in the areas of higher education.

Concern for her children's education and spiritual welfare is an integral part of the Church's universal mission. The Established Church in Ireland's persistent attempts to proselytise since the seventeenth century have, historically, caused Irish Catholics to be particularly on guard with respect to their children's education - to be ever watchful for 'hidden agendas' in educational proposals emanating from whatever source. This is not particularism in any reprehensible sense. Rather, it is a proper and justifiable concern for the upholding of one's own religious beliefs and values in the education of one's children. An understanding of this may go some way towards answering accusations of Catholic 'exclusivity' in respect of its eschewing of integrated education. Catholic education, properly conceived and implemented, is neither exclusive nor divisive. It not only promotes Christian values but reaches out in every way possible to the society in which it finds itself. Neither, as various studies have confirmed(57) is it in any sense divisive or un-civic. For Catholic education to *be* Catholic education it must of necessity be *Christian* education. It cannot be otherwise. Similarly, Protestant education ought, by definition, to be Christian education. In the tragedy of the Northern Ireland conflict therefore, it might be expected that, *pace* denominational-doctrinal differences, the common remit and constituency of Christian education in the schools of both Christian-confessional communities would be making a significant contribution to

inter-community harmony. This is patently a critical aspect of the challenge facing Christian education in the Province. The successful meeting of the challenge is necessarily vitiated by sectarian bigotry; but not by particularism, if by the latter is meant a proper concern for one's faith and one's church that is at the same time both charitable and outward-looking.

The Catholic Church's concern about the dangers of proselytism justified the intensity of its care for the education of its children freeing it from any accusation of undue particularism. Other events in the nineteenth century, however, tended to enmesh it in that mould at least in the eyes of others. The decades which followed the catastrophic famine of the 1840s (the harvests of 1860, 1861 and 1862 were the worst since the failure of the potato crop in 1847) were renewed periods of great suffering and deprivation for the Irish people, and once again they were forced to emigrate, this time at the rate of more than one hundred thousand a year, while the government did virtually nothing to alleviate their plight. As Emmet Larkin (1987) has put it:

The plight of those at the base of the social pyramid became really desperate. The government, in this deepening social crisis, refused to provide any relief for the distress beyond what could be obtained by resorting to private charity and the hated poor law, and the people began to emigrate at the rate of more than one hundred thousand a year. At this point, the indignation, not to say the bitterness, of those who felt they had a real social responsibility to their people may be easily imagined. In this awful testing time the Irish people not only learnt once more as a people how Catholic they were but also learnt again in their bitterness how Irish they were, and it is not too much to claim that it was in these years that the Irish Catholic identity focused by Daniel O'Connell before the Famine, and reinforced by the Devotional Revolution(58) in the years immediately after, was finally crystallized. (Larkin 1987 xvi, xvii)

The refusal of the government to alleviate the distress consequent upon the three successive bad harvests of 1860-62 created a social situation 'that proved to be most conducive to the rise of the Fenian, or Irish Republican, Brotherhood, whose purpose as an oath-bound secret society was to establish an Irish Republic by force of arms.'(59) The bishops, united in their opposition to Fenianism which they finally petitioned Rome formally and authoritatively to condemn on 26 January 1870, had earlier decided to meet the revolutionary challenge by approving the

launching of a constitutional political movement in the National Association, with a three-point programme of reform namely, disestablishment of the Irish Episcopalian Church, compensation by landlords for tenant improvements and episcopal control of a system of denominational education at all levels. The problem of proselytism had begun to ease somewhat following the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869, although Larkin refers to a letter written by Cardinal Cullen to Rome only two years earlier (1867) in the course of which he refers to the continued activity of proselytizing organizations(60) particularly in the city of Dublin.

'Yesterday,'(7 February 1867) Cullen interestingly added, referring to an interview with the Lord Lieutenant, 'I spent an hour with His Excellency. I gave him a history of all the proselytizing institutions of Dublin and showed how wicked they are.' (Larkin 1987 632)

The Catholic Relief Act of 1793, and Catholic emancipation in 1829, had resulted in a country-wide expansion in the building of Catholic churches, convents and seminaries. This, however, was paralleled by a renewed onset of interdenominational rivalry. From about the mid-1820s anti-Catholic sectarianism began to re-appear as Daniel O'Connell's campaign for Catholic emancipation grew in numbers and influence. Added to this, was the phenomenon of 'the increasingly important rôle of anti-Catholic clergymen of both the Episcopalian and Presbyterian communions in Conservative politics'. Among these, the Presbyterian, Dr Henry Cooke, was the most prominent. Dr Cooke saw 'a necessary connection between schemes for Irish political autonomy and the designs of the Vatican.'(61) Of a much more virulent stamp, however, was the anti-Catholicism of the Rev Thomas Drew, a Dubliner, who had come to Belfast in 1833 to take charge of the new 'Free Church' which had been built to attract the poorer Anglicans repelled by the exclusiveness of the two existing churches.(62) Given to violently anti-Catholic preaching in the open-air ('You possess your churches and your meeting-houses and your churchyards *only until Popery has sufficient power to nail up the one and to rob you of the other*') (63) the rantings of Drew, and others such as the Rev Thomas McIlwaine (Church of Ireland) and the Rev Hugh Hanna of Clifton Presbyterian Church, contributed significantly to those outbursts of sectarian rioting that were to punctuate the nineteenth century, and to become such a fearful feature of life in Belfast. Further, the anti-Home Rule movement saw the coming together of the Irish Conservatives and the Orange Order, under the new designation of

'Unionist', which resulted in the defeat of Gladstone's Bill of 2 June 1886. The following day witnessed the beginning of a series of riots in Belfast which, on and off, lasted until 25 October during which 32 people were killed and 371 injured.

Events such as these, together with the growing nationalization of politics in the nineteenth century saw the Catholic Church in Ireland inevitably inclining in the direction of constitutional nationalism. In so far as it did, can it be argued that the Church was coming to espouse a form of particularism, Irish-Catholicism as opposed to Catholic-Christianity, that was at odds with the divine commission to universalism? In this context it might be thought relevant to refer to Garret Fitzgerald's description of the Irish sense of identity that had been developing from the time of the Reformation, namely:

The fusion of the cause of Irish independence from Britain with that of the preservation of the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland. For long thereafter, British rule and Protestantism were seen by many as a single opponent. (Fitzgerald 1982 6)

### **3.8 Particularism and Christianity**

The question which has just been posed is a difficult one because while Christianity is unequivocally universal in its divinely commanded outreach - 'Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Mt 28: 19,20) - the Christian Church wherever it finds itself is always in a social situation that may be thought of as being situationally unique. In its history of Christian presence in any given social milieu, inescapably local colouring accrues. Irish Catholicism will have individualistic characteristics that are different from, for example, Canadian Catholicism. Constitutional nationalism may be seen as a Christian solution to modern Irish politico-social problems, but in the Philippines under the Marcos dictatorship a bloodless revolution against a corrupt regime successfully gathered strength among the suffering people and with the support of the Church. In none of any similar exemplary cases that might be quoted - Poland comes to mind particularly - ought the full integrity of Christ's teaching to have been in any way compromised and no doubt the local churches would argue convincingly that it had not been. Yet some element of doubt must linger. The danger is that Christians might become so involved in good works



in politico-social situations - valid and justifiable in themselves - as ultimately to identify these as the extent of their Christian remit and forget, perhaps, what Our Lord said to Pilate: 'My kingship is not of this world.' (Jn 18: 36) By virtue of the great imperatives of Christian charity the Church cannot remain impervious to the demands of social justice or to the cries of the poor. Whatever the local situation and social ethos the Church must engage as fully as she can in works of compassion and alleviation. In doing so, Christ is being made manifest in her good works, and the particular responses made by local churches in this area can be advanced as demonstrating in practical terms the universalism of Christian love. The concomitant danger remains, however, that an all-engrossing attention to providing solutions to particular problems in the human condition may result in losing sight of the Christian ethic itself. The following remarks made recently (1990) in an interview on radio by Desmond Connell, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, indicate the reality of this danger. Affirming the validity of the Church's 'option for the poor' the archbishop went on to state that he was 'equally concerned about spiritual poverty - the poverty of not for example knowing about the love and redemption by Our Lord, Jesus Christ.' Secondly, referring to the present state of religious education he commented as follows: 'I am deeply worried that religious teaching is being put aside and the time devoted exclusively to social affairs.' 'This watering down of the spiritual is deeply widespread', he concluded.(64)

James McEvoy (1986) has described the dangers of particularism in relation to the Northern Ireland situation in the following terms:

Particularism lies in submitting the spiritual to some inner-worldly goal or good, or in confusing the two inextricably - the favour of God with the nation, the land, the language, the monarchy, or anything else which, while perfectly good in itself and at its true place can, through our sinfulness, become a fetish and an inverted world. (McEvoy 1986 25)

Reminding us of Aquinas' warning 'that the Christian Church can at any time fall back into the Old Covenant', and away from the universalism 'which, through the Incarnation and Redemption, brought the infant Church on its exodus from the Jewish nation into a life of universal dimensions and implications', McEvoy speaks of the spiritual danger which he sees as attendant on the rôle of the Catholic

Church in Northern Ireland, 'in attempting to hold together a community that suffers from injustice and is alienated from the institutions of government.'

The isolation caused in part by the border, the refusal of full and equal citizenship of the state, the experience of injustice and the sense of grievance, the ever-present tendency to identify their Irishness (which may not be given free expression in public) with their Catholic faith (which is safe from official repression), the added isolation which is an effect of communal disorder, the paucity of visitors, the restraints on travel which poverty imposes, the acquisition of education largely at local centres within Northern Ireland - all these conspire to narrow the vision, to intensify the local experience of the Church (for good or ill), and to particularize even the universality of the Spirit of God, by which the Church must endeavour to live, at the peril of spiritual debility and ecclesial provincialism. (*ibid.*,25)

Addressing the need of the Church to struggle against this particularism 'in its various phases and moments', and referring to the particular conditions in which the nationalist community and the Church find themselves, McEvoy comments as follows:

Within the nationalist community the Church must teach its members to place first the Kingdom of God and allow no power, no rival, to stand between itself and Christ its head. (*ibid.*,25)

The 'phases and moments' of particularism of which McEvoy speaks are of crucial interest to the present study's analysis of Northern Ireland confessionality and its ideological cognates of nationalism and, especially, of Irish Republicanism and Ulster Unionism. It may be proposed that nationalism, at least in its constitutional form, does not appear to have been inimical to the progress of God's kingdom in Northern Ireland. There are, however, grounds for submitting this statement to pragmatic analysis in the sense that fervent constitutional nationalists may 'temporize' in the face of the excesses of unconstitutional nationalism, or, Republicanism. While the Church's condemnation of revolutionary Fenians in the 1860s had been unequivocal, the identification of national freedom and Catholicism had long been a part of the Irish Catholic psyche, as Fitzgerald has remarked. The anti-Catholic sectarianism that so violently marked much of the nineteenth century from the days of O'Connell's campaign for emancipation did nothing to change this. The growing rapprochement that had been such a notable feature

between Catholics and Protestants - most notably the Presbyterians - at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries had been destroyed in the religious rivalry and sectarianism that emerged in the late 1820s - and that at a time when, the disabilities under the Penal Laws having being left behind, Ireland as a Catholic nation was beginning to flourish. The first public meeting of Belfast Catholics to petition for further emancipation had, in 1813, actually felt constrained to pass a vote of thanks to the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster for supporting their claims. However, and sadly - as Budge and O'Leary have pointed out:

Catholic-Protestant relations began to deteriorate in the late 1820s when O'Connell's campaign for emancipation was reaching its height, and it was clear that the six million enfranchized Catholics, able to return their own members, would speedily swamp the Irish Protestant representatives in the House of Commons. (Budge and O'Leary 1973 26)

Such fears, played upon by demagogues, go some way towards explaining the sectarian violence which increasingly came to characterize this deterioration. To give a fuller explanation, however, it is necessary to pay some attention to the rôle played by the Orange Order. The Rev Drew (as Grand Chaplain in 1852) as well as the Rev McIlwaine and the Rev Hanna (the virulently anti-Catholic demagogues mentioned earlier) were in fact members of that institution. Formed in the year 1796, the Orange Order emerged as:

A militant and classless Protestant secret society which in its first public pronouncement included among its goals, in addition to the Constitution and the Protestant religion, the maintenance of the Established Church...The higher echelons of the Institution were dominated by the aristocracy in Ireland, and to an even greater extent in England, where the Dukes of Northumberland and Gordon held prominent office even before the royal Dukes of York (1821) and Cumberland (1828) were elevated to the grand mastership. As the century wore on the clergy of the Established Church in both countries joined in large numbers...The Order was unable to escape a thorough investigation by a Select Committee, set up in 1835 (shortly after the Whigs returned to office) under the chairmanship of Joseph Hume, its most persistent enemy in the Commons. The evidence given to the Committee, which filled three blue books, established beyond doubt what had been general knowledge in Ireland since 1795 - that is, that the Orangemen controlled the Irish yeomanry, had lodges in the army, enjoyed a certain

immunity from justice in Ulster, and were frequently engaged in civil disturbances...The Duke of Cumberland formally dissolved the Order in both countries. The dissolution was much more effective in Great Britain than in Ireland. Just as the Irish lodges (during the six years since 1828) had persistently ignored the annual warnings from Cumberland against parading, so they now went underground, but only just. (*ibid*, 11, 22-24)

Commenting on what they describe as 'the abrupt change in the social temper of Belfast in the half century between 1798 and 1857' Budge and O'Leary opine that many writers 'appear to have underestimated' the part by the Orange Order in this phenomenon. They underestimated:

The divisive influence of the Orange Order, and the possibility that to its development rather than to any of the causes assigned...may be attributed the growth, if not the inception, of religious rivalry in Belfast. It was making headway there by the 1830s, though admittedly by no means as strong as in the neighbouring counties. It is, nevertheless, remarkable that the familiar pattern of sectarian rioting in Belfast should have been established as early as the first quarter of the nineteenth century. (*ibid.*,27)

The religious rivalry and sectarianism - the blacker aspects of particularism - which emerged in the late 1820s could neither then, no more than now, be justified as consonant with Christ's command to love one's neighbour as oneself. To the extent that Christians of various denominations in Northern Ireland indulge in sectarian bigotry, they clearly are at odds with the mind and teaching of Jesus Christ. If they cannot bring themselves to co-operate with others of the Christian household - not even in the cause of peace and reconciliation - nor to resolve the situation in accordance with the healing prescriptions of the Christian ethic then clearly something in the nature of a theological crisis must be held to exist. It is one thing to be devoted to one's particular denominational creed. It is something qualitatively different in Christian terms to exclude others - in this case fellow Christians - from the practice of Christian love and friendship even (it might be said *especially*) in the difficult circumstances of community conflict.

Another aspect of theological crisis lies in a particularism which cannot rise to Christian universalism. A denomination might *express* a willingness to take part in dialogue with fellow Christians but the pre-occupations of its own particularism are

allowed to attenuate the universalism which properly belongs to Christianity. This would appear to be McEvoy's point above when speaking of those factors which 'conspire to narrow the vision, to intensify the local experience of the Church (for good or ill) and to particularize even the universality of the Spirit of God, by which the Church must endeavour to live, at the peril of spiritual debility and ecclesial provincialism.' Such an inward looking particularism, the danger of falling into which (as has been said) McEvoy sees as attendant upon the Catholic Church's rôle *vis-à-vis* the alienated Northern Irish community, would clearly be far removed from an outward looking and universalist Christianity eager to engage in practical overtures towards others for the love of Jesus Christ.

The influence of ideologies may well constitute the most significant contribution to Northern Ireland's theological crisis. In the case of Northern Ireland Protestantism, as Bruce has remarked earlier, 'Loyalism depends on its religious base. Beyond evangelical Protestantism no secure identity is available'. In the case of Northern Ireland Catholicism, Republican ideology or even fervent nationalism can exercise a powerful influence, manifested for example in ambiguous condemnations of violence and the 'whatabout-ery' phenomenon discussed on p. 311. The ideological dream often becomes a graven image preferred to the incoming of the Kingdom. If it be the case that many Northern Ireland Christians whether consciously or unconsciously but *in actual practice* prefer (that is, 'put before', 'give precedence to') their political/ideological aspirations - an Irish Republic, a British Ulster, a United Ireland, a federated Unionist Ireland - to the kingdom of God on earth; or the nursing of grievances to the Christian precept of forgiveness; or to continue to live in an atmosphere of suspicion in place of an ambience of Christian love, then, with some justice it must be said that the consequent inability to promote Christian principles to the level of urgently needed Christian practice constitutes an on-going theological crisis in the systematic and pastoral dimension. The polarized communities, the continuing conflict (the summer of 1991 and the first two months of 1992 have seen a renewed intensification of retaliatory murders), the lack of any significant signs or steps towards inter-community reconciliation, are but some of the particular instances indicative of this.

In a recent article (1987) David Stevens, Associate Secretary of the Irish

Council of Churches and a member of the Inter-Church Group on Faith and Politics, has stated:

Most conflicts between groups throughout history have been 'solved' by domination, destruction of the other, or driving him out. To seek reconciliation honestly in Northern Ireland is, therefore, a genuinely utopian project and in the perspective of history unlikely to happen. The only thing that can be said is that if we don't, we will probably ultimately destroy each other and ourselves. The key questions in Northern Ireland are whether the two communities genuinely want to live together and whether they are prepared to pay the price to achieve this. (Stevens 1987 85)

The anomaly embedded in Stevens' 'key questions' is that the two communities are Christian communities. There can be no doubt that the people of Northern Ireland cannot evade their own responsibility to make a positive and significant contribution to a solution. It does not sufficiently answer the case to point to 'the intractable difficulties in arriving at a political solution'. Even granting this, there still remains a province-wide constituency for the practice of Christian reconciliation. It must, therefore, remain legitimate to inquire *why* the two communities cannot in terms of a common Christianity agree to 'pay the price' for living together in communal harmony. The basis of that common Christianity is love of God and our neighbour as ourselves, and a willingness to forgive each other. If these basic Christian imperatives *are accepted* the practicalities of working out a solution should not be beyond the abilities of a Christian-inspired, intelligent people. Must it be considered utopian for Christian people to employ Christian principles for a solution to their problems however intractable these may appear to be? Stevens earlier remarks: 'We must pursue our own secular fates.'(65) The world is a secular place it is true but, surely, this cannot mean that Christian principles become thereby discounted. Such a disjunction would be to consign Christianity to the colourless area of irrelevance in human affairs.

There *have* been Christian-inspired responses it is true, and their value must not be underestimated. 'If the political actions of Christian people have so far failed to solve the problems', state Gallagher and Worrall, 'there is no doubt that the personal action of Christian people has done much to alleviate the results of the problems.'(66) Added to this there can be no doubt that the prayers and good

offices of many Christian people have been salutary in preventing a slide into a Lebanon-type abyss. Nevertheless, can it be said that the crucial challenge to positive, open and reconciling Christian action by a Christian confessional people whose society is rent by conflict, has been effectively taken up? Has been structured and implemented? Has, in exemplary fashion, reached into the schools? Can Christian education make progress in such a situation? The difficulties and challenges which stand in its way must be premised upon the nature of the society since the schools reflect the attitudes and values of the wider society. Yet, despite the difficulties and problems which have been posed, there are grounds for Christian hope. The many Christian parents and educators concerned that this need be met, and the many schools where the healing Christian assumptions and values are both taught and practised, form part of that salutary Christian presence in the Province upon which that hope is grounded.

### 3.9 Notes and references

1. See Austin Flannery, O.P. (ed.), *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1981 Edition) pp. 727-8.
2. See Edward Hulmes, *Education and Cultural Diversity* (London and New York: Longman, 1989) pp. vii-ix.
3. Dominic Murray, 'Schools and Conflict', in John Darby (ed.), *Northern Ireland: the Background to the Conflict* (Belfast, Appletree Press, 1983), p. 147.
4. Richard Rose, *Governing without Consensus: an Irish Perspective* (London, Faber and Faber, Limited, 1971). See also Andrew Greeley and Peter Rossi, (1966), *The Education of Catholic Americans*; and E. R. Tapper's (1968), unpublished Ph.D. thesis, *Secondary School Adolescence*. The issue of mixed or integrated education in Northern Ireland is the subject of Chapter 4 in the present study.
5. Denis P. Barritt and Charles F. Carter, *The Northern Ireland Problem: A Study in Group Relations* (London, Oxford University Press, 1962). The authors' last point ('everyone in Northern Ireland is to some extent caught up in the bonds of past history whose importance in education we have shown') is particularly perceptive. The influence of these 'bonds'- such as stereotyped perceptions and politico-ideological thinking, for example - upon members of the educational profession needs to be faced up to more courageously, perhaps, than it has been especially in relation to Christian education. The issue is confronted in Chapter 7 of the present study.
6. Barritt and Carter, *ibid.*, p. 77.

7. Murray, 'Schools and Conflict', p. 147.

8. *Television and Religion in Northern Ireland* (London, Opinion Research Centre, duplicated report of survey 307, 1968), Table 29. In Britain, 48 per cent said they thought it 'very important' that their country should be Christian - a thought provoking statistic in the light of the 'new' religious education which was developing.

9. Murray, 'schools and Conflict', p. 145.

10. See note 36, below.

11. The instances referred to are therefore part of the socio-cultural development of both communities. The Irish Volunteers were a constitutional movement. It was only as late as 1794 when the United Irishmen element finally decided upon rebellion. The Falls/Shankill hunger marches and riots were a rare example of inter-community working class solidarity at a time of great social deprivation. The fact of an emerging climate of tolerance in the 1960s should not be overlooked either. Knowledge of these events should have an unambiguous place in our children's education - both in the Protestant and Catholic sectors - especially in the upper forms of secondary and grammar schools.

12. The 1780s and 1790s constituted a truly unique period in the history of Belfast. It was a 'golden age' in Presbyterian liberalism and egalitarianism, a time when the city came not unjustifiably to be known as 'the Athens of the North.'

13. See T. J. Campbell, *Fifty Years of Ulster* (Belfast, The Irish News, 1942), p. 21.

14. See Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster! The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 259.

15. This question is dealt with in practical terms in Chapter 7.

16. Martin's model is useful in that it refers to an aspect of the Northern Irish Catholic psyche not often mentioned. The consciousness of belonging to an historic people as well as that of having occupied an honoured place in the Christian Catholic world does colour the self-perception of many Northern Irish Catholics. It might be suspected that many have not yet fully realized how deeply this image has been tarnished in the world abroad, especially in the area of mission, by the present conflict.

17. It was a fragile 'might', however. The Irish clan system left too much scope for unilateral manoeuvring by individual chiefs. See the discussion in Sean O'Faolain, *The Great O'Neill* (Cork and Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1942) on 'the fundamental divergence between the Celtic conception of a ruler and the new conception of the State', pp. 10-17.

18. The phrase is from the title of A. T. Q. Stewart's, *The Narrow Ground: Aspects*



of Ulster 1609-1969 (London, Faber and Faber, 1977)

19. The six counties, that is, (Antrim, Down, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Derry, Armagh), of the historic nine-county Province of Ulster. The other three counties (Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal) are situated in the Republic of Ireland.

20. This is by no means always the case, however, as the rest of the paragraph makes clear.

21. See, for example, Paul VI's Apostolic Letter on Mixed Marriages (*Matrimonia Mixta*, 7 January, 1970), 11: 'If, however, the circumstances justify it, a marriage between a Catholic and a baptised non-Catholic can be celebrated, subject to the local Ordinary's consent, according to the rites for the celebration of marriage within Mass (19-38), while respecting the prescription of general law with regard to Eucharistic Communion.' The decree *Ne Temere* of the Council of Trent - brought into full operation in Ireland from 1908 - laid down as its third condition that 'the children of the (mixed) marriage shall be baptized and brought up in the Catholic faith.' In Paul VI's Apostolic Letter the absoluteness of the Trent stipulation is modified in the following terms, in respect of the Catholic partner to the marriage: 'He is also gravely bound to make a sincere promise to do all in his power to have all the children baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church.'(\*5)

22. Buber's book is *Between Man and Man*, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. (London, Kegan Paul, 1947)

23. E. E. O'Donnell, *Northern Irish Stereotypes* (Dublin, College of Industrial Relations, 1977) See, for example, pp. 155-6.

24. *ibid.*, p.154.

25. 'The theory states more explicitly that a majority group projects those of its characteristics of which it disapproves to the minority group.' (O'Donnell) The study by Else Frankel-Brunswick and R. N. Stanford referred to by O'Donnell is, 'Some Personality Correlates of Anti-Semitism', in *Journal of Psychology*, 10, 1945, pp. 271-291.

26. O'Donnell, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

27. *Census of Population 1971: General Report*, (Belfast, HMSO, 1971)

28. See Peter Brierley, *UK Christian Handbook 1985/86 Edition* (London, MARC Europe Bible Society, Evangelical Alliance, 1984), The comparative figure for England was 13 %.

29. Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster! The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 263.

30. See article, 'R.E. important: - Minister', in *The Belfast Telegraph*, 6 June, 1991.

31. Duncan Morrow, Derek Birrell, John Greer, Terry O'Keefe, *The Churches and Inter-Community Relationships* (Coleraine, University of Ulster Centre for the Study of Conflict, 1991), p. 118.
32. *ibid.*, p.117.
33. *ibid.*, p. 114.
34. Geoffrey Bell, *The Protestants of Ulster* (London, Pluto Press, 1976) p. 13.
35. Steve Bruce, *God Save Ulster!*, p. 249.
36. Circa 1981. The writer listened to the extended interview which included Dr Paisley's views on separate or parallel Protestant-Catholic community development. Paisley's more general position is, of course, very well known. 'I am loyal to the principles of the great Protestant Reformation and refuse to barter my heritage for a mess of ecumenical pottage. I am loyal to the Queen and throne of Britain, being Protestant in the terms of the Revolution Settlement. I am loyal to Ulster, the Ulster of our founding fathers.' ('Paisley tells Bishop what loyalty means to him', in *The Belfast Telegraph*, 10 October, 1969) Thus it is clear that the ideology of the Protestant Unionists is that of the traditional Orangeman. Rose comments further: 'The Ulster of Paisley's founding fathers is a regime which will not countenance Catholic influence.' (Rose, *op. cit.*, 227)
37. Steve Bruce, *Firm in the Faith* (Aldershot, Gower Publishing Company, 1984). p. 164.
38. Bell, *The Protestants of Ulster*, p. 13.
39. See Nicholas Canny, *From Reformation to Restoration; Ireland 1534- 1669* (Dublin, Helicon Limited, 1987), p. 205.
40. The Anglo-Norman invasion took place in 1170. Long before the seventeenth century many of the great Anglo-Norman houses (such as the Desmonds, the Fitzgeralds, the Butlers, the Burkes) had become merged into the culture and *mores* of Gaelic society. These were the Old English to whom reference has been made. Of some of them it was said that they had become 'more Irish than the Irish themselves.' Outside of a limited area of a few counties around Dublin, termed *The Pale*, the English writ had had little or no power or presence for centuries. As early as 1366, legislation was passed - The Statutes of Kilkenny - with a view to halting the all prevailing Gaelicization. Daphne D. C. Pochin Mould in *The Irish Dominicans* (Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1957) describes their intent as follows: 'The famous Statutes of Kilkenny of 1366, of course, indicate the way in which the English were trying to maintain themselves and to fight back the Irish way of life. They ordered that the English should not adopt Irish customs, marry Irish girls, put their children out to foster parents, as was the ancient Irish custom, use Irish (Brehon) law, entertain Irish bards. In English controlled districts, Irishmen are to be excluded from cathedrals, abbeys and other benefices in the

Church. The English are to ride in the English, not the Irish, fashion, and if they speak Irish they are to forfeit their lands until they undertake to speak English.' (p. 16) The steady resurgence in Irish culture which got under way in the wake of the Anglo-Normans finally reaching and settling into the western province of Connaught with the conquest by Richard de Burgo in 1235, 'reached its peak in the 16th century and then the Tudors were to set about the country's reconquest once more.' (p. 16)

41. The Confederation of Kilkenny met intermittently during the years 1642-49. It finally decided upon a policy of military action (under Owen Roe O'Neill) which would enable them to confront those who opposed the rising, seize control of the government and dictate terms to the king especially that of providing guarantees of full religious liberties for Catholics. This achieved, O'Neill hoped they might 'even assist him in his struggles against his rivals for power in Britain.' 'The logic of this strategy', however, 'was never admitted by the Old English participants in the Confederation of Kilkenny.' (Canny, p. 212 and p. 213)

42. Canny, *From Reformation to Restoration*, p.207.

43. Following this quotation, Canny proceeds to discuss the rising at some length in his book. (*ibid.*, pp. 208 ff.)

44. *ibid.*, p. 207

45. *ibid.*, p. 208

46. *ibid.*, p. 209

47. *ibid.*, p. 210. See also Magnus Magnusson, *Landlord or Tenant? A View of Irish History* (London, The Bodley Head, 1978) 'This was when the native Irish rose against their oppressors; and, according to the mythology of the North, the Protestant settlers were butchered in their hundreds of thousands. Serious historians now know that this is a distortion. In the first place, there were not "hundreds of thousands" of settlers to butcher; and in the second place, a sober study of the evidence of contemporary documents concerning land changes and deaths suggests that the figures of the so-called Massacre have been wildly exaggerated. What is more, they were wildly exaggerated at the time, for specific propaganda purposes - to justify in advance the scale of any vengeance that might follow.' (p. 33)

48. See Ramsay Colles, *The History of Ulster: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, The Gresham Publishing Company Limited, 1919), vol. II, p. 149.

49. *ibid.*, p. 149.

50. *ibid.*, p. 148.

51. Canny cites this incident as an explicit example of the previously cautious though growing missionary endeavours of certain of the Old English who had

established contact with the Counter Reformation movement on the continent. 'While the Old English might have refrained from entering into rebellion against the crown, they had taken advantage of the government's difficulties to advance the position of the Counter Reformation in the loyal areas of the country.' (Canny, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

52. Colles, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

53. *cuius regio eius religio*: The compromise settlement of the Peace of Augsburg, 1555.

54. The Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor, usually known as the Kildare Place Society, was founded on 7 December, 1811. Unlike the plethora of proselytizing societies which then existed in Ireland to wean the Irish from Romanism it was, as Akenson remarks, genuinely undenominational throughout its early years and at first the Irish clergy adopted an attitude of 'benevolent neutrality' towards it. The society's managers, however, 'disturbed this peaceful state of affairs by beginning, in 1820, to grant a part of their income to the various Protestant proselytizing societies.' Thus it gradually became 'just another Protestant agency.' (Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment*, p. 90.)

55. Macaulay refers to E. Jane Whately, *Life and Correspondence of Richard Whately D.D.* (London, 1866) Vol. II, pp. 243-246. It is interesting to reflect that Whately had been a senior fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, and mentor and friend to the young John Henry Newman when he was elected a fellow on 11 April, 1822. Sheridan Gilley (1990) traces their relationship in his recent book *Newman and his Age* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd: 1990)

56. *A Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)*, 1870. Chaired by Lord Powis, it is commonly referred to as the 'Powis Commission'.

57. See, for example, Andrew Greely and Peter Rossi, *The Education of Catholic Americans* (Chicago, Aldine, 1966), and the Irish hierarchy's *Directory of Ecumenism in Ireland* (Dublin, Veritas Publications, 1976)

58. The 'Devotional Revolution', as propounded by Emmet Larkin ('The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875', in *American Historical Review*, lxxxvii, no.3, June 1972, pp.625-52) would appear to mean the dramatic acceptance and practice of Catholic *mores* by the mass of the Irish people as a direct result of the Famine of the 1840s. His thesis is that in the two or three decades after the Famine the 'great mass of the Irish people became practising Catholics which they have uniquely and essentially remained both at home and abroad to the present day.' In his study of pre-Famine Ireland, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland* (Dublin, 1982) S. J. Connolly has written that 'there was a rival popular culture...which hindered the growth and acceptance of Catholic *mores* among the people.' This was a culture which 'hinged on the boisterous festivities surrounding traditional public gatherings such as wakes, fairs, faction fights etc., and a belief

in an alternate supernatural world inhabited by fairies' (changelings, etc.) It was finally in the period following the famine that 'the resources of a newly prosperous Catholic laity were mobilized by a reformed and energetic Church to bring about what Professor Emmet Larkin has aptly described as a "devotional revolution" within Irish Catholicism.' (Connolly) Thomas G. McGrath ('The Tridentine Evolution of Modern Irish Catholicism, 1563-1962; a Re-examination of the "Devotional Revolution" Thesis', in Riamonn Ó Muirí (ed.), *Irish Church History Today* (Armagh, Cumann Seanchais Ard Mhaca, The Armagh Historical Diocesan Society 1990] pp. 84-99), and other scholars have criticized this 'bleak picture' of pre-Famine Ireland, McGrath pointing out among other things that 'the indiscipline and lack of attention to detail were almost inevitable concomitants of the penal era'. 'Church going was obviously less frequent, for a multitude of reasons, than it later became but it was high by most continental standards and foreign travellers in Ireland were always impressed by Irish religiosity.' McGrath holds that it was the gradual implementation of the decrees of the mid-sixteenth century Council of Trent which forms the proper context for any evaluation of the development of modern Irish Catholicism. McGrath concludes: 'Professor Larkin thought he had discovered a "devotional revolution" where in reality he was trying to come to terms with the tail-end of the Tridentine renewal which had been taking place strongly from c. 1775, which was accelerated by the Famine and which become almost fully institutionalized by c. 1875. The period 1875 to Vatican II in 1962 witnessed the triumphant expression of the Tridentine ideal in Ireland.' (McGrath)

59. See Emmet Larkin, *The Consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1860-1870* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987) p. xvii.

60. Among the main proselytizing agencies were the following: The Society for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion (founded 1792); The London Hibernian Society (founded 1806); The Sunday School Society for Ireland (founded 1809); The Baptist Society for Promoting the Gospel in Ireland (founded 1814); and, The Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their Own Language (founded 1818).

61. Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment*, p. 78.

62. Budge and O'Leary, *Belfast: Approach to Crisis*, p. 78.

63. *ibid.*, p. 79.

64. The interview with Archbishop Connell was broadcast by *Radio Eireann* (Irish Radio) on Sunday, 6 October 1990.

65. See David Stevens' 'Comment on the SCM response to "Breaking down the Enmity"', in *Studies*, vol.76, no.301, pp. 83-8, (p. 84)

66. See Gallagher and Worrall, *Christians in Ulster 1968-80*, p. 209.

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## Chapter IV

### MOVES TOWARDS INTEGRATED EDUCATION

Those who produced the report discussed the issues regarding integration for a long time. The more they discussed them, the more they were aware of the pitfalls and difficulties inherent in a simplistic advocacy of integration. They were accused of cowardice and of shirking the issue, but they preferred realism to facile recommendations that had no chance of being implemented - and they were right. Later lack of desire to implement Dunleath demonstrates that the integrationists claimed by the polls had either disappeared, or, as is more likely, never existed. The working party saw what the theorists and idealists seem to have missed. They recognized, irrespective of the personal wishes of any of their members, that community attitudes are not changed by diktat. To impose integration on an unwilling or unconvinced community would be to hinder rather than help the cause. They could see no way to arrange a marriage without the bride. (Eric Gallagher and Stanley Worrall)(1)

#### 4.1 Mixed education: the nineteenth century experience

The recent sharpening of the controversy about integrated or mixed education that has followed the passing by parliament (14 December 1989) of the Education Reform Order (Northern Ireland) 1989, might be regarded as the latest phase in the long drawn out dispute between Church and State over education that stretches back to the early years of the nineteenth century. Where the religious complexion of the state coincides with that of a given denomination, as had been the case with the Established Church of Ireland in the last century, full financial provision is easily made and controversy largely avoided. (The Church of Ireland was finally disestablished on 1 January 1871, on the grounds that, in the words of Gladstone, it was 'if not the home and refuge, yet the token and symbol of ascendancy.')(2) The case of the independent denominations was different and more difficult although grant aid continued even when, as with the Presbyterians in the 1840s, the National Education Act of 1831 was breached on occasion. The Presbyterians and Irish Anglicans, in any event, had been learning to tolerate one other in the wake of Catholic emancipation in 1829, and the perceived necessity to combine against the great Repeal and Home Rule movements which the

Irish Catholics had mounted as their sense of national confidence began to burgeon, following the dark days of the eighteenth century. That coming together was celebrated by the Presbyterian leader, Dr Henry Cooke in 1867 when he declared: 'It is now more than thirty years since I...proclaimed the banns of holy marriage, intellectual and spiritual, between the Presbyterian Church and the Established Church.'<sup>(4)</sup>

In the case of the Catholic Church the question of relations with the state in matters having to do with education was more complex. The new System of National Education introduced in 1831 was to provide compulsory primary education for all, in schools erected under the auspices of, or under the control of central government and was to be administered by a Board of Education Commissioners appointed by the government. These commissioners paid the salaries of all school teachers, possessed the right to dismiss individual teachers and controlled the use of textbooks and lesson materials. For the Catholic bishops who, with their people, were still adjusting to a new era of post-Emancipation toleration, the opportunity of an educational system for their children was something to be greatly welcomed, if the conditions could be accepted. Donald Akenson (1970) has remarked that when the system was founded, the country was still heavily influenced politically by the Established Church. As was shown in the previous chapter, the proselytizing propensities of that Church were nothing if not persistent. Like the Presbyterians, the Anglicans were also opposed to Catholic priests having access to school classrooms in the local area, whose purpose, as they put it, was to teach 'the peculiar dogmas, the superstitious rites, the intolerant sentiments, the blasphemous fables, the dangerous deceits, and, in a word, all the errors of popery.'<sup>(5)</sup> Akenson refers to a specifically Anglican objection which highlights that Church's proselytizing propensity:

The Anglican opposition raised one point that was not often mentioned in Presbyterian agitation, namely, that the national system should be condemned because it interfered with the duty of proselytizing Roman Catholics. (Akenson 1970 190)

The bishops had, in addition, to consider that it was a system of mixed education that was to be introduced. This was a cause for both concern and some controversy among them. On the one hand, the religious faith of the children

entrusted to their care had at all costs to be safeguarded. Many of them thought that this could not be done under the system proposed. On the other hand the great need for a comprehensive system of education for their charges, something that was vastly in excess of their own present resources, was there to be supplied were they able to accept it. For the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr John McHale, however, the risks of mixed education were in all the circumstances too great:

From the extraordinary power now claimed by the state over a mixed education, it would soon claim a similar despotic control over mixed marriages, and strive to stretch its net over all ecclesiastical concerns. (*ibid.*,1)(6)

Yet in the end it was decided that the risks had to be accepted, with the bishops to exercise the greatest care in seeing to the religious education of the children. For some of the bishops the proposed system was worthy of unqualified acceptance. For Dr Blake, then Catholic bishop of Dromore, the system provided:

First, the great desideratum, a good moral education for the whole community, supplying excellent class-books, excellent teachers, and excellent inspectors. Secondly, it invites all the youth of the country into its schools. Thirdly, it takes care that the great principles of morality and religion, which are suggested by the law of nature, and admitted by all Christians of every denomination in Ireland, shall be diligently inculcated in its books and by its teachers. (*ibid.*,1)

There is a thoroughly eirenic spirit at work here. The period was one which had seen something of a softening in denominational rivalries and the prospects for his own sorely tried people (as they emerged from the disabilities of the Penal Laws) of a fully administered educational system to be shared with other Christians with whom, latterly, they had been at arms length, was obviously a source of much satisfaction to him; and not least because it would supply 'the great desideratum, a good moral education for the whole community.' It may be taken for granted, however, that Dr Blake well understood the imperatives that called for the safeguarding of the religious education of his Catholic children. Like the other Catholic bishops, Dr Blake was aware of the risks in the situation. He accepted them gracefully, and in his submission to a Royal Commission of the time he gave praise where he could.(7)

As history attests, however, the bishops' fears for the even and untroubled progression of Catholic religious education in the mixed system were only too

well realized. Controversies over religious textbooks, over versions of the Bible and certain passages therein, over the right of priests or other religious to the use of classrooms for the imparting Catholic religious instruction, and (as has already been mentioned) the revelation that one of the most active of the National System's Commissioners, the Anglican archbishop of Dublin, Dr Richard Whately, was a determined proselytizer,(8) were only some of the experiences that made the experiment a bitter one.

## **4.2 The Irish Christian Brothers withdraw from the system**

The Irish Christian Brothers - founded in Waterford for the education of poor boys in 1802 by Edmund Rice, a prosperous businessman and devout Catholic - had felt constrained to begin withdrawing from the system as early as 1837. With their founder, Edmund Rice, they had entered a number of their schools on an experimental basis, but only too soon and increasingly were their misgivings to prove well-founded, as Rice's biographer, Desmond Rushe (1981) makes clear.

The text books at first prescribed, while a special series was being prepared, were those of the Kildare Place Society(9) and when the new books became available - thirteen in all - not one was compiled by a Catholic or by an Irish person. Irish history and literature were ignored, and some of the works included essays on religious subjects by Archbishop Whately and other prominent Protestant divines.(10) The books brought out by the Christian Brothers were, according to an inspector, 'not such as they could sanction in a national school for general instruction.' (Rushe 1981 110)

Yet the evidence shows that the Christian brothers were skilled exponents in that very field of general education. Referring to a highly laudatory report on a number of Christian Brothers' schools by the Rev George Dwyer, a Protestant rector and inspector ('I would say that the most perfect schools I have ever been in in my life were the the schools in Mill Street in Dublin and the (Brothers') schools in Cork') Rushe comments appositely as follows:

The Rev Mr Dwyer's reactions are of much interest. They show that in the Schools he listed there was clearly a substantial amount of attention paid to elements of education which became an integral part of enlightened schooling more than a century later - aptitude testing and career guidance. (*ibid.*,110)

While on the one hand, a rule of the Institute stated that 'the Brothers are to recollect that the instruction of children in piety and religion is the great and main end of their Institute', it is clear that they 'showed a strikingly intelligent, imaginative and down- to-earth approach' evidenced by the matters referred to by the Rev Dwyer. The national system on the other hand:

Gave secular education the first and chief place, prohibited the display of religious emblems and the incidental teaching of Catholic doctrine and, in leaving religious instruction a matter of choice to managers, suggested to children 'that religion is a matter of secondary importance and may even be laid aside altogether at discretion.' (*ibid.*,112)

While the Rev Dwyer's glowing report was not the only one (John F. Murray's on the North Richmond Street (Dublin) school *inter alia* stated: 'It is quite enough for an inspector to say that he observes in this excellent institution everything to admire and nothing to condemn'), a growing number of instances made it clear that the Christian/Catholic concept of education was not to be tolerated.(11) The Christian Brothers saw no option but to withdraw from the system.

### 4.3 The disillusionment of the hierarchy

Finally, in 1859, the hierarchy itself met in Dublin and adopted a proposal by Archbishop Leahy of Cashel to petition the chief secretary Cardwell 'for the separate instruction of Catholic children.' Subsequent to this they issued a general pastoral to the Catholic people of Ireland stating their belief that 'in order to ensure that schools for Catholic youth be safe for tender consciences' it was necessary to have a system of education exclusively tailored for Catholics. They specified a number of their grievances:

They deplored the constitution of the Board of Commissioners, which, besides consisting of persons of several denominations, was Protestant dominated. Moreover, the Commissioners as a body were unacceptable because their power derived exclusively from the state even though it extended to matters vitally affecting religion. The prelates protested the education of Catholic teachers in the model schools, especially because they were often taught history and philosophy by Protestant teachers. The bishops denounced the exclusion from the schools of the sign of the cross and of Catholic devotional images. Significantly, the prelates complained about the character of several of the school

books, a complaint previously unvoiced. Administratively, the hierarchy objected to the arrangements whereby schools attended only by Catholic children were liable to inspection by Protestant officers of the Board. They also protested the Stopford rule which allowed children of one faith to be present at the religious instruction of another faith. (Akenson *op. cit.*,303)

It cannot be said that the bishops had not tried to give mixed education every chance to succeed. They had entered the National Education System in good faith and in the hope that despite their misgivings it would be able to accommodate the fulfilment of the conditions which they deemed essential for the Catholic-Christian education of their children. At almost every turn however, they were frustrated both by sectarian prejudice and a pervasive proselytism (some aspects of which have already been mentioned) to such an extent that they not unnaturally came to the conclusion that:

Mixed education was intrinsically unsound and at variance with the Catholic religion and dangerous to the bishops' flocks. No change in the constitution of the body of Commissioners could compensate for its inherent defects nor neutralize its injurious effects. (*ibid.*,309)

Emphasis has been placed on the Irish Catholic bishops' disillusionment with the nineteenth century mixed education experiment in order to indicate the difficulties and frustrations to be met with when attempting to foster and maintain within a mixed or integrated system of education the particular ethos and quality of education consonant with the assumptions and values of a Catholic/Christian education. The nineteenth century experience reinforced the lesson that, as the Synod of Thurles (1850) had put it; 'the separate education of Catholic youth is in every way to be preferred to it.'<sup>(12)</sup> The further fruits of that experience might be observed, in the twentieth century, in the great efforts and financial sacrifices made by the Northern Hierarchy and the Catholic community in Northern Ireland to preserve the independent character of that Christian education tradition.

In recent years the integrated (or mixed) education issue has come directly to the surface once again in the government's *Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989*, which may be seen as the culmination of efforts ('representing as broad a consensus of support that could be achieved') to promote and extend integrated education throughout the Province at the present time. The provisions

of the Order favour and provide *full* financial support for the setting up of integrated schools, as well as allowing for the easy transfer to integrated status of already existing schools. The Northern Catholic bishops, however, have stated that they felt compelled to raise objections to this legislation on the grounds that it is both unfair and discriminatory to Catholic education. Their objections relate in particular to sections in *Part VI (Integrated Education)* of the Order and it is might be deemed useful to consider these now, before proceeding further.

#### **4.4 The Catholic bishops' objections to current legislation**

Opening the debate in the House of Commons on the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, passed by Parliament on 14 December 1989, the Northern Ireland Education Minister, Dr Brian Mawhinney, said that the reform changes would raise educational standards and increase parental choice. The proposals in the Order were, he said, the result of intense consultation and represented 'as broad a consensus of support that could be achieved.' He continued as follows:

The Order will ease the setting up of new integrated schools and encourage existing schools to open their doors to children of a different faith. It also establishes a common curriculum, which will teach a common history syllabus, mutual understanding of different cultural heritages and could open the way for a core syllabus on religious education. Historically, Northern Ireland's children have been educated separately - by religious belief and tradition. An increasing number of parents want a third option. They want their children educated in the same classroom as children from the other side of the community. This does not mean we intend to impose integrated education. We do not. It will happen only when and to the extent that parents themselves choose it.(13)

Part VI of the Order, entitled 'Integrated Education', is set down as follows:

Part VI  
Integrated Education  
Chapter 1

*General functions of Department and boards in relation to integrated education*

64 - (1) *It shall be the duty of the Department to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, that is to say the education together of*

*Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils.*

*(2) The Department may, subject to such conditions as it thinks fit, pay grants to any body appearing to the Department to have as an objective the encouragement or promotion of integrated education.*

## *Chapter 2*

*The Duty of the Department to maintain grant-maintained integrated schools*

*65 - (1) ...it shall be the duty of the Department to maintain any school under the control and management of a Board of Governors incorporated under this chapter.*

*The amount of any capital grant shall be equal to 100 per cent. of the expenditure in respect of which it is paid. (Article 77)*

*Schools eligible for grant-maintained integrated status*

*68 - Any controlled, voluntary or independent school*

*Institution of procedure for acquisition of grant-maintained integrated status by existing school*

*69 - (1) ...in the case of any controlled or voluntary school which is eligible for grant-maintained integrated status, a ballot of parents on the question of whether grant-maintained integrated status should be sought for the school shall be held...*

*(2)...the request must be signed, or otherwise endorsed in such a manner as the Department may determine, by a number of parents of registered pupils at the school equal to at least twenty per cent of the number of registered pupils at the school on the date on which the request is received...*

*71 - (1) Where...the result of a ballot...shows a simple majority of votes cast in the ballot by persons eligible to vote in the ballot...in favour of seeking grant-maintained integrated status for the school, it shall be the duty of the Board of Governors of the school to submit a proposal for the acquisition of grant-maintained integrated status for the school to the relevant board.*

*72 - If a proposal...is approved by the Department, the Board of Governors of the school...shall on the proposed date of implementation of the proposal become a body corporate.(14)*

In the debate which preceded (and is now following) this piece of legislation, media reports seem mostly to have focused upon Catholic Church reactions to the measure. It is true that Catholic Church spokesmen, while welcoming many of the provisions in the Order, have been very vocal in opposing those elements in the



legislation which they take to be both unjust and discriminatory. It is also true that they have carried the burden of the argument against the manner in which the government is seeking to promote integrated education through the Order, which is seen as endangering the integrity of the Catholic educational system. The substance of the Catholic bishops' objections to the Order is contained in their document dated 15th December 1989(15), the day after the Order was passed by Parliament. The statement does not rehearse the Catholic Church's fundamental and frequently expressed reservations about integrated education so far as Catholic education is concerned; nor does it re-iterate an earlier statement (September 27 1989) by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in relation to *Article 13, Part III* of the Order where the Council recommends that the Department has no rôle to play in 'planning, implementing or assessing the Religious Education programme of a Catholic maintained school.' Instead it concentrates firstly, upon how the Order endangers the integrity of the Catholic educational system and secondly, upon unfair distribution of grant aid. In respect of the former, the statement speaks of 'transient parents' (the parents, that is, of the present generation of Catholic schoolchildren as opposed to succeeding generations of Catholic parents and children, for whom, also, Catholic schools are thought of as being held in trust) being able, 'by a simple majority to transfer a school out of the Catholic into the integrated school system.' Not only that, but, contrary to the provisions laid down for England and Wales, the consent of the School Trustees in Northern Ireland is not required:

In the first place the Order endangers the integrity of the Catholic educational system, by allowing the religious character of any Catholic school to be changed by a simple majority of transient parents, voting to transfer a school out of the Catholic into the integrated system. This means that a significant change in the religious character of a school can be made without the consent of the Trustees. The Trustees, as legal owners of the school, hold the school in trust for the whole Catholic community, and not just for the parents. The Education Reform Act 1988 in England and Wales provides that, before a 'significant change in the religious character of a school' can be made, the written consent of the Trustees of the School must first be obtained. We cannot understand why the Catholic Trustees in Northern Ireland are treated less favourably than their counterparts in England and Wales. (Northern Catholic Bishops 1989 1,2)

In respect of the bishops' second stated objection - an 'unfair distribution of grant aid' - it is, indeed, difficult to understand why both the controlled and the integrated schools are to receive 100% capital funding, while the Catholic schools are to get only 85% capital funding. Such state under-funding of Catholic schools whether voluntary or maintained has always been a burden which Northern Ireland Catholics have had to bear. Following the Education Act of 1930, grant provision was as low as 50%. In 1947, the Education Bill provided only for a 65% grant towards construction and maintainance of (mostly Catholic) voluntary schools. The Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor at the time, Dr Daniel Mageean had cogently argued that:

Since state schools satisfied the Protestant conscience with regard to the appointment of teachers and the teaching of religion, the distinction between state and voluntary was more nominal than real and hence that voluntary schools should get equal financial assistance. (Macaulay 1970 30)

Yet, it was not until 1968 that grant assistance to the Catholic schools was raised and then to 80% - and subsequently to the present level of 85%. In their statement on the present Education Reform Order, however, the Northern bishops while 'not contesting the rights of parents to choose the schools to which they will send their children', complain that parents who choose Catholic schools are treated less favourably financially than those who choose integrated schools. This, they assert, is unfair and unjust. They also believe it to be discriminatory.

Furthermore, the Draft Order is unfair in its distribution of grant aid. Parents exercising their parental choice for a Catholic school benefit from 85% Government capital funding. By contrast, parents exercising their parental choice for an integrated school are to receive 100% capital funding. There is therefore an unjust distinction made in the Order between different exercises of parental choice. This conflicts with the Minister's own stated declaration (in a press release of 24th November last), that the Government's 'purpose is to afford equal legitimacy to all parental aspirations, whether for integrated schools or others', and to ensure that those wanting integrated schools 'have the same rights and opportunities to exercise their parental choice as other parents'. This Order, however, does not give equal legitimacy to the parental aspirations of those choosing Catholic education, as distinct from integrated education. It denies to parents who choose Catholic schools 'the same rights and opportunities to exercise their parental choice' as

are afforded to parents choosing integrated schools. This is unfair and unjust. We believe it to be discriminatory.

We are not contesting the rights of parents to choose schools to which they will send their children and to receive adequate Government funding to support their choice. We simply insist that those who choose Catholic schools should not be less favourably treated financially than those who choose integrated schools. We deeply regret that, despite our reasoned objections, the Government should at this time have persisted in pursuing a course which is regarded by the great majority of the Catholic community as inequitable and unjust. (Northern Catholic Bishops *op. cit.*,2)

#### 4.5 Protestant opposition to integrated education

It might almost be forgotten that the Protestant Churches are equally if not even more opposed to integrated education. As Seamus Dunn (1986) has pointed out:

In particular the position of the Catholic Church inevitably receives considerable attention, because its opposition to integration is public and constant, and so its arguments are available for analysis. On the other hand, although there is a little evidence, mainly from speeches and public comments, that the Protestant Churches are equally opposed to integration, or are ambivalent and unclear about the issue, very little has been written down and so the arguments are not available for scrutiny. (Dunn 1986 308)

In the same article, however, Dunn reveals a significant instance of the Protestant Churches' negative attitude towards integration. Following the formation of the All Children Together (ACT) movement, (designed to intensify pressure for integration in the wake of misconstrued allegations of Bishop William Philbin's 'refusal', in 1974, to confirm some Catholic children in the New Barnsley district of Belfast who had not attended a Catholic school), and prior to a conference arranged by the New University of Ulster in May 1978 on 'Segregation in Education', in which several ACT members participated, the Alliance Party's Lord Dunleath had made a significant response to the new movement's representations. He sponsored in the House of Lords an enabling amendment to the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Act 1972, namely: 'An Act to facilitate the establishment in Northern Ireland of schools likely to be attended by pupils of different religious

affiliations or cultural traditions.'(16) In the debate at the time, all the Protestant Churches had spoken in favour of integration, and the All Children Together movement had expected that positive support would be forthcoming from them. Dunn, however, continues as follows:

Following the passing of this Act, the All Children Together Movement believed that the Protestant Churches, which had committed themselves in public by resolutions at synods, assemblies and conferences to the support of integrated education, would deliberately take initiatives in places where there was a minority of Catholics at a school and/or where there was clearly majority parental support. When it became clear that this was not going to happen ACT decided to move by itself, and the result was the establishment of Lagan College. (Dunn 1986 310)

Gallagher and Worrall confirm Dunn's comment in the following terms:

As we have seen, none of the Protestant Churches was put to the test. Significantly, none of them instructed any of their representatives on school committees to make use of the provisions of the Dunleath Act. (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 167)

Given the long-standing and total opposition of most Protestants to any idea of accommodating Catholic teachers (among whom, naturally, would be members of religious orders) in Protestant schools - and integrated education would include such arrangements - it might be considered not surprising that the Protestant Churches were reluctant to take any effective action. In the years following Lord Londonderry's Education Act of 1923 (which, first, sought to introduce the concept of mixed education in the newly established Northern Ireland) the Protestant Churches had united with the Orange Order to form the United Education Committee to campaign against it. With rallying calls of 'The Bible is in danger' and 'Protestant teachers for Protestant children', by 1925 they had they succeeded in making the Act unworkable. As John Darby put it: 'The Catholic opposition to the bill never approached the fury of the Protestant churches.' (Darby 1976 127)

It was only after 'considerable agitation' and a number of amending acts including that of 1930 which 'made provision for the representation on the local education committees of (Protestant) managers who had transferred their schools and which also made provision for Bible instruction by the teachers in the schools',

that 'peace was restored'. (Kelly 1970 59) The 1947 Education Act left this situation virtually unchanged for the Protestant churches. It incorporated all the guarantees for religious instruction of the 1944 Butler Act, and in addition provided for the representation of the Churches on the local school management committees of the new county intermediate schools. 'For those reasons the new system in the end won fairly ready acceptance.' (*ibid.*,60) But by then the vast majority of Protestant schools had already 'transferred' to the controlled sector. Writing in 1969. David Kennedy described the situation as follows:

The school community is sharply divided into Protestants and Catholics. Roman Catholics have retained their schools at great financial cost. The Protestant Churches have transferred theirs to the Local Education Authorities which have renovated, extended and in some cases replaced them by magnificent new buildings. They are ostensibly non-denominational but in effect they are Protestant, attended by Protestant children, staffed by Protestant teachers and providing religious education acceptable to the Protestant Churches. (Kennedy 1970 162)

In such an apparently satisfactory situation it would seem very unlikely that the Protestant (state) schools will either feel threatened by, or feel called upon to respond in any realistic way to integrated education. Indeed, as Murray (1983) points out, they feel a sense of identity with the educational Establishment which has always sought to accommodate their ethos. Commenting on the disinclination of Protestant schools to participate in any effective way in a recent Schools Cultural Studies Project (1982) which required participants 'to question previously sacrosanct societal values' and on the report of the Project team that (in contrast to their Catholic counterparts) 'staffs in State (Protestant) schools may see any such assault on the *status quo* as a positive threat to their position and as such to be opposed, or at least ignored', Murray states:

It appeared that the Protestant school identified much more closely with the policy-making and administrative sections of the educational system. These were deemed to be natural and effective support structures which, through dissemination of information and close contact, moulded a kind of solidarity among all State schools. There seemed to be a sense of belonging to, and identity with, an extended educational family. (Murray 1983 148)

To reasons such as these, including the security of the 100% grant aid pro-

vision accorded their schools in the controlled sector, may be attributed the fact that the Protestant Churches have not been in fact heard to any great extent in opposition to the integration clauses of the current legislation. They are under no financial pressure to become integrated schools. If past history may be taken into account, they have no wish whatever to adopt integration. The absence of any campaign by the Protestant churches against the integrated option would seem to reflect a sense of confidence that, with financial provision in any event assured, there will not be any significant movement by the controlled schools in that direction. Although they are included in the government's integration proposals and can, if they wish, opt for integrated status, it may be thought highly unlikely however, that any significant number of schools in the wholly Protestant controlled sector will respond to the option. Underlining this, perhaps, is the comment made recently by Mr John Parkes, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education, in an address which he gave to the Association of Area Education and Library Boards:

The decision to retain controlled integrated schools as an integral part of the package reflects the views of many respondents to the consultation paper, including Boards, that this should be allowed to happen.(17)

Mr Parkes' phraseology is interesting. From his phrase 'the decision to retain', could it be inferred that the exclusion of the controlled (Protestant) schools had been contemplated, in which case 'the package' would only have applied to the maintained (Catholic) schools - scarcely a viable proposition? It might also be thought that his use of the phrase 'that this should be allowed to happen' reflects in some of the respondents he refers to a certain confidence that the government's integration proposals would not in the event turn out to be a threat to the Protestant controlled position. The Boards to which Mr Parkes refers have, in common with all the Education and Library Boards in the Province, both Protestant and Catholic schools in their administrative areas. However, as Gallagher and Worrall have remarked in their discussion on the Dunleath Act, 'the Education and Library Boards have been careful not to get involved. They have made no attempt to discuss the issue, let alone take any initiatives.' (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 163)

In the present state of extreme polarization between the two communities - if for that reason alone - it seems scarcely likely that any important segment of Northern Ireland opinion whether Catholic or Protestant can be judged as having moved in any significant manner away from a position of opposition to integrated education to one of favouring it. Given the extent to which the issue had been debated in the 1970s, together with the failure of the initiatives of Basil McIvor - Minister of Community Relations with responsibility for education in the short-lived Power-Sharing Executive(18) -and of Lord Dunleath,(19) it might be thought remarkable that the present education Order gives the emphasis it does to integrated education. The debate, then, had been both intensive and extensive. What, however, was its genesis?

#### **4.6 The campaign for integrated education**

The All Children Together movement, to which reference has already been made was established in 1974. It came into being as a result of what Darby terms 'a curious incident' that occurred in the summer of 1970. Due, understandably, to the violence pervading the area at the time, a number of Protestant families in the New Barnsley estate (contiguous to the Catholic Ballymurphy estate in West Belfast) moved out of their homes, and the Catholic families who moved in found it convenient to send their children to the existing New Barnsley state school, Vere Foster Primary. The Protestant headmaster, a Mr McIlwaine, continued to carry out his duties, as did his staff. The Catholic bishop, Dr Philbin, requested the Catholic parents to withdraw their children from the school - which they refused to do. It later came to be alleged that the bishop refused to confirm the children. Considerable publicity was given to this but, as Gallagher and Worrall state:

As so often happens in Northern Ireland, the truth was blurred by what many thought to be the truth. In point of fact, the bishop had postponed confirmation until acceptable catechetical arrangements had been made. (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 160)

As a result of that dispute, however, a number of parents formed the All Children Together association to press for integrated schools. Though the number of parents was relatively small, the association came to be a focal point for action among some influential people who wished to promote shared schools and, as has been mentioned, the association was largely instrumental in securing the

Dunleath legislation of 1977. (Dunn 1986 308) Reviewing the situation as it was in September, 1976, Andrew Boyd (1976) traces aspects of the growing influence of the integrated schools campaign. He refers to the presentation of a petition to the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Merlyn Rees, when he was attending the third annual conference of the British Irish Association taking place at Oxford during July 1976. The petition urged the Secretary 'to call a meeting of teachers, parents, clergymen and the education authorities to consider the establishment of schools that could be shared by Catholics and Protestants'. Boyd comments as follows:

What seems clear, however, is that someone at the Oxford Conference was working hard on the theory that separate schools (voluntary and state) are the cause of community conflict in Northern Ireland and that integrated education would solve the problem. (Boyd 1976 4)

Boyd refers to a member of the Northern Ireland Labour Party at the time, Brian Garrett, and to Lady Fisher, a one-time Unionist MP for North Down as being 'particularly interested' in promoting the shared schools. 'They circulated the petition for signatures and later sent letters to the press - advocating the case for shared schools.' Referring to an earlier period, the late 1960s, Boyd also mentions David Bleakely, a Northern Ireland Labour Party MP at Stormont, as 'laying the blame for Northern Ireland's troubles on the schools' and promoting this view 'with some energy and conviction'.

It was taken up by the Unionist press and then by Terence O'Neill when he was Prime Minister. James Callaghan fell for it when he was Home Secretary and responsible for reforming Northern Ireland in 1969. (*ibid.*,4)

Stating in effect that there is nothing in any sense wrong with all this Boyd comments:

But there is much wrong with the theory that education, because it is denominational, is the cause of conflict in Northern Ireland...The case that some of the integrationists try to make out is that if the Catholic Church did not insist on denominational education but allowed Catholic children to attend state schools, Protestants and Catholics would begin to understand one another. Conflict would therefore cease, if not in this generation then in the next. That sort of



theorising looks good, especially to those Unionists who like to be considered moderate. It seems to prove that it is the Catholic Church, by insisting on separate schools for Catholic children, that keeps Northern Ireland divided. These advocates of integration never mention of course that the Junior Orange Order indoctrinates Protestant youngsters from the age of seven, or that most Loyalists would not in any case want integrated education. (*ibid.*,4)

Gallagher and Worrall have graphically described the situation at the beginning of the seventies when in the wake of the traumatic events of the summer of 1969, Northern Ireland had become world news, with its unfolding tragedy bringing to the Province not only reporters but experts of all kinds proffering solutions. When education came up for scrutiny, integration seemed an obvious solution.

For all its tragedy and trauma, the summer of 1969 brought exhilaration as well. Reform and change were in the air. Sociologists, peace programmers, and political observers flocked into the Province. They homed in on every sociological or other factor worth looking at. When it came to education, they were like wasps in a honey pot. Supported by a limited number of indigenous reformers they began almost with one voice to advise British Home Secretaries and their successors the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland to look carefully at the education system. It was all so clear to them much of the trouble starts in the schools. The equations were quickly and simplistically stated. Segregated education equals ignorance and strife; integrated education equals understanding and reconciliation: *ergo*, integrate, and the sooner the better. (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 157)

The publication of the results of a number of opinion polls during the period by the moderate Protestant newspaper *The Belfast Telegraph* and the current affairs journal *Fortnight*, indicated an apparently high level of cross-community support for integrated education. Surprisingly, there was reported to be a majority in favour of it. 64% of adults and 65% of young people were alleged to favour mixed schooling. Still more unexpected was the claim that there was a Catholic lobby for it and that the percentage support was 69%. Yet it has to be said that in all instances of the publication of such findings, there was no evidence of any significant movement of public opinion manifesting itself as moving in that direction. As Gallagher and Worrall (1982) have put it:

All the figures produced by the polls were impressive. Yet at no single time during this period or since was there anything in the nature

of a strong groundswell actually attempting to alter the *status quo*.  
(Gallagher and Worrall 1982 159)

They continue: 'Whatever the truth of the polls, there were, however, some in Northern Ireland actively seeking and working for change.'(20)

In 1977 six staff members in the New University of Ulster published a study of education and community in Northern Ireland(21) in which they referred to a survey of the time claiming that 81% of parents questioned would wish their children to attend a neighbouring integrated school, if one were available. However, the polls clearly did occasion food for thought as much in Catholic circles as elsewhere. Indeed criticisms of the hierarchy emanated on occasion from some somewhat unexpected sources.

#### 4.7 Calls for experiment and reappraisal

Writing in the summer of 1978, Father John Brady, the Jesuit Director of the College of Industrial Relations in Dublin, was quite explicit:

A response is called from the Catholic Church *vis-à-vis* the Northern Ireland situation. The needed response is a declaration that the Catholic Church is prepared to pursue its legitimate interests in education through participative structures, at least in some instances and on an experimental basis. By collaborating in this way the Churches would be saying in deeds rather than words that they do not wish to perpetuate the divisive structures of Northern Ireland. (Brady 1978 95)

Some time later, in December 1979, Professor Peter Connolly of Maynooth (Ireland's national seminary for the training of candidates for the priesthood) was confessing to being perturbed at Bishop Cathal Daly of Down and Connor's refusal:

Even to envisage the possibility of a few experiments with denominational schooling - showing its practical impossibility in Belfast but avoiding the question of alternative places where it might be practically tried out. This seems to be a firmly closed door at present and in the immediate future. (Connolly 1979 764)

A sense of frustration is apparent in Professor Connolly's remarks but the perspective from Maynooth is different from that of Belfast or Derry. The *in*

*situ* experiences of the Northern bishops are inescapably grounded on day-to-day realities that underline, often only too grimly, the intractability of the Northern Ireland problem. Might not, in any event, the divided school systems be regarded simply as indices of the prevailing political and religious divisions and therefore as passive elements in the conflict equation, functionally independent of the conflict, the resolution of which will leave them as they were before? As has been discussed earlier, however, such a conceptualization does not in fact accord with the reality of the school's influence - both actual and potential - *vis-à-vis* the wider community. Professor Connolly's complaint in respect of the bishops was that:

They cannot see or will not acknowledge that segregated education in Northern Ireland must be reckoned at least a contributory factor in the tragic divisions there. (*ibid.*,764)

If this is so then *mutatis mutandis* the segregated school might indeed be thought of as perhaps naive but (in Professor Connolly's words) contributory factors in the tragic divisions especially if they do not even *think* of themselves as having a positive rôle to play in seeking to make whatever contribution they can - as Christian educational institutions - towards reconciliation in the wider community. There *have* been inter-schools projects and events and Dunn (1985) has reported most teachers as aspiring 'at the lowest' towards the improvement of community relations through increased cross-community contacts. Yet for most schools 'cross-divide contact is very limited indeed.'(22)

Hopefully some of the initiatives and projects which have emerged in recent years will be successful in helping schools become more realistically aware of their responsibilities in the area of community outreach. This is discussed in some detail in the penultimate chapter, Chapter 7. Bishop Cathal Daly of the diocese of Down and Connor (in which the city of Belfast is situated) has been very specific as to the rôle the Catholic school *should* be playing in the divided society. Speaking at a prize-giving in St Patrick's High School, Downpatrick, on 23 September 1988, he said:

A Catholic school is not worthy of the name unless it is actively promoting reconciliation between denominational communities, through ecumenical contact and all forms of ecumenical dialogue.(23)

This recognition from an authoritative source that there are barriers of divisions in the community which schools can help to break down accords with one of the assumptions of the study namely that the Northern Ireland schools ought positively to adopt such a rôle, a rôle no less Christian in outlook than educationally justifiable in practice. In this respect the values and assumptions of Christian education will prove uniquely helpful. Dr Daly's use of the word 'ecumenical' is instructive. It points to the schools engaging in activities which are church related and which actively seek to promote reconciliation in the community through educational structures and projects which possess a unitive Christian complexion. The philosophy of approach is Christian, not secular, and in a confessional society such as Northern Ireland, such an approach ought to find a ready purchase. Bishop (now Cardinal) Daly's statement sets out unequivocally what the Catholic school ought to be doing, namely, *actively promoting* reconciliation between the denominational communities by means of ecumenical contact and *all forms* of ecumenical *dialogue*. It is a programme for a Christian education engaged in by committed Christian educators actively seeking to promote in their schools and among the children they are educating, ways and means which will lead towards reconciliation between the communities.

Integrated education, considered at least in terms of shared Christian schools, was advanced as a possible way forward by the English hierarchy at their National Pastoral Conference in 1980. They gave circumspect expression to their views as follows:

The possibility of establishing (shared) Christian schools should be carefully considered provided that they are based on sound principles of Christian education and are not proposed for merely pragmatic reasons.(24)

To this the Irish bishops replied:

We wish to investigate the possibility of further shared schools not on a merely pragmatic basis but in order to discover the potential that might lie in this for ecumenical and other reasons.(25)

Clearly the Irish hierarchy's investigation would have encompassed structures of educational outreach by the Catholic schools which would be of such a wide-ranging character *vis-à-vis* sister schools in the other community that -

given reciprocity - the concept of 'sharing' would be a real one in terms of teacher exchange, sharing facilities, combined educational projects, social ventures and, equally importantly, joining in prayer, sharing in worship and together developing a quality of shared educational life informed by the values and teaching of the Lord Jesus. Yet each school would still possess its own individual character and integrity. The bishops' 'ecumenical and other' reasons would include not only Christian development along with the pupils, teachers and parents in sister schools, but also making a contribution - through the achieving of the goal of *inter-schools co-operation* - towards community reconciliation.

#### 4.8 Failures in ecumenism

A major difficulty in ecumenical outreach, however, is that the Province has proved to be somewhat stony ground in this respect. The fact that Bishop Daly stressed ecumenical contact and 'all forms of ecumenical dialogue' in his statement to Catholic schools, does not mean that he is unaware of this. The contrary is the case as will shortly be made clear. The bishop was clearly taking the opportunity to *re-emphasize* the importance of the schools to the active pursuit of reconciliation between the different *and differing* denominational communities. The reconciliation of these communities in terms of the prayer of Christ Himself - *Ut unum sint* (Jn 17: 21) - is a vision far from fulfilment in Northern Ireland. Even under the pressure generated beneath the darkened skies of the civil strife of the 1970s, a renewed ecumenical endeavour floundered in, as Gallagher and Worrall (1982) describe it, 'the Irish ecumenical dilemma of negotiating with regard to the apparently non-negotiable.'<sup>(26)</sup> Perhaps they meant by this the emphasis unerringly placed by the Protestant churches on sensitive issues such as mixed marriages and aspects of family planning; or Father Michael Hurley S.J.'s criticism of the hierarchy's new *Directory on Ecumenism*<sup>(27)</sup> as opening up 'so few new horizons and new possibilities' for what he termed 'the ecumenical apostolate.' Fr Hurley concluded:

The sad fact is that the great majority have not yet become concerned for the unity and joint mission of the Churches so that the world in Ireland can believe. (Gallagher and Worrall, 1982 149)

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cannot be said, candidly, to have realized its aspirations in any realistic sense. In a *limited* sense it can be allowed that 'the main thrust of the Churches' contribution has taken the form of greatly enhanced ecumenical collaboration at a time of increasing polarization between the communities at secular level'.(28) Television screens, for example, have on occasions shown meetings of Church leaders impressive in their desire to give witness to the need for reconciliation and mutual forgiveness. And while it might be true also - as Gallagher and Worrall aver - that there is now more contact, more mutual respect and understanding between the Churches than at any earlier period of Irish history, at the same time these authors are forced to confess that 'there have been setbacks and disappointments in the ecumenical field'. How far such contacts as there are, will develop, 'is very uncertain at the time of writing.'(29)

One such setback which had serious effects for ecumenical rapprochement was the lack of response by the Protestant Churches to the Report of their own Joint Churches Working Party (1976), *Violence in Ireland: Report to the Churches*. This Report paid particular attention to the schools question and in fact - and a year earlier - had pre-empted the recommendations proposed by a New University of Ulster survey of 1977, which advocated the Churches establishing 'more fruitful and constructive relationships within and between both sets of schools.' The suggestions made by the Report in this field were both of a critically important and viable nature especially since, having regard to the vexed question of integrated schools, the Working Party advocated not integration, but an enlightened form of inter-schools sharing. With regard to integration, their view was realistic:

They recognized, irrespective of the personal wishes of any of their members, that community attitudes are not changed by diktat. To impose integration on an unwilling or unconvinced community would be to hinder rather than help the cause. They could see no way to arrange a marriage without the bride. (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 170)

The section on education in the Report envisaged providing the basis of an inter-schools educational programme that could successfully transcend the denominational divide and at the same time allow schools their own independent Christian integrity. It is quite tragic that the Report was allowed to lapse into ineffectiveness. In Chapter 7 of the present study its educational recommendations are brought

forward for particular discussion as a major contribution in the practical sphere, towards the constructing and implementing of models for Christian education.

The Working Party requested responses to the Report from the Churches. While the hierarchy 'submitted a reasoned document', the other Churches 'responded less fully.' The weakness of the Protestant Churches' response led Bishop Cathal Daly, who had been a co-chairman of the Working Party, to make the following comment one year later: 'There are some worrying indications that this appeal of the inter-church Working Party may not yet have had the impact or the effect which we hoped it would'. Similar sentiments were expressed in a much more explicit manner by the Protestant co-authors of *Christians in Ulster* (1982) the Reverend Eric Gallagher, and Stanley Worrall, Headmaster of Methodist College, Belfast. Discussing the situation at some length in their book and referring to Bishop Daly's comment as 'an understatement', they continued:

Either the report for the most part had found few clerical purchasers, or it was gathering dust on its owners' book shelves. The Christian Education Movement had arranged for joint introductions of the report at some of its inter-church sixth form conferences. But there was no indication that any of the Churches, or their representatives on school committees and Education and Library Boards, were either concerned or convinced enough to do anything about the report's recommendations. None of them had started to think about the suggested pilot schemes or research projects. (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 171)

Gallagher and Worrall made no secret of their disappointment. This, after all, was the very stuff of reconciliation, while at the same time eschewing the vexed question of integration. They felt constrained to ask the Protestant churches 'Why?'

Why? Was it inertia, lack of conviction, disapproval? Or was it that the 'business-must-go-on' treadmill left no room for experiment and manoeuvre? For whatever reason, if they did not foment division - and they did not - they did not see the vision and share the fulfillment of a joint search through the schools for reconciliation. (*ibid.*, 171)

It will have been noted that the Report of the Joint Working Party had not gone so far as to recommend integrated education, but rather a form of inter-schools co-operation, teacher exchange in research programmes, and pilot schemes, the aim

of which was to bring together the young people of the different religious denominations. There was no threat to the 'integrity' of any school whether Catholic or Protestant in the proposals that were put forward. Had the 'joint search through the schools for reconciliation' got under way *then*, in 1976, in however modest a manner, it might by now have been bearing fruit in practical and crucially important ways.

There can be no doubt that ecumenical difficulties and grievances played their part in fostering the inaction on the schools proposals. As an articulate Church of Ireland layman, Barry Deane, put it, in 1976, there were 'soft words at Ballymascanlon' (the place and name of the hotel where the ecumenical conferences of the time took place), 'and hard lines at the grass roots.'<sup>(30)</sup> On 2 February 1977, the influential Rôle of the Church Committee of the Church of Ireland spoke of 'the unreality of inter-Church dialogue hitherto e.g. the Ballymascanlon meetings'. Some months earlier the hierarchy had stressed: 'It would not be a correct understanding of the principles of ecumenism if Catholics, with the aim of drawing closer to other Christians, were to neglect any part of the truth and integral tradition of Catholic life and worship.'<sup>(31)</sup> Ecumenical progress of any real kind was proving to be difficult, the eirenic educational proposals of the Working Party notwithstanding.

Richard Rose is illuminating on the subject of prospects for ecumenism in a climate of doctrinal conservatism. Referring to his own research, which indicated 'a very high level' of doctrinal conservatism across all the main denominations in Northern Ireland he comments as follows:

Yet the strength of religion in Northern Ireland - even though there is agreement on many points - might also be a barrier to ecumenical reunion for, as Glock and Stark note, ecumenism makes most progress, in America, at least, among 'the most secularized mainline denominations'.<sup>(32)</sup> Whatever else Northern Ireland is, it is not secularized. (Rose 1970 262)

Yet if only for the common good of all our children - not even to speak of the seamless robe of Christian unity which is the mind of Jesus Christ - ecumenical outreach must continue. Old antipathies and unfriendly stereotypes in Northern Ireland - which the present conflict undoubtedly exacerbates - must be erased. In



this respect, an authentically Christian education will help our children to see others in the mild and charitable light of the common Redeemer. A lively educational enterprise concerned with the achieving of educational excellence in every part of the curriculum and informed by the healing assumptions and values inherent in the Christian perspective on life, will make our schools privileged places both for ecumenical and other types of community outreach, to the benefit of the children we teach, and of society at large.

Religious values will permeate the life of the school contributing significantly to its ethos and its distinctive ambience. Religion itself will not be treated merely as a school subject - one among many - but will be seen as highly relevant for the business of successful living, both in respect of this world, and of preparing to meet our loving, heavenly Father, in the next. In the religious education class itself, the historicity of Jesus as Teacher and Saviour, his life and teaching, and the doctrines of the Christian Church which he founded, will figure largely as content for learning and discussion; but will not, naturally, be *confined* to that classroom period. Jesus, as Teacher and Exemplar, and Christian values more generally, will be the standard for reference and relevant decision throughout the school community. The school will function professionally in respect of all the educational disciplines, but the enterprise will be informed throughout by the values of the Christian ethic, and the centrality of Jesus Christ.

#### **4.9 The inappropriateness of integrated education**

The Christian vision and educational ideal is, therefore, clearly a different one from that of integrated education. Integrated education is committed to educating children of different faiths together in the one school. The logic of this is that provision will be made for the teaching of whatever faith the children attending the school adhere to. This could mean providing for children from homes professing Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Secular Humanism, or any other faith. The underlying philosophy of integrated education, therefore, is the pluralist one of a relativizing religious indifferentism which is totally at odds with the uniqueness of Christianity and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Son of God and Saviour of the world. It might be argued that, in Northern Ireland, integrated education would be largely concerned with making provision for the teaching of religion to

children of different *Christian* religious denominations and by teachers from those denominations. The philosophy of the school, nevertheless, is inescapably pluralist. Furthermore, even when such provision is made, the compartmentalization which ensues, and the confining of religious education to a few timetabled periods in the curriculum, falls far short of what is meant by Christian education. Again, if a mixing of Catholic and Protestant children together were undertaken as part of that provision, the resulting 'watered down' Christianity which would ensue could scarcely be thought of as in any sense satisfactory. Speaking on behalf of the Catholic hierarchy and their concern for Catholic children in such a situation, Cardinal Conway (1966) expressed the bishops' reservations in terms such as these:

They do not think that they would grow up with a strong and virile faith if all they got at school was an agreed syllabus Christianity, watered down to the lowest common denominator of different persuasions and taught by persons who may not even be believing Christians themselves.(33)

This view has been further elucidated recently by Bishop Brendan Comiskey (1990). Referring to integrated schools he has written:

Quite often in these schools religion is taught by someone, lay, religious or clergy, from outside the school; or religion is, of necessity, confined to very distinct times and places. In this way is furthered the notion that religion is one other subject; faith is something which can be sealed off from the rest of one's subjects and, therefore, from the rest of one's life. From a religious or Christian perspective this is 'disintegrated' or fragmented education. The children may be together but their total education isn't. This can only increase the number of people who profess a Christian faith but who belong to that type who never allow their religious belief to 'interfere' with their lives! (Comiskey 1990 8)

The allegation that *Catholic* education is responsible for the divisions in Northern Ireland society is further weakened by evidence that anti-Catholic discrimination, a divisive phenomenon indeed, has been a characteristic of Northern Ireland from its beginning.(34) Yet, as Gallagher and Worrall explicitly state, the advocates of integrated education in the seventies had 'always worked on the assumption that it will promote reconciliation and that Catholic education is divisive.'(35) The accusation that Catholic schools are divisive was answered by the Catholic hierarchy when they issued their new *Directory on Ecumenism* in 1976:

There is now abundant sociological research to indicate that, on the contrary, Catholic schools promote tolerance and peaceful inter-community relations. The replacement of Catholic by inter-denominational (multi-denominational, non-denominational) schools in Ireland would not contribute to overcoming the divisions in our midst...We must point out that in such schools the full Catholic witness is inevitably diluted, and that the compromise which this entails is not conducive to the development of a secure and strong Christianity in those who experience it. (Irish Episcopal Conference 1976)

As to the view that mixed education will promote reconciliation by (it is inferred) changing inappropriate attitudes, it is appropriate to refer again to Rose (1971) who has argued powerfully against this, citing what he terms 'the weak ameliorating influence of mixed education.'

The very limited extent to which mixed education affects attitudes is not sufficient to justify its introduction on the ground that political discord can be ended by integrating schools. This would require years of negotiation about existing institutions and to establish new schools. Then, it would literally take generations before the bulk of the adult population of Northern Ireland had been exposed to the weak ameliorating influence of mixed education. (Rose 1971 337)

Rose's views were upheld to a surprising degree by H. Sockett et al., (1977) in a study published by the New University of Ulster and which dealt with a number of other problems in integrated education, financial, administrative, religious and political.(36) In any event the problems of actually implementing an integrated education regime in the polarized society of Northern Ireland would be daunting indeed. In his review of a recent book by Dominic Murray (1985), Andrew Boyd makes some of these explicit as follows:

In any case, asks Dominic Murray, do those who promote the idea of integrated education know exactly what might be involved? Would the curriculum in the integrated school include the Irish language and Gaelic games? Would the Catholic children be expected to join in singing the national anthem 'God Save the Queen' and to acknowledge the Union Jack as the symbol of national sovereignty? Would portraits of the Pope appear alongside those of Elizabeth II? Dominic Murray found all these symbols of cultural identity, and many others, both conspicuous and significant in the two schools he studied.(37)

Perhaps the most realistic contribution on the pragmatic implications and

difficulties for integrated education in Northern Ireland was that submitted in its *Memorandum of Evidence on the subject of Educational Administration in Northern Ireland* to Lord Stonham at the Home Office by the Northern Committee of the Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO) (1969). It may be apposite to remark that although the majority of its members are Catholic 'there is and has always been a significant Protestant minority which plays a prominent rôle in the Organization's affairs.'(38) The INTO's observations were both cogently reasoned and consisely put:

It must, however, be recognized that given the peculiar politico-sectarian problems in Northern Ireland this area is not likely to become a pioneer in the field of inter-denominational education. Very little consideration has apparently been given to the very real problems which would be associated with such a venture, viz.:

1. Parental consent would be necessary in order to avoid a breach of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions of the N.I. Education Acts.

2. There would need to be a substantial period of impartial central and local administration before Catholic teachers would consider such a change. Their apprehensions about the possibility of partisan administration are supported by experience in the field of Further Education. This is one area where a system of integrated education operates, yet only 2 of the 32 principals are Catholics and both of these teachers were appointed by regional education committees.

3. There is substantial evidence to support the view that the Protestant Churches in Northern Ireland would strenuously resist any weakening of their present influence in the county school structure. In the Republic of Ireland the Protestant Churches continue to demand separate educational facilities.

4. It is unlikely that many Protestant parents would consent to their children being taught by members of Catholic religious orders, even though such persons are fully qualified teachers.

5. It is unlikely that many Catholic parents would consent to their children being taught by those Protestant teachers, who are publicly identified with the Orange Order and similar bodies.

6. Substantial proportions of Protestant and Catholic pupils live in separate areas and massive school transportation problems would arise in any attempt to achieve integrated rather than neighbourhood schools. In view of the foregoing points we consider that the cre-

ation of an integrated school structure, whether non-denominational or inter-denominational, would be resisted by both communities, and, far from improving relations, would lead to a further deterioration. (INTO Northern Committee 1969 12-13)

The failure of the Protestant churches between 1978-80 to take advantage (as has already been said) of the Dunleath Act - as had been expected by the integration lobby - signalled the failure of integrated education in Northern Ireland as in any sense a broadly based movement.(39) It had been taken for granted that the Catholic Church was opposed to integrated education and would state its views in an unequivocal manner. When, however, it became clear that, for the Protestant Churches, in spite of various declarations, integration was not in any realistic sense a live issue, All Children Together went on to open its first second level integrated school, Lagan College, in 1981 and this was shortly afterwards followed by the setting up of an integrated primary, Newforge Primary School. A few others have since followed, notably Hazelwood College and Hazelwood Primary, in North Belfast, in 1985, under the auspices of a new association called The Belfast Charitable Trust for Integrated Education. While the favourable provisions of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order, 1989, have now removed any financial problems from those who might wish to adopt the integrated option in education in Northern Ireland, there does not seem any great likelihood that it will be taken up to any significant extent. However, the disadvantaged position in which the current legislation has left Catholic schools - which cater for at least half of the school-going population - ought in fairness and equity to be remedied.

#### 4.10 Notes and references

1. Eric Gallagher and Stanley Worrall, *Christians in Ulster 1968-1980* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982), p.170. The report referred to is *Violence in Ireland: Report to the Churches* (Belfast, Christian Journals Ltd., and Dublin, Veritas Publications, 1976 and 1977). It was produced by the working party also mentioned, the members of which belonged to the Joint Group on Social Questions set up in 1970 by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy and the Irish Council of Churches. Lord Dunleath sponsored enabling legislation in the House of Lords 'to, facilitate the establishment in Northern Ireland of schools likely to be attended by pupils of different religious affiliations or cultural traditions.' The Act became law 22 May 1978 but except for 'one very doubtful taker', as Gallagher and Worrall have remarked: 'There was no rush to make use of the new Act.'

2. Hansard, cxciv 414.

3. Clergymen and priests of the various faiths might be admitted only as members of the public, not because of their religious office. By this early insistence upon excluding other ministers of religion from their schools, the Presbyterians were the first to breach the mixed National System by denominationalism.

4. Dr Henry Cooke (1788-1868). It was under Cooke's leadership that the Presbyterians obtained the favourable 'non-vested schools' status from the Commissioners of the National System. Non-vested schools were only under the rules and regulations which they themselves drew up and upon the basis of which they applied for governmental aid.

5. 'Parliamentary evidence on national education in Ireland', in *Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine*, 3 ser., iii, (January 1838), p. 52.

6. Extract from one of a series of open letters to Lord John Russell criticising various aspects of British policy in Ireland, contributed by Archbishop McHale and published in the *Dublin Evening Post*, 24 November, 1838. See Akenson (1973) *The Irish Education Experiment*, p. 1.

7. *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)*, vol. 1, pt. 1: Report of the Commissioners, p. 123 [C 6], H. C., 1870, xxviii, pt. i. See Akenson, *op. cit.*, p. 1. The columns of the Dublin press, the *Dublin Evening Post*, for example, witnessed a remarkable exchange of letters on the subject between two Catholic archbishops, Archbishop McHale of Tuam, and Archbishop Murray of Dublin, spanning the years 1838-1840. The former was very strongly opposed to the National System while the latter was one of its Commissioners.

8. Whately resigned in 1852 as a Commissioner in protest at the withdrawal of certain religious books from the list of approved books for the schools. It later became clear that he regarded the books in question as part of a process 'by which the minds of a large proportion of the Roman Catholics have been prepared and are now prepared for the reception of Protestant doctrines.' Elsewhere, he referred to mixed education as 'the only hope of weaning the Irish from the abuses of popery'. See E. Jane Whately, *Life and Correspondence of Richard Whately, D. D., late Archbishop of Dublin*, London, 1866, i. 243-246.

9. The Kildare Place Society. See Note 54 to Chapter 3.

10. Rushe refers to the 'quite cavalier contempt for Irish ethnic sentiments' of the System's administrators. He cites the following by way of example: 'In the Third Book of Lessons compiled by Mr Carlisle, the Scottish Presbyterian clergyman who was a member of the Board, and issued in 1835, there was a hymn which the pupils were expected to learn and sing. One verse went: "I thank the goodness and the grace/ That on my birth have smiled/ And made me in these Christian days/ A happy English child." In 1838, Archbishop Whately revised this textbook, but while the second edition omitted several pieces of prose and poems which had a

native flavour, such as references to harps and harpers, the "happy English child" hymn was retained.' Desmond Rushe, *Edmund Rice: The Man and his Times* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1981), p. 109.

11. See Desmond Rushe, *Edmund Rice* pp. 109- 112.

12. Article I of the Synod of Thurles, 1850. See Donald Akenson, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

13. Reported in *The Irish News*, 14 December, 1989.

14. *Education and Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989* (Belfast, HMSO, 1989), Part VI, Chapter 1, pp. 64-72.

15. 'Statement from the Northern Catholic Bishops on the Education Reform (N.I.) Order 1989' (Belfast, Diocesan Office Somerton Road, 1989)

16. The Act became law on 25 May 1978.

17. 'Greater Responsibility for Education and Library Boards': an address to the Association of Area Education and Library Boards, given at Newcastle, Co. Down, 13 October, 1988.

18. Basil McIvor was the minister responsible for education in the short-lived Northern Ireland power-sharing Executive. He introduced legislation designed to prepare the way for shared Protestant/Catholic schools on 30 April, 1974. The power-sharing Executive, however, lasted for only five months.

19. For the failure to take advantage of the Dunleath Act see page 143.

20. Gallagher and Worrall, *Christians in Ulster 1968-1980*, p. 160.

21. The study was by J. Darby, D. Murray, D. Batts, S. Dunn, S. Farren, J. Harris, *Education and Community in Northern Ireland: Schools Apart?* (Coleraine, New University of Ulster, 1977.) Reports from this project were given to a Conference on Integrated Education at the New University of Ulster the following year, 1978. See also note 36 below.

22. See Seamus Dunn, 'Little Contact Between Segregated Schools', in *Fortnight*, 4 February, 1985, p.12.

23. Reported in *The Irish News*, 25 September, 1988.

24. See Gallagher and Worrall, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

25. *ibid.*, 166.

26. *ibid.*, 140.

27. Irish Episcopal Conference, *Directory on Ecumenism in Ireland* (Dublin, Veritas Publications, 1976). This was a much longer and more wide-ranging publication than the hierarchy's 1969 Directory. Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) had appeared 5 years earlier than this on 21 November, 1964.

28. See Gallagher and Worrall, p. 211.
29. *ibid.*, 211.
30. *ibid.*, 138.
31. *Directory on Ecumenism*, 1976, paragraph 11.
32. Rose is referring to Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark's *Religion and Society in Tension* (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1965.)
33. Cardinal Conway's remarks were reported in *The Belfast Telegraph*, 27 April, 1966.
34. See, for example, Chapter 2. pp. 74-79.
35. Gallagher and Worrall, p. 167/8.
36. H. Sockett et al., *Segregation in Education* (Coleraine, New University of Ulster, 1978), papers read at a conference on the theme. The Conference received reports of the project dealt with in Darby et al., *Education and Community in Northern Ireland*.
37. Dominic Murray, *Worlds Apart: Segregated Schools in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, Appletree Press, 1985). Andrew Boyd's review appeared in *The Irish News*, 15 September, 1985.
38. See Appendix I to Irish National Teachers Organization Northern Committee, *Educational Administration in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, INTO, 1969), p. 15.
39. For a discussion on this subject see Gallagher and Worrall, *Christians in Ulster*, pp. 162-169.

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## Chapter V

### THE RATIONALIST-EMPIRICIST CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A widespread conviction within a community that life is a pilgrimage, that God is immanent in all this universe, as well as transcendent over it, may provide the only social bond powerful enough to save civilization. A profound authority for giving, or at least trying to give, religious education does stem from fears that without a religion that has profundity, engaging the heart, society may fall apart. (Roy Niblett)(1)

Christian maturity is characterised by strength but not pride, humility and patience, a quiet mind, self-denying love of God and man, and an outlook governed by eternal perspectives that is full of certain hope, joy and confidence in Christ. (Philip May)(2)

It is astonishing and disturbing that so little effort is devoted nowadays to Christian or Catholic apologetics at a serious intellectual level....I conclude that a serious apologetic is absolutely indispensable for the Church, and that many of its present ills are due to the neglect of it....I maintain that the Christian and Catholic apologetic task not only *ought* to be carried out, but that it *can* be. (Hugo Meynell)(3)

#### 5.1 Beliefs and commitment in secular liberalism

In the previous chapter it has been seen that compared with Christian education, integrated education presents a different perspective especially having regard to the place occupied by religion in the educational enterprise. That difference is quite fundamental since in the one case the assumptions and values of the Christian religion characterise the school's ethos, while in the other, some teaching on a variety of religions, (often typically conceived as *life stances*), is fitted into the curriculum of the school the ethos of which is of necessity pluralistic, and informed by such assumptions and values as belong to what is frequently termed the liberal tradition in education. The underlying philosophy of that tradition may be summarized perhaps, as a rational belief in the efficacy of the pursuit of 'tolerance', and a tendency to regard confessional education as something obscurantist and outmoded. Tolerance is an admirable virtue. It can be seen exemplified at

its highest level in Christ's words to the woman taken in adultery: 'Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.' (John 8: 10,11) It will be noted, however, that Our Lord's refusal to condemn the woman did not overlook the reality of the sin. His command to 'love your enemies' (Mt 5: 44) is the very perfection of tolerance.

Tolerance in theory however sometimes masks intolerance in practice. The commitment to any set of values clearly indicates a belief in the validity or efficacy of those values; but when elevated to the level of an ideological commitment even the pursuit of 'tolerance' can itself become both exclusive and confessional. Among those who promote the secular liberalism of pluralism we can recognize, despite a more discreet use of the terminology, the existence of a commitment to common aspirations, aims and objectives. This clearly constitutes a type of ideological position and therefore a form of confessionalism - illustrating that confessional tendencies are a good deal more widespread than is often suspected or admitted. Claims to objectivity are open to the accusation of being tendentious since proponents of secular liberalism cannot establish a wholly rational and dispassionate basis for the values to which they subscribe. Such claims need in the end recourse to epistemological justification since belief *in* something (in this case a particular set of values) necessarily implies the belief *that* something is in fact the case - that rationality, for example, is the sufficient basis of the human personality. Later in the chapter it will be argued that the foundationalist epistemology of the liberal thesis is, in fact, incoherent.

The problem frequently overlooked is that a 'pluralist' society is not without ideological principles of its own. Its underlying philosophy is established within limits which already bear the hallmark of conviction and commitment. It is for this reason that attention is drawn to one of the underlying assumptions of the present work, namely, that there are various forms of confessionalism which have to be taken into account. It is not just those with 'religious' convictions who are responsible for confessional education. Non-religious, or secular, convictions, also, are not without their impact on educational expectations.

Writing of the need to have firmly in mind the values which we consider to be basic, Edward Hulmes (1979) comments as follows:

It is frequently pointed out that it is just such a society which we are in the process of developing, and that we do have in mind (or rather our leaders have in mind) the values of openness and tolerance which lead to progress. This is, paradoxically, an exclusive position, leaving those whose religious commitment demands a different course of action in a constant and unhealthy state of professional schizophrenia. (Hulmes 1979 35)

## 5.2 The doctrine of relativism

In the world of today it might with plausibility be said that for many, the complex interactions between pluralism, and particularism in religion, constitute the classic paradigm of perplexity that signals uncertainty and doubt. But this uncertainty and doubt can itself slide imperceptibly into a studied neo-orthodoxy, the principle tenet of which is that no particular form of commitment can be considered superior to any others. The practical effect of this is to make education, and especially religious education, the instrument for inculcating the doctrine of *relativism* rather than an all-embracing kind of tolerance for the views of others. In consequence, an alternative form of confessionism thus begins to emerge. The virtues of tolerance, understanding and openness to the sincerely held views of others may justifiably be prized as indicative of what is best in the inheritance of civilized man; but when these are elevated and institutionalized into an ideological commitment in which, as Hulmes puts it, 'the expression of respect for *all* traditions becomes the first clause in the new and universal creed, along with the denial of any exclusive body of absolute, revealed truth', the way is open for a relativization of values the logical result of which is to enshrine subjectivity, *tot homines quot sententiae*, as a doctrine, and to relegate ethics and religion to the realm of relativity. Hulmes continues:

A society which considers it proper to preserve the right of each to dissent from the others, and the right of others in their turn to disagree with basic issues of human existence, *simply because these differences exist*, has scarcely begun to take seriously *any* of the rival world views. Such a society may be deluded into thinking that it can survive the onslaught of what has recently been called 'a continuing dialectic of contraries.' (*ibid.*,35) [Emphasis added]

Sheridan Gilley has expressed a similar concern on the same crucially im-

portant theme when giving the C. S. Lewis Lecture in Belfast, in 1986, under the auspices of the Irish Christian Study Centre. He remarked as follows:

What Lewis perceived with uncanny accuracy and foresight was that the modern world contains a phenomenon infinitely more sinister than Ian Paisley or the Pope, and that is the common enemy of all good Christians, the evil which I can only call in the vaguest terms liberalism, which leads to what Lewis called 'the abolition of man' in the name of an ultimate ethical and religious relativity. You can tell a Christian terrorist that he is violating his own Christian convictions; but it is difficult to show a man without morals that he is violating anything at all. (Gilley 1986 4)

As Gilley pointed out, Lewis, himself, in his lectures on 'The Abolition of Man', delivered in the University of Durham in 1943, had exposed the error that lies in what Gilley terms 'the modern elevation of subjective experience over objective truth.' Later, in his essay, *The Poison of Subjectivism*, Lewis wrote:

A philosophy which does not accept value as eternal and objective can lead us only to ruin...The very idea of freedom presupposes some objective moral law which overarches rulers and ruled alike. Subjectivism about values is eternally incompatible with democracy. We and our rulers are of one kind only so long as we are subject to one law. But if there is no Law of Nature, the ethos of any society is the creation of its rulers, educators and conditioners: and every creator stands alone and outside his own creation. Unless we return to the crude and nursery-like belief in objective values, we perish. (Lewis 1967 77)

### 5.3 The 1960s 'crisis in theology'

Lewis published this in 1967 - during the decade, that is, which witnessed what has come to be called 'the crisis in theology'. The accumulated impact of apparently adverse findings in the science of historical criticism upon traditionally held attitudes to the Bible, combined with brilliant technological advances that put satellites in space and men upon the surface of the moon, together with the continued influence of philosophical positivism and 'a fashionable dalliance' with the atheism of Camus and Sartre, produced a climate more than usually inimical both to religious belief and acceptance of transcendental absolutes. These, increasingly, were being subjected to the criticisms of an active and vocal body of secular humanists whose influence was becoming significant in the field of educa-

tion. It was, however, the flood of writings from theologians which generated the most unease at the time. Books such as Bishop John Robinson's *Honest to God* (1962), Paul van Buren's *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (1963), Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* (1965), and Ronald Gregor Smith's *Secular Christianity* (1966) were, it has been speculated, not so much attacks on Christianity as attempts to re-interpret it for modern man. They were certainly indices of unease and lack of confidence in Christianity's capability of resisting the flowing tide of secularism and the new criticism.

More than this however, theologians such as those mentioned were not only enamoured of the secular dimension, but some of them - to take Paul van Buren as an example - were clearly influenced by the empiricist stance of the philosophy of logical positivism which eschews belief in any reality apart from that which is open to the empirical investigation of the sciences. Van Buren called for a 'reduction' in Christian theology in order that, as he put it, its contents might be brought entirely within the sphere of the secular. Cox exhibited a similar desire to accommodate the secular suggesting that 'We are presently in transition from an ontological phase of human thinking to a functional phase.' Yet, as James Alfred Martin (1966) has pointed out, Cox's own position 'bristles with unspecified and hence unexamined metaphysical assumptions of its own.' Gregor Smith's account of the Christian faith, is, as he claims himself, 'thoroughly secular', seeking to exhibit the meaning of faith within the framework of temporal and historical existence. Adopting Bultmann's existential interpretation of history, transcendence is to be understood 'not as some timeless or suprahistorical reality', but rather as a dimension of history itself, so that God, too, is historical - 'even, perhaps - God is history.' Secularism had clearly become a major preoccupation with Christian writers such as these mentioned. Yet secularism is an ideology whose proponents explain everything exclusively in this-worldly terms. Some of the theologians sympathetic to secular thought and achievement looked to Christianity 'to give the criterion by which the methods and goals of a secular civilization would be achieved'. But others, as John Macquarrie put it:

Go all the way with secularism, though we have already seen reason to question whether, in such a case, they could still be reckoned theologians at all. (Macquarrie 1968 7)

The impact of these writers of the 1960s, together with a number of esoteric theologies including the Nietzschean 'Death of God' controversy, now sparked off by the publication of the American scholar Gabriel Vahanian's (1960) book of the same title, sapped the faith and confidence of many in their confessional belief in God and redemption through Jesus Christ. John Robinson's book alone, said to have radically and 'in a most provocative manner' questioned some of the basic issues in the Christian faith, sold something in the region of a million copies. The very fact of such sales, however, pointed to the deep interest in religion most people have - in itself an index of the human yearning for a transcendence that will break the bonds and trammels of merely human existence with promise of immortality. The doctrine they were offered, however, anchored them firmly and exclusively in a secularistic world. Speaking of his contemporaries in 1968, John Macquarrie had this to say:

There is no valid ground for the failure of nerve which has stampeded many contemporary theologians into a total intellectual capitulation to their secular environment. (*ibid.*)

#### 5.4 Objectivity in moral values: the Natural Law

C. S. Lewis did not suffer from any such failure of nerve, or lack of confidence in the validity of moral absolutes or religious imperatives. His arguments against 'the ultimate evil of subjectivity', as well as those he put forward to establish objective value and the existence of 'the Law of Nature', still remain compelling, and are subsumed under the following three considerations advanced by Gilley in his 1986 lecture on Lewis, referred to above:

1. "Religious experience, like all other experience, is not an end but a key or clue or an opening to something other, indeed as Lewis came to see, as an avenue of divine self-disclosure, in which God reveals and offers Himself.

I perceived (and this was a wonder of wonders) that just as I had been wrong in supposing that I really desired the Garden of the Hesperides, so also I had been equally wrong in supposing that I desired Joy itself. Joy itself, considered simply as an event in my own mind, turned out to be of no value at all. All the values lay in that of which Joy was the desiring. And that object, quite clearly, was no state of my own mind or body at all. (Lewis 1955 208)



2. "...Value is not simply a result of instinct nor is it reducible to our subjective response to it, for it existed before us and exists beyond us, and like God it abides forever.

Those who know the *Tao* can hold that to call children delightful or old men venerable is not simply to record a psychological fact about our parental or filial emotions at the moment, but to recognize a quality which demands a certain response from us whether we make it or not. (Lewis *ibid.*)

3. "In all cultures there is a witness against lying and murder. As Lewis wrote in *The Poison of Subjectivism*:

If a man will go into a library and spend a few days with the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* he will soon discover the massive unanimity of the practical reason in man. From the Babylonian *Hymn to Samos*, from the *Laws of Manu*, the *Book of the Dead*, the *Analects*, the Stoics, the Platonists, from Australian aborigines and Redskins, he will collect the same triumphantly monotonous denunciations of oppression, murder, treachery and falsehood, the same injunctions of kindness to the aged, the young, and the weak, of almsgiving and impartiality and honesty. He may be a little surprised (I certainly was) to find that precepts of mercy are more frequent than precepts of justice; but he will no longer doubt that there is such a thing as the Law of Nature." (Lewis 1967 77)

This is the 'Natural Law' about which children are informed in Christian education. It is the God-given irreducible bar of conscience before which every human person without distinction of race, colour, religious (or irreligious) affiliation has personally to answer. As to theologians to whom the riches of the Christian Dispensation are available, anything in the nature of a descent into a liberalism that sympathetically treats with relativism is difficult to understand. This liberalism in theology has sapped the very foundations of Lewis' 'mere Christianity'. Gilley's criticism in respect of its influence in England, is severe indeed:

The people of England have been robbed of their religion and morals at least in part by their religious and moral leaders, in a wholesale National Apostasy from Christian faith and Christian ethics...And with this has gone a ruthless subversion of the doctrinal content of the Faith, in the name of that very subjectivity in which Lewis saw the flames of hell. (Gilley 1986 8)

The current erosion in religious belief and practice is fuelled by such liberal principles which relativize morality and reduce belief in the existence of God to a realm of subjective experience. Christian education, in its concern to prepare the young person for his dual destiny of life in this world and life in the next, in its positing of an objective religious world-view which encompasses belief in the existence of a loving God, and acceptance of the salvific mission of the historical Jesus Christ, is grounded upon principles and assumptions that are the antithesis of relativistic liberalism. It is deemed necessary, however, critically to examine the philosophical assumptions of contemporary liberal education and to discuss a number of relevant aspects of the rationalist-empiricist orientation made manifest in logical positivism and analytical philosophy, since these have been influential in promoting that deepening climate of agnosticism and humanistic-relativism which afflicts much of society today including the constituency of education.

## **5.5 Christian humanism and the early liberal tradition**

The ideal of a liberal education may plausibly be argued as having its roots in the Renaissance, a period which saw the flowering of a Christian humanism which, while in rebellion against the effete medievalism of the Schoolmen, was nevertheless, at ease with the universal faith of Christendom. These humanists sought a freedom of expression for the individual which emancipated him from the constricting typologies and burdensome traditions that had accumulated around a declining Scholasticism. The philosophy of Plato and the culture of Greek and Latin literature gave new zest and spirit where over-reliance upon patristic writings and the works of Aristotle had long palled. The new education demanded its own freedom and that included 'freedom from the rules of Scholasticism, freedom for the individual to follow his own bent and not just parrot Aristotle', as Crane Brinton (1950) has put it. The love of Greek and Latin and the classical virtues of discipline and moderation, and the discovery of the Greeks and Romans as being 'free from superstition but by no means irreligious, controlled mature men of imagination, not narrow rationalists'(4), was to become an integral part of Europe's educational heritage. Yet it would be a serious mistake to attempt to portray the Christian culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as polar opposites even in such a seemingly obvious sphere as that of art. As Brinton has remarked:

There is a grave difficulty in accepting the formula: Middle Ages equals religion and inhibition, Renaissance equals paganism and exhibition. All through the high Renaissance the artist is at work for the Church and on religious themes. (Brinton 1950 30)

It is true that Renaissance humanism in all its aspects including the artistic constituted a complex movement of self-conscious rebellion from a medievalism that for many had degenerated into a way of life that had grown 'stale, over-elaborated and unlovely' in various ways. But like the Protestant Reformation the movement 'was not really anarchical. It rebelled against one authority, one complex of ideals, habits, institutions, in the name of another and by no means unrelated, complex.' (5) The humanist method of scholarship remained the same, for example:

Only, for the Church Fathers, Aristotle and the medieval doctors, the humanists substituted the body of surviving Greek and Roman writings, literary as well as philosophical, and, where they still were actively interested in religion, the text of the Bible, duly studied in the original Hebrew or Greek. (*ibid.*,33)

Plato was judged to be a relief after Aristotle but for many of them (Thomas More and John Colet, for example) he was welcomed 'as a philosopher closer to the purified but still sacramental Christianity they basically wanted.'(6) Referring to the great writers of the French classical period during the age of Louis XIV, Brinton avers that 'they felt that they were good Christians.' When the same author quotes Taine, the distinguished French historian of ideas, as maintaining that the classical spirit (*esprit classique*) helped to produce the state of mind we call the Enlightenment, one might agree in respect of a burgeoning, inquiring humanism. The hostility exhibited by many writers of the Enlightenment towards the Christian religion was, however, something very different.(7)

It ought also to be remembered that it was the Church which preserved and transmitted what had remained of the classical heritage during the Dark Ages; and that as Kevin Nichols (1979) has remarked 'during the Middle Ages it achieved a new and brilliant synthesis of classical philosophy and the truths of revelation'. Both of these achievements were indicative of the Church's then unique interest in education, from its early concern for catechesis developing into an acceptance of

education's wider rôle - in Origen's fourth century university at Alexandria - until in the end it had become the educator of Christian Europe.

This synthesis was the basis of an educational curriculum, the liberal arts, philosophy and theology, which became universal in western Europe. From initiation into private and distinctively religious mysteries to induction into a comprehensive and integrated world-view; from catechesis to education. (Nichols 1979 15)

The Church took responsibility for education almost from the beginning and it might be said that down the centuries it conducted its remit with some distinction. One of the effects of the growth of secularism upon education has been largely to remove theology from its traditional place as the keystone of the whole educational structure. In addition the advent of universal state-controlled education coincided with an increasing recourse to a philosophical scepticism and a widespread agnosticism which sought to transmute the religious component in education into generalized attitudes such as reverence and awe, often leaving out of account the actual reality of the Creator's existence and the salvific intervention into human history of Jesus Christ.(8)

Religious education itself then becomes something quite different. It cannot be said either logically or in the face of a universal tradition of religious education that has spanned the centuries that teaching *about* a variety of different religions is religious education even when mediated by an empathic approach. Religious education of its nature is something essentially more than this. A contention of this study is that religious education logically involves education in a particular religion, that religion being - in our cultural milieu - Christianity. From time immemorial religion has to do with God as man relates to him in knowledge and worship. For two thousand years in Europe the history of that relationship has been Christian. Even considered as a subject in the secular curriculum, then, religious education logically ought to treat predominantly of Christianity. The failure to do so gives an air of irrelevance to the subject by denying its Christian, religious, and European cultural dimensions.

At this juncture, it is deemed relevant to set down Kevin Nichol's (1978) 'taxonomy' of religious education. It might be added that had such a programme been formulated and successfully implemented as a *response* to the uncertainties

in the subject that had been prevailing not just during the 1960s but even earlier as Basil Yeaxlee's (1957) Report *Religious Education in Schools* indicated, (this subject is discussed further in Note 29 to the present chapter), the encroaching and deeply unsatisfactory 'new R.E.' models might well have been warded off. Out of considerations and principles such as these which Nichols enunciates, specific objectives could be formulated and teaching materials easily prepared for an informed and confident presentation in the classroom.

*First*, Religious education should initiate children into all the dimensions of religious life. So, learning doctrine, studying scripture, experiencing liturgy and belonging to a religious community are all valid parts of the substance of religious education. *Secondly*, there is no logical requirement that these dimensions should be treated as though they were of equal value. So, a religious curriculum could reasonably allow to, say, the doctrinal dimension a controlling interest. *Thirdly*, educational criteria do not rule out that the teaching and learning might go on in a climate of commitment. Education can occur within a community of faith. But, *fourthly*, the criteria of education do require that religion be rationally presented. Especially it is important that the curriculum distinguishes between belief and fact, and does not confuse religious and scientific certainties. And, *finally*, the teaching must be done in such a way that children's minds are not closed. It is this effort to shore up religious belief by irrational means against subsequent criticism, rather than the nature of the material itself, that really constitutes indoctrination. (Nichols 1979 48)

There are, then, logical and historical grounds for promoting a Christian religious education in the liberal curriculum; where, conceived of as a subject, it can be taught for its Christian cultural, historical and moral values as well as for fulfilling a basic human need by giving an optional purchase on Christian acceptance and belief. In the context of an amazingly rich European tradition, the arguments for doing this are strong indeed. By contrast, the current phenomenological approach to religion is not only philosophically misconceived but has proved educationally inept in classroom practice where, in addition to causing confusion among young people as to what, in fact religion *is*, the refusal of guidance has the effect of leaving them bewildered amid the plethora of religious typologies proffered them. If 'the religious impulse' - to employ Jean-Claude Barreau's (1976) phrase - is one of man's deepest and most typical characteristics, an authentic religious education must surely and sympathetically provide the young person with at least some

elements of guidance to aid his or her personal choice in such a fundamentally important area. The educational reasons for promoting Christian religious education as the standard for examination and discussion in European state schools are particularly sound, and especially, perhaps, when it is understood that the liberal love of knowledge finds welcome acceptance. This, together with the primacy accorded to conscience in the Christian ethic, sets the seal on the possibility of making choices in religion which are reasoned and mature.

## 5.6 The liberal ideal in Newman and Victorian England

For Cardinal John Henry Newman, who celebrated liberal knowledge so cogently<sup>(9)</sup> theology had a rightful place in education. Education itself ('but education is a higher word') is 'commonly spoken of in connection with religion and virtue.' The following passage illustrates that earlier tradition of liberal education in Newman where the communication of knowledge is seen as something worthwhile in itself and education as 'an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character.'

But education is a higher word; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connection with religion and virtue. When, then, we speak of the communication of knowledge as being Education, we thereby really imply that knowledge is a state or condition of mind; and since cultivation of mind is surely worth seeking for its own sake, we are thus brought once more to the conclusion, which the word 'liberal' and the word 'philosophy' have already suggested, that there is a knowledge, which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure, and a sufficient remuneration of years of labour. (Newman 1852 105)

Nichols comments:

There is a certain hesitancy, an ambiguity in Newman's great book. On the one hand it is a celebration of intellect. On the other hand, he realizes that it may lead to an elegant parody of religion: which is no more than human excellence unsavoured by the salt of humility: whose devotees become 'the victims of their own intense self contemplation'. Newman acknowledges that...liberal education may make people self-centredly clever. It may make them so logically critical as not to be open to the mysteries of the spirit. (Nichols, *op. cit.*, 15)

The early ideal of liberal education of which Newman was one of its latter day classical exponents had, as has been said, theology as its cornerstone. The development of a secular system of mass education in the wake of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century saw a more pragmatic concentration on basic knowledge and on basic skills taught in a mechanical way; or on the idea of a secular liberal education for its own sake - a far cry indeed, as Nichols avers, from the humanist schools of Vittorio da Feltre and the Christian educators of the Renaissance. For the Newman conception of liberal education - in its aim of developing the 'philosophic habit', a certain beauty of the mind, and the ability to order and judge intelligently and sensitively, developing natural qualities which may serve the life of faith - these later developments lacked an essential ingredient. As Nichols puts it:

Newman's fear of a culture and an education based on an ideal of liberal knowledge unchecked by the discipline of theology began to be realized. It found little place for religion, certainly not as the unifying element in knowledge, the keystone of the house of intellect. (*ibid.*,16)

At the same time, as Vincent Alan McClelland (1979) points out, the Victorian liberal education ideal came to embody 'a powerful and popularly acceptable life-ethic upon which individual and collective moral responsibility could be erected'. Further, 'it was an ethic found to be compatible by Christian and unbeliever alike.' As evidence of this, McClelland refers to the approval voiced by Henry Edward Cardinal Manning :

Liberal education henceforward was no longer to be the sole prerogative of the rich, the privileged, the 'gentleman' of Newman's *Idea*, but 'whether it be the poor child in the parish school, or the son of the rich man in the university', it was all ideally the same. Its constituents for all conditions and descriptions of men were to be nothing less than 'the formation of the whole man - intellect, heart, will, character, mind, and soul.' (McClelland 1979 15, 16)

This formation of character valued by Manning and the liberal ideal of social life has been described by McClelland as follows:

One of order and discipline, governed by a strict line in personal conduct associated with a willingness to place the interests of self at the disposal of the common good: (*ibid.*,17)

It might therefore be seen that the ethical values invoked in the liberal educational ideal in the nineteenth century were such as could be advocated in Christian education. (A willingness to place the interests of self at the disposal of the common good, for example, is consonant with the admonition of Jesus to love one's neighbour as oneself.) During that century, however, England was still unequivocally a Christian confessional society, although one beset by denominational rivalries as the controversies surrounding the 1870 Education Act and the sectarian disputes of the early twentieth century testify. The period following the First World War, however, saw a significant growth in atheism and agnosticism. 'A new spirit of emancipated atheistic international democracy' came to be perceived with some satisfaction by George Santayana and H.E. Brightman. The same period witnessed the burgeoning influence of logical positivism and later, of its offshoot analytical philosophy, followed still later by a professed interest in the atheistic existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre. The religio-philosophical climate was undergoing something of a sea change, at least - and in the first instance - in academic circles. While it is true that prior to the passing of the 1944 Education Act the majority of British people had let it be known that they wished their children to receive religious education - and they clearly meant Christian religious education<sup>(10)</sup> - the Christian spirit of the nation seems by then to have suffered an undoubted erosion.

## 5.7 Contemporary liberal education

The disjunction, therefore, which came to occur in contemporary liberal education whereby Christian religious education came, in effect, to be ruled out of the state school curriculum might be seen as the result of the secular coming into the ascendant in education in a climate of growing agnosticism. The newly emergent discipline of Philosophy of Education and the educational philosophy and writings of Paul Hirst evidenced developments in that direction from the 1960s. But the pragmatism of John Dewey (1937) is also a case in point in respect of his seminal influence in modern educational philosophy, as compared for example, with that of Newman. While for Newman religion was 'the unifying element of knowledge, the keystone of the intellect', for Dewey, it was the concept of 'understanding' that now became the keystone and the keystone at that of the house of 'social betterment'. Dewey's influence was considerable among the philosophers of education in the newly emerging discipline (during the 1960s) of Philosophy of Education; and,



in the light of the particular emphasis placed on the concept of understanding in current liberal education, Dewey's references are clearly of first importance.

The question I am raising is whether it isn't the educator's business to see that the education given by the schools be such that those who go out from them can take stock of the knowledge that is available for social betterment. (Dewey 1937 55)

Accepting that 'education must have a tendency, if it is education, to form attitudes', and proposing that there is 'an intermediary between aimless education and the education of inculcation and indoctrination', Dewey describes this education as:

The kind of education that connects the materials and methods by which knowledge is acquired with a sense of how things are done and of how they might be done, not by impregnating the individual with some final philosophy, but by enabling him to so understand existing conditions that an attitude of intelligent action will follow from social understanding. (Dewey 1937 p. 56)

This concept of understanding, with its corollary of intelligent action subsequently taking place, is clearly allied to the concept of rationality. The over-emphasis placed upon rationality in contemporary liberal education has, however, been subjected to criticism as constituting too narrow a conception of the integral human personality as it actually functions in all of its complexity. As stated by Paul Hirst (1972) one of the most noted proponents of the contemporary notion of liberal education, the goal of what he terms the 'sophisticated concept of education' is the developing of 'a rationally autonomous person whose life is self-directed in the light of what reason determines'. In this sense education 'stops short of seeking to determine the personal development of pupils in terms of belief, action, attitudes, etc., where reason itself stops short.' He further opines that education is 'clearly not concerned with the total good of the child as Christians or many others would see that.' (11) This is a position clearly difficult to sustain, especially when it comes to the complex and sophisticated practice of providing a *complete* education for our children, and not least in the area of moral education, where, it would appear, educationalists of Hirst's outlook hold that morality is chiefly a matter of making decisions.

Criticism has also been directed at R. S. Peters (1966) by B.A. Cooper (1973) for example, for being 'so concerned with the intellectual dimension of education that he virtually ignores those other physical, emotional, and spiritual activities which together make up a comprehensive definition of man.'<sup>(12)</sup> As well as this, there is a need, as R. T. Allen (1982) puts it, to recognize human existence as 'necessarily situated in a contingent, historical, cultural and social context.'<sup>(13)</sup> Given such a context, there is an obvious need to adopt a more holistic view of human nature. Elmer J. Thiessen (1990) has only recently remarked:

We also need a more holistic view of human nature which recognizes that our rational nature is intimately bound up with the emotional, physical, moral and spiritual dimensions of our being. (Thiessen 1990 4)

It seems clear then, that the liberal ideal of rational autonomy needs revising especially when it is considered, as Thiessen remarks, 'how finite and dependent on others' we are. The human individual is such an intricate composition of feelings, emotions, ideas, thoughts and aspirations as he relates to others in a world full of challenges as much social, physical and emotional as intellectual, that it can scarcely be said that his needs are adequately served by an exclusivist concentration on his 'rational autonomy' - an idealized notion of personal autonomy that is philosophically indefensible. Thiessen comprehensively defends the notion that children are 'simply not autonomous.'

Children are simply not autonomous and it is foolish to suggest that we should treat them so, as is so often done for example, when it is suggested that we need to let them decide for themselves with regard to religion. Growth towards autonomy always occurs within a certain context. We are necessarily shaped in part by our past and by our environment, and therefore we can only achieve limited autonomy. Human beings simply cannot achieve complete independence, perfect rationality, total objectivity, or complete openness. They cannot subject everything they believe to critical evaluation. (Thiessen 1990 3)

This is not to deny either the importance of rationality or the innate and inviolable personal autonomy of the individual, or the necessity for him to grow into and become a rationally adept person, capable of making his own decisions through the exercise of rational judgement, but rather, as Lawrence Haworth (1986) has proposed, to advocate that human beings should strive for 'a normal rational

autonomy', one, that is, which does not over-stress the intellectual at the expense of other human qualities.

Referring to the emphasis upon rationality in moral teaching Mary Warnock (1977) - admittedly with a qualification as to the position in later life - speaks of the 'harsh doctrine' that 'morality must be taught to children by example.' In any event, rationality by itself is insufficient:

Of course we want children to be rational. But we also want them to be truthful, hard working, generous and virtuous in other ways. Why is only rationality to be taught? (Warnock 1977 134)

Within the same context Warnock faces up to the problem of commitment in an unambiguous manner.

The point is this: you cannot teach morality without being committed to morality yourself: and you cannot be committed to morality yourself without holding that some things are right and others wrong. You cannot hold that, and at the same time sincerely maintain that someone else's view of the matter may be equally good. (*ibid.*,140)

The import of Warnock's view is lent support by that of Edward Hulmes (1979) for whom teacher commitment, honestly and openly revealed, can and ought to be a positive advantage in the classroom. Hulmes is discussing the need in the classroom for what he terms 'a genuine encounter with religious claims', which relates a teacher's commitment (whatever it might be) to the bar of truth. Like Warnock, he is concerned to advocate openness and realism in the teaching situation. Such a stance cannot be held to offend against any concept of education however articulated in terms of disciplinary professionalism. Stating that 'teachers of religious education are not licensed to proselytise on behalf of any tradition in county schools', he comments further, and appositely, as follows:

This applies as much to a coherent agnostic view of the human predicament as to any other view. But this does not mean that their personal convictions and beliefs should (or can) be clinically separated from their professional obligations as teachers to present material as objectively as possible. (Hulmes 1979 3)

Equally it might be said that the fact that a teacher's commitment is of a religious nature need not therefore be taken as evidence that, such being the case,

education *per se* cannot take place. David Day (1982), in his review of the teaching of religious education in England in the decade 1970-1980, has remarked as follows:

Hulmes re-affirmed the importance of a genuine encounter with religious claims...His treatment of commitment was related to that of truth. A personal faith might be a positive advantage in the classroom and certainly did not necessarily involve bias or indoctrination. (Day 1982 356)

Warnock's concern is with the teacher as a moral agent. 'If the teacher is a moral agent he must have views, principles, attitudes, even passions.' This being the case, 'why should he remain neutral in discussion?' With Hulmes, 'the genuine encounter with religious claims' would necessarily broach upon considerations of morality since moral prescriptions inevitably emanate from religious beliefs. Both authors take account of the exigencies inherent not only in classroom situations but in the very nature of what it is to be a good teacher of pupils.

## **5.8 'The case against an epistemic basis for liberal education'**

Moral teaching in the positive sense, then, cannot be avoided. But as Marie Schilling (1986) has pointed out the development of character, for example, cannot be well served by a theoretical rationality whose overriding aim is the accumulation of knowledge. There clearly is a need for a practical rationality which in its turn leads to the demand for different types of education. Hirst, however, 'following in the footsteps of the logical positivists, recognizes only the significance of theoretical rationality for the liberal curriculum.'(14)

Contemporary liberal education claims to be grounded on canons of rationality, autonomy, forms of propositional knowledge, and a tendency to describe the world of experience as it actually exists. The logical positivist influence is clearly apparent in the empiricism of the last phrase; as is the influence of a related analytical philosophy in the following paradigm articulated by Hirst himself, in terms of which he speaks as follows:

Concepts and propositions of a public language which are testable by those who use that language. The conceptual and logical analysis which leads to this paradigm is a matter of the logical relations and truth criteria to be found at present in our conceptual schemes. (Hirst 1974a 92)

As construed by Hirst, a liberal education is 'one which has breadth, and which at the same time limits that breadth to certain logically defined *forms of knowledge*.'(15) The limitation is imposed by the nature of knowledge itself and it becomes necessary to establish criteria by which these forms may be identified. Liberal education, then, is conceived as being strictly grounded in the structure of propositional knowledge. This appears a confining framework, indeed, for the network of human relationships and endeavours in the purposive educational enterprise. Schilling (1986) however, has recently stated what she has called 'the case against an epistemic basis for liberal education' as propounded by Hirst, and has summarized the objections of Hirst's critics as follows:

1. Rationality, as Hirst defines it, is too narrow a basis for liberal education.
2. Hirst's epistemological thesis is incoherent.
3. Hirst's conceptual-analytic argument fails to provide sufficient justification for his notion of liberal education.(16)

Hirst defines his conception of rationality in the following terms:

Being rational I see as a matter of developing conceptual schemes by means of public language in which words are related to our form of life, so that we make objective judgements in relation to some aspect of that form of life.(17)

The danger is, as Schilling comments:

An individual educated strictly in accordance with Hirst's concept of liberal education...may end up a poorly developed person with a highly developed mind...Rationality is only one of the many values that historically have contributed to the definition of liberal education. (Schilling 1986 6)

## 5.9 The epistemology of Classical Foundationalism

A further objection has been advanced by Alvin Platinga (1987) in respect of the foundationalist epistemology which in fact underlies liberal education; namely, that the basic premiss of Classical Foundationalism whereby 'properly basic' beliefs are arrived at, is itself 'self-referentially incoherent.' These basic propositions or beliefs are said to be such as can support others, and need no support themselves.

Their connection with Empiricism - that all knowledge is derived from experience - is clearly demonstrated in that they are tied to the nature of our sensory states and are perceptual beliefs arising out of our own immediate experience. They would therefore take some such form as the statement: 'I am seeing redly.' They must be justified independently of reasoning, are said not, themselves, to stand in need of justification, and are held to have a privileged epistemic status, that is, the ground of knowledge upon which they are made is of such a basic character that the propositions cannot properly be challenged. Thus, these basic propositions or beliefs are held to provide a foundation for epistemic belief. Yet, clearly, there are problems with these basic beliefs. For example, the stipulation that they must be perceptual beliefs raises the case that the perceiving subject may in fact be mistaken.

As Platinga puts it, the fundamental premise of the Foundationalists may be stated as follows - where *P* is a 'properly basic belief' for *S*, the subject or person having it:

*P is properly basic for S if and only if P is self-evident, incorrigible or evident to the senses for S.*

Platinga's objection is that this statement itself lays down a certain condition for rationality which it doesn't itself meet. Classical Foundationalism accepts the statement as basic yet, in respect of the term 'self-evident' it (the statement, that is) doesn't offer any arguments to support the contention. Again, and this time with respect to the term 'incorrigible' it cannot be said that the statement belongs to the realm of one's own mental states. Clearly it does not. Yet, it is only statements belonging to the realm of one's own mental state that are incorrigible. To quote the example which Platinga gives - one cannot properly be corrected in stating, 'I've got a pain in my left knee.' Classical Foundationalism's basic premiss, therefore, concludes Platinga, is, itself, self-referentially incoherent.(18)

The basic assumptions of the Foundationalist approach to epistemology on which liberal education may be said to rely, have also come increasingly to be seen as problematical by, among others, philosophers such as N. Wolterstorff (1976), Ralph Page (1980) and Elmer J. Thiessen (1990). Foundationalism assumes that knowledge must be grounded on 'basic facts' which we can know with complete

certainty and which we can approach with complete objectivity; and that there is a 'basic methodology' which allows us to draw conclusions in a formal manner which will again yield complete certainty. A further assumption is that epistemology can be conceived of as essentially distinct from the psychological and sociological conditions under which beliefs develop - a position discussed in its context earlier when the implausibility of divorcing rationality from those other integral elements of the holistic personality was considered.

Hirst's resort to comparisons with 'the autonomy of science' is not as convincing as might at first appear, especially when the Christian origin of science is taken into account. Stanley L. Jaki (1974) for example has argued convincingly (as will be seen in the next chapter) that modern science would have been impossible without the theism of its Christian progenitors. In any event logically, scientific truth is only contingent. It cannot give complete certainty since the next empirical experiment might conceivably give a different result thus invalidating a principle enunciated on the basis of earlier experiments. As well as this there is the recognition in Philosophy of Science and in sociological critiques of knowledge that all observations are in fact, as Thiessen puts it, 'theory-laden' and that theorizing is 'an incredibly complex process'. In his own discussion Thiessen states: 'We simply cannot divorce epistemology from certain personal, historical and material factors as the foundationalists tend to do.'(19)

Leslie J. Francis (1983) has also examined the grounds argued by Hirst for his concept of education as being strictly grounded in the structure of propositional knowledge.(20) Referring to the strictly descriptive method of conceptual analysis advocated by Hirst, Francis makes the very valid point that we are compelled to accept neither 'that the philosophy of education should be fought out on the terms of conceptual analysis', nor that 'all individuals must share that description of the concept in order to engage in an activity which can be logically described as educational.'(21) Again, while Schilling has referred to some of Hirst's critics as agreeing with him that the pursuit of knowledge is a fundamental goal of education 'and that the enterprises he designates as forms of knowledge are indeed worthy candidates for the school curriculum'(22), Francis on the other hand has questioned whether or not there is a compelling and logically necessary case to support

Hirst's underlying thesis that the concept of education itself must be primarily and exclusively concerned with the transmission of the forms of knowledge.(23)

On the issue of justification Hirst's critics (Barrow [1976] and Russell [1976] for example) have professed themselves less than satisfied with what he has had to say - as when, for example, in his paper 'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge', Hirst (1965a) stated that:

To ask for a justification of the pursuit of rational knowledge...presupposes some form of commitment to what one is seeking to justify...The situation is that we have reached the ultimate point where the question of justification ceases to be significantly applicable. The apparent circularity is the result of inter-relationships between the concepts of rational justification and the pursuit of knowledge. (Hirst 1965a 113-138)(24)

### **5.10 Thiessen's reconstruction of the ideal of liberal education**

In the light of what has been said on contemporary liberal education so far, the following observations by Elmer J. Thiessen (1990)(25) may be considered particularly positive and helpful within the context of harmonizing the liberal education ideal - as propounded by contemporary liberal education theorists - and Christian education, which, both philosophically and theologically, has always subscribed to that true liberty of spirit which properly belongs to man, and of which the medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart's (1260-1328) 'taking leave of God' is, perhaps, its most elevated example. Thiessen is right to state problems which Christian theists and others have with contemporary liberal education in its declension into agnosticism, the philosophical background to which will, shortly, be examined. As Thiessen remarks in the extract which follows, the dogmatic empiricism which underlies what he describes as 'the scientific ideal and the secularist frame of mind' is not itself without significant problems.

The ideal of liberal education has undergone a process of secularization, and it is for this reason that initiation into a specific religious tradition is viewed with suspicion today. There are, however, some problems with the dogmatic empiricism that often underlies the scientific ideal and the secularist frame of mind. We therefore need to return to the older ideal of liberal education based on a more open-minded metaphysics. (Thiessen 1990 4)



This acknowledgement of the need for a metaphysical theory has also been suggested by John White (1982) and R. T. Allen (1989) but indeed, as will be seen later in the present chapter, P. F. Strawson (1965) had earlier referred to the need for what he termed at least 'a descriptive metaphysics' ('surely a far cry', James Alfred Martin (1966) remarks, 'from both the pretensions of logical atomism and the restrictions of logical positivism.') As Thiessen puts it: 'Hirst is wrong in treating the traditionalist notion of education with its emphasis on transmission (initiation) as entirely different from the concept of liberal education'.

We have here not two different concepts of education, the one primitive and the other sophisticated, but two different and equally important phases of liberal education. (*ibid.*,5,6)

These phases are initiation and liberation. Thiessen's basic proposal is that liberal education be reconstructed so as to include *both* initiation and liberation. He refers to Charles Bailey's (1984) claim for liberal education as an education which liberalizes a person and moves him/her 'beyond the present and the particular'. It might be said that this does not appear to be a very large claim for liberal education. While early empirical psychologists could conclude that the great disability of animals is that they are 'chained' to the here and now by their immediate sense impressions to which they are totally captive, the status of *man* has always been in a category radically above such a condition by virtue of his gifts of consciousness and introspection or self-conscious reflection. As well as this, his intellectual capacity has never bound him to the merely particular. Furthermore, as will be discussed both later and in the next chapter, early man, without any formal education, had already arrived at the acknowledging and worship of a 'High God', thus indicating the reality of his spiritual qualities and his ability to extrapolate from the particular to the transcendent. In his criticism of Bailey, Thiessen concentrates upon the present and the particular in terms of the early importance of nurture for the child, as it develops its powers of rationality and thus becomes more able to benefit from the liberating aspects of a sound education.

But Bailey, along with many other philosophers of education fails to address adequately the question as to how we get into the present and the particular in the first place. It should be rather obvious that a child must first of all be initiated into a particular home, a particular language, a particular culture, a particular set of beliefs, etc., before he/she can begin to expand his/her horizons beyond the present and

the particular. Liberal education as traditionally understood is therefore necessarily parasitic on something else. It is an abstraction from a larger whole. (*ibid.*,5)

Incorporating Bruce Ackerman's (1980) argument that children need a stable and coherent 'primary culture', and that this is a pre-condition of their subsequent growth towards rational autonomy, Thiessen presents initiation into the present and the particular as a necessary phase of a person's growth towards *normal* rational autonomy (making any charge of indoctrination at this stage of development inapplicable). As children mature, 'the need for stability and coherence lessens, and thus the liberating phase of liberal education can gradually be introduced.' (*ibid.*,6)

The implications of Thiessen's 'reconstruction' of liberal education are relevant to Christian education in terms of its wider justification and particularly with respect to nurture within the faith community. Thiessen suggests that 'Christian parents should boldly initiate their children into the Christian faith', stressing that 'this principle' as he states it, 'is dealing with the initiation phase of liberal education, i.e. the education of a child until the age of 5, or 6'; and with the right of parents 'to determine the nature of the primary culture into which their children are first initiated.'(26)

It might be thought apposite at this juncture to refer briefly to Kevin Nichols' (1986) elucidation of the educational aspects of catechesis, since catechesis may with some justification be thought of as a form of spiritual nurture. If, as has been argued here, the religious impulse is basic in man, then catechesis may be considered as a way of giving bearings within a specific, in this case the Christian, religion:

Education aims, among other things, to make religious faith more thoughtful, to make commitment more critical, reflective and better informed. Catechists also aim at these things: the 'free adherence to God in faith' of the General Catechetical Directory translates very readily into an educational register....Yet, in so far as he is working in the setting of formal education, the catechist will cut his coat to suit his cloth. He will concentrate his attention on those aspects of catechesis which can reasonably be called 'educational' - understanding, thoughtfulness, reflective experience. This is the basis for the claim

that there is a mode or style of catechesis which can legitimately be called educational. (Nichols, 1979 21)

Christian nurture can with some justification be seen to possess the attributes deemed necessary for promoting personal stability as well as a sense of social cohesion in the developing individual. It can with plausibility be understood as possessing that component of initiation/socialization *some* degree of which is essential, as Peter Berger (1969) holds, for a person's development throughout his/her life. Indeed, without a social world, as Berger puts it, the individual not only:

Begins to lose his moral bearings, with disastrous psychological consequences, but he will become uncertain of his cognitive bearings as well. The world begins to shake in the very instant that its sustaining conversations begin to falter. (Berger 1969 22)

Referring to Berger's thesis and commenting that 'all of us, liberals as well as Christians, need *plausibility structures* in order to maintain our sanity, according to Berger', Thiessen sees Christian nurture as essential for providing such plausibility structures within the context of a faith-supporting community and faith-supporting institutions.

Clearly the home and the church provide these plausibility structures, but they are not sufficient. We also need Christian schools where there is a systematic, serious and orderly initiation into and study of the Christian tradition. This suggestion is entirely in keeping with the recognition of other liberal educationalists like M. Oakeshott (1972) who see schools as necessary to continue the process of initiation into the human inheritance begun by parents. (Thiessen *op. cit.* 8)

Thiessen's 'reconstruction' of the contemporary liberal educational ideal is an appealing one as well as being cogently reasoned. Indeed, considering the highly influential and damaging influence which the Hirstian and Philosophy of Education paradigm has had on attitudes towards Christian education and on the concept of Christian religious education, particularly but by no means exclusively, in state or maintained schools, the need for what Thiessen has termed a 'reconstruction' of the liberal educational ideal may be thought timely. The influence of western scepticism which, as has already been said, has seen a growing decline into agnosticism, has also had the effect of depriving innumerable children not only of their

priceless heritage of Christian belief, but also of a more considered appreciation of the Christian inspiration that lies at the heart of European culture.

### 5.11 The concept of religious education

There is clearly more to the promotion of the educational ideal than can be realized by its problematical conception as a discipline grounded exclusively on considerations of rationality. As has been seen earlier, one of the results of this in the field of religious education has been Hirst's (1973) limiting of the goal of religious education to 'an accurate understanding of religious claims' and an awareness of 'their rational status.' This goal he alludes to in terms of 'teaching about religion'.<sup>(27)</sup> This teaching 'about' religion should be careful to include 'a direct study of religions, which means entering as fully as possible into an understanding of what they claim to be true.' As an aid to this, there should be 'a great deal of imaginative involvement in expressions of religious life and even a form of engagement in these activities themselves.'<sup>(28)</sup>

Merely to rehearse these views of Hirst is to enunciate the basic concepts which fashioned that change in perception as to the nature of religious education which began to occur in educational circles in England from the late 1960s. The concept of religious education now meant a phenomenological study of a plurality of religions. Overriding emphasis was to be placed upon understanding what it meant to be an adherent of any particular religion. An empathic approach to the selected religions was to be adopted with a view to experiencing, if only for a short time, their practice, liturgy and ambience.

The faulty criteria and the lack of justification which underlie the Hirstian/Philosophy of Education position must deny validity to the attempts that were made to change the nature of religious education properly conceived; and must equally deny validity to the phenomenological and other models of 'religious education' which accompanied them. In addition to this, the pedagogical weaknesses from which the new models suffer when translated into actual classroom practice, have been a cause of concern and disappointment to their promoters<sup>(29)</sup>, and it may well be this factor which has contributed significantly to what David Day (1984) has called 'the perennial identity crisis' which the 'new' religious education seems to undergo. Perhaps in all this there are some grounds for hope that

an authentic religious education may be restored both conceptually and effectively to the curriculum, especially if it is realized and accepted that, as suggested earlier, Christian religious education, considered as a subject, could well constitute religious education for the liberal curriculum in state schools, being taught for its Christian-cultural, historical, and moral values, and, in addition, fulfilling a basic religious need by giving an optional purchase upon personal commitment.

The ferment of ideas and the intense debate on religious education that has been taking place since the mid-1960s has not by any means ended. It might also be remarked that in all the circumstances the current acceptance into the state school system of the 'new R. E.' is not by itself sufficiently strong evidence that the meaning of the concept of religious education has lost what may be described as its traditional and generally accepted connotations. In the public domain, still, it cannot really be said that there has been a *radical* shift away from traditional conceptions of religious belief - whatever may be said about religious practice. A number of polls and surveys have indicated that when religious belief is mentioned, whether in a personal or a church affiliation context, it is Christianity which is equated with that belief by a clear majority of British people.(30)

The hiatus in the literature which existed for some time from the late 1960s with regard to challenging the assumptions underlying the fundamental changes in conception and re-orientation of religious education that have been mentioned, did begin to be filled although in somewhat piecemeal fashion. (For example - H. McCauley (1970) replying to the charge of indoctrination; John Hull (1975/76) on the theology of education; Stanley L. Jaki (1978 and 1986) on the Christian origins of modern science; Edward Hulmes (1979) on commitment; Leslie J. Francis (1979) on the logic of education, theology and the Church school; Kevin Nichols (1980) on the educational characteristics of catechesis; Peter Bryant et al. (1982) on the inadequacy of Piagetian child developmental theory for moral development; Marie Schilling (1986) on the weak epistemic basis for liberal education; Elmer J. Thiessen (1990) on misconceptions in liberal philosophy; *et cetera*.) It can be clearly stated that part of the motivation for writing this thesis is that it is felt that there is a need for a synthesis of such studies. Taken together they constitute an important corpus of scholarship subjecting the changes that have taken place to

critical examination and in the process providing parameters of confidence for the validity of the Christian confessional/Christian education thesis.

Phenomenological and personal-quest models may be thought of as leaving the concept of religious education vacant of meaning since these are clearly concerned with something different from what religious education in fact connotes, which is *education in a particular religion*, that religion, in the European cultural milieu, being Christianity. The criteria for the concept of religious education are different from the semantic elements contained in concepts relating to 'teaching about religions' or in-depth personal responses to individual religious interpretations of ultimate questions. This is because religious education, properly conceived, has connections with a particular religion.

Since religion is integral to the human experience it is important to become aware of what it is. Norbert Schiffrers (1975) enumerates and discusses eight methods of finding formal and material criteria for the notion of religion worked out by Philosophy of Religion. His survey includes what he terms 'the method of isolation' of Schleiermacher and Otto, that is, to isolate a certain aspect of religion - the religious experience or feeling, 'the holy'; or again, 'the evolutionist method', used with different aims by Feuerbach, Freud and Jung, whereby 'at a crucial point of individual or sociological development non-religious phenomena mutate into religion.' None of the methods, however, have proved satisfactory, and significant objections have been raised in every case. The religious experience explanation, for example, has the disadvantage 'that it did not do justice to the notion of essence. It excluded other religious motivations such as reason, which also form part of religion;' Or, again:

(The) psychological aspect of religion may have therapeutic value but it is unfortunately generalized into a mandatory pedagogy under the illusion that religious men are to be freed from their self-alienation by the suppression of religion. (Schiffrers 1975 1358)

Schiffrers concludes: 'This survey of the various methods used to determine the notion of religion shows that it is not enough to produce formal criteria.' He continues:

This may be why the etymological interpretation of the word religion still enjoys a certain favour. (*ibid*)

But indeed it is not difficult to understand the failure of these methods since, as Schiffers remarks, 'so many authors give the impression that the notion of religion is purely abstract and can hardly be verified in the concrete forms of religion.' Yet the multifarious concrete forms which religion has exhibited from the beginning demonstrate the *actualizing* force of this basic and very human phenomenon. The phenomenon has always been and still is a fundamental *datum* in the taxonomy of humanity, to be studied examined and described. To attempt to isolate and focus upon the notion of religion as something purely abstract that has to do solely with personal attitude is, surely, to ignore a segment of human reality which is already *there* - a part of human inheritance from the beginning. A human being may be personally 'religious' but this has never excluded the validity of the case that it has generally been through membership of a *religion* that he or she has shared his or her beliefs within a *community* of fellow believers. The situation remains the same today except that Western philosophical scepticism allied with certain interpretative analyses of findings in the sociological sciences have combined to produce what are in effect *substitute forms* of religion.

M. J. Charlesworth's (1972) comment on Philosophy of Religion is apposite at this juncture:

From one point of view, the Philosophy of Religion is largely an invention of the eighteenth century, for it was then that philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Lessing and Schleiermacher began to consider religion as a distinct phenomenon susceptible of being investigated in a critical and systematic way. It was then, we might say, that religion became a 'problem' explicitly for the first time and that Philosophy of Religion came to be seen as a distinct branch of philosophy alongside the Philosophy of Morals, or of Art, or of Knowledge. (Charlesworth 1972 *viii*)

The proliferation of new disciplines consequent upon the burgeoning of the empirical sciences in the nineteenth century resulted in such an overriding emphasis upon scientific verification in terms of the empirical that the phenomenon of religion itself - even within the so-called 'soft' sciences of anthropology, sociology and psychology - came to be considered within the constraints of what has been termed closed systems of knowledge of temporal things, whose 'autonomy' comes with insight into their laws and verification in practice. This orientation solely to the verifiable as well as the drive towards the compartmentalization of the sci-

ences into closed and autonomous systems has been referred to perceptively by Schiffers in the following terms:

Anthropologically, the anti-religious fascination of the systems comes from the fact that in his search for truth man always relies on the real, which he meets first in his world, and acknowledges what he can verify. An outlook on the world which makes it verifiable has produced the phenomenon of the non-religion, the 'absence of God' (Heidegger), the 'darkness of God' (Buber), the 'adult world' (Bonhoeffer), and the phenomena of ersatz religions masquerading as the 'death of God' theology. (Schiffers *op. cit.*, 1361)

It is judged necessary to attempt an analysis of the concept of religious education at this juncture since it is being argued that religious education is education in a particular religion (and that that religion, certainly in Europe, should be Christianity.) Before proceeding further, however, it is relevant to make a number of observations. Firstly, it might be objected that Schiffers' conclusion (above) that his survey of 'the various methods used to determine the notion of religion shows that it is not enough to produce formal criteria', invalidates what is being attempted here. But, contrary to the impression so many authors give that, as Schiffers comments, 'the notion of religion is purely abstract and can hardly be verified in the concrete forms of religion', it is argued here that the phenomenon of religion is an observable, fundamental *given* in the taxonomy of human experience which points to the *reality* of religion as an integral part of human inheritance from the beginning. The criteria being sought, therefore, are grounded upon that 'given' and drawn from that 'reality'. Secondly, the analysis of the concepts of religion and religious education which proceeds here, pre-empts the inquiry into language and meaning in relation to Analytical Philosophy which follows this. It is felt, however, that for the sake of completeness in the present section, the analysis should be given at this point, and that the references to language, meaning and Analytical Philosophy, which are given, will be sufficient for clarity.

In analysing the concept of religious education the value of conceptual analysis is upheld without, however, accepting the constricting situation-context paradigm in respect of language and meaning which analytical philosophy promotes. When G. E. Moore (1942) for example, states that 'to define a concept is the same thing as to give an analysis of it', his concern is with a purely 'as of now' sense or mean-



ing.(31) Yet, clearly, there are 'valid' meanings which do not just belong to an 'as of now' categorization. A given 'as of now' meaning may in fact be misconstrued - in which case the 'incumbent' meaning would still obtain. Speaking of 'meanings as changing continuants', L. Jonathan Cohen (1962) avers that the historian of ideas must treat them as 'continuants with changeable contents' as he traces changes in meanings especially of culture-words such as the word 'nature', for example, (as opposed to pronouns and logical connectives) which may have occurred through the passage of time. The significant word would appear to be 'changeable', that is, *subject to* change, for clearly there are innumerable cases where changes neither have occurred nor seems likely to occur. Cohen continues:

Moreover, from any point of view from which the meaning of a culture-word is a temporal continuant, one must in consistency regard the meanings of language-words that pertain to it as temporal phenomena.  
(Cohen 1962 22)

Yet Frege considered all thought, all meaning, as equally 'timeless, eternal, unchangeable'. 'The same words', he writes, 'on account of the variability of language with time, take on another sense, express another thought.'(32) Words are continuous through change of meaning, but meanings themselves have no core of continuity relative to which they may undergo a peripheral change.(33) When this is contrasted with Cohen's own statement that 'it is meanings that vary their language-words rather than language-words their meanings'(34), something of the complexity of the debate in philosophy of meaning becomes apparent. It would appear true to say, however, that meanings can, have and do persist over time - mostly enshrined in their original verbal garb though at times in different verbal garbs. Significant meaning continuants from the concept of 'Christendom', for example, still persist in the term 'Western Civilization'. But even allowing for the possibility of semantic development and hermeneutical shift, a vast number of words and phrases retain their fixed meanings. Consider, for example, the meaning of the concept of 'motherly love'.

'The modern historian of ideas', states Cohen, 'must narrate the general development of the concepts he's concerned with...Nor are any concepts exempt from this kind of treatment.'(35) Conceptual statements about word meanings, however, can in most cases interchange with corresponding statements about concepts since

it is by means of language that people give the most articulate and intelligible expression to the concepts with which they think. The apparent confusion in this comment is resolved by Cohen when he states that: 'To analyse the concept of time is to analyse, on the conceptual plane, the meaning of the word *time*'.(36) It is similarly the case with *religious education*. That is, to analyse the concept of religious education is to analyse, on the conceptual level, the meaning of the term 'religious education'. To put it the other way round, to analyse the meaning of the term 'religious education' will give the meaning of the concept of religious education, and thus it may be said that the semantic clarification of the concept indicates the meaning continuant of what is meant by religious education.

In their treatment of concepts, analytical philosophers (D. W. Hamlyn (1970) for example) tend to speak, as Hamlyn does, of meanings that 'can correctly be brought about' from an enumeration and understanding of the defining terms said to be constitutive of the concept, but as the present discussion indicates, it is reasonable to speak of meanings of terms that can be said *to have already been brought about* and which now, in fact, exist culturally, etymologically and lexically. It is true that particular words may be closely related to rapid cultural change and subjected to equally rapid and, therefore, noticeable change within a comparatively short space of time, but it is disputed that any significant change in either general language usage or general understanding of the terms religion or religious education has, in fact, taken place. Recent surveys have served to confirm that in England, for example, for a majority of the adult population (around 78 per cent) the term religion means not only a particular religion but, in fact, Christianity.(37) This understanding of religion was especially noticeable in the period immediately preceding the passing of the Education Act of 1944, during the 'controversial' 1960s, and beyond. While religious *practice* may be low in Britain, it can hardly be held that this understanding of religion as *Christianity* can have altered all that significantly in a mere twenty five years. It must be fair to say then, that cultural, etymological and lexical meanings retain significance and relevance in explicating the meaning of the concept of religion - and by extension, of religious education.

An historico-descriptive, verbal-analytic examination of the meaning of the term 'religious education' therefore, would seem to constitute a useful approach to

the concept with a view to elucidating its meaning and arriving at its formal and material criteria. To that end the following steps might be taken:

(i) *examine the lexical meanings of both terms of the concept:*

R. G. Woods and R. St C. Barrow (1975) speak of lexical meaning as 'verbal equivalence' and rightly refer to the importance of descriptive and evaluative/emotive meanings as being of particular use in philosophy especially in connection with statements about evaluative concepts such as education. But lexical meanings can do a great deal more than give the meaning of an unfamiliar word in terms of other words with which we are familiar. Lexical meanings clearly carry a strong agreement quality in terms of common language usage. In addition they embody definitions and explanations that are grounded on deep scholarship.

(ii) *examine their etymology:*

In his article on the concept of religion (already referred to), Norbert Schiffrers (1975) gave reasons why 'the etymological interpretation of the word still enjoys a certain favour.' (38) Schiffrers himself finds the etymological approach unsatisfactory because 'it is only possible in Latin, and it is impossible to overlook the fact that the religious phenomenon appears in widely different linguistic dress.' But in the present thesis where - while by no means, it should be said, eschewing the universalism of Christianity - a pragmatic emphasis has been accorded the continent of Europe, it can be judged apposite to state that at least Old English, Old French and ultimately Latin derivations are directly relevant to the English language, and English is a world language. It might fairly be said, then, that the etymological support for the meaning of the term 'religious' (and indeed of other terms) is significant and can lend clarification to the lexical meaning to a considerable and logically justifiable extent.

(iii) *examine their cultural meanings:*

In respect of cultural meaning the view is taken that so far as what is broadly termed 'Western Civilization' is concerned, the religion which is most closely associated with that culture is Christianity. Adopting, briefly, a global conspectus on religion it might be pointed out that *Theravada* Buddhism (i.e. 'teaching of

the Elders') is essentially atheistic. On the other hand it might plausibly be argued that Buddhism is more of a life stance than a religion; especially if, as will be argued here, religion logically implies acknowledging the existence of God and worshipping Him. In the European context the general ambience still remains such that the cultural connotation of the term 'religion' is Christianity. This is not to deny any rights to such minority religions as exist in Europe, but rather to state that Europe is grounded upon two thousand years of Christian history and development. In Britain, it might seem that assertions as to the multi-cultural and multi-faith complexion of British society are often exaggerated. In 1981, for example, the Asian population - 'a collective term to cover a range of ethnic minorities whose cultural roots emanate from the Indian sub-continent, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (although some came to Britain from East Africa and elsewhere)' - was 1,114,000; while the West Indian population was 604,000. That is, the ethnic minorities in 1981 accounted for just over 3.5 per cent of an estimated overall population of well over 54,000,000.(39) Further, it might also be remembered that the religious complexion of the West Indian population is predominantly Christian.

(iv) *rehearse the formal and material criteria implicit in and emergent from (i), (ii) and (iii) above, in respect of 'religious', the qualifying/descriptive term in 'religious education':*

In the public domain the lexical meaning of 'religion', the substantive cognate of 'religious' ('of or concerned with religion') is given as *a particular system of faith and worship* and, additionally, as *the human recognition of a superhuman controlling power, and especially of a personal God or gods, entitled to faith and worship*. In other words, religion connotes belief in God, a system of beliefs, a pattern of worship, and a community of believers. The etymological derivation (through the Middle English *religiun*, the Old French *religion* and the Latin *religio*) aptly carries the meaning consonant with 'obligation', 'bond', 'reverence'.

In relation to the term 'education', the lexical meaning offers the generally accepted and unremarkable *courses of systematic instruction with the aim of giving intellectual and moral training to, and developing the character and mental powers of young people, mainly*. In addition to this it would seem that consideration of the rôle of those who 'impart' or facilitate education, no less than of the young

people who receive it, points to a more comprehensive understanding of the process than the tendency (discussed earlier in the chapter) of contemporary philosophers of education of the liberal orientation to confine it *exclusively* within parameters bounded by the concept of rationality. As Jeff Astley (1987) has put it, the word education 'is also used in a broader sense and without implying these restrictions.' It connotes:

The teacher-learning process which comprises intentional, explicit, systematic and sustained activities through which learning is facilitated by a person or group of persons ('teachers', 'educators'.) (Astley 1987 26)

Referring to the pastoral character-developmental aspect of its etymological derivation from the Latin *educatio* and *educare*, Spencer Leeson (1957) refers to the term in the following succinct and illuminating manner:

Education is by definition, and indeed also by derivation, a feeding; the feeding of the whole indivisible personality of the human being with food that will promote his growth towards his natural end, the end for which he was born. (Leeson 1957 10)

The cultural derivations of education, certainly in Europe, are undoubtedly Christian but as Leeson again has eloquently pointed out, 'the presiding spirit' has long come to be one of Christian humanism. He continues as follows:

There is nothing in this that is cramping to the growing personality of the child, nothing to suggest imprisonment in a hothouse, nothing sanctimonious, unnatural or illiberal. Quite the contrary. The Christian life is the freest and most natural life of all, because it bids us fulfil our true nature. It trains us to be free. Nor can Christian humanism narrow our view. It takes all knowledge for its province, and soars high above the specialist interest of this or that subject, because it sees knowledge in all its varied stages as one in God; and in everything he thinks and says and does and plans for his pupils, their teacher will remember what they are and whence they come. (*ibid.*,11)

## 5.12 Content in Christian religious education

Leeson's remarks give body and spirit to the conclusion analytically arrived at in the present analysis that, logically speaking, religious education means education in the Christian religion. As such, its rôle in the education of young people

whether in state or Church- related schools is both a fulfilling and a salutary one. Christianity is a religion of content, and, whether taught in the context of religious education as a subject in the secular school curriculum, or indeed as a subject in a school where the Christian education ideal permeates the whole educational enterprise, its educational value is of the first order. The heart of the subject is Jesus Christ. His historical life and teaching; his claim to be the Son of God; his salvific death and resurrection; his founding of the Church and commissioning of the apostles; his ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit by God the Father; the kerygmatic rôle of his Church and its history throughout the ages; the basic doctrines of the Church which he founded; Christ's Church today and the continued relevance of the 'good news' of the Gospel for modern man in his scientific, technological world; the Christian contribution to European culture in the fields of art, literature, philosophy, music, sculpture; the Christian origins of modern science; Christian interpretations and contributions to ethical problems in multi-disciplinary fields; Christian responses to poverty and inequality; the Christian rationale of environmental friendliness....A veritable wealth of content suffuses Christian education as a subject.

The doctrinal aspect of the subject is clearly fundamental to Christian religious education. It is in itself both salvific and liberating but its presentation whether in the market-place or the classroom does not compel. Those 'who have ears to hear' may indeed hear, but the freedom is theirs to accept or reject. This applies to young persons as well as mature people. The indoctrination accusation has been largely discredited. To repeat H. McCauley's (1979) thesis:

No evidence has emerged which suggests any direct link between religious belief and indoctrination.... It is quite possible, and, indeed, highly desirable that critical standards be maintained in the teaching of religion, just as in the teaching of any other subject. (McCauley 1979 137)

Thiessen (1990) is unambiguous about the need for Christian doctrine to be accepted as worth-while content and reminds liberals that 'it is rather presumptuous for them to judge this content otherwise, since the liberal tradition is after all just another tradition itself, as McIntyre (1988) has demonstrated.'<sup>(40)</sup> Christian doctrine is a content of beliefs concerning Jesus Christ which have come down through New Testament writings and the teaching tradition of his Church from

the beginning. It is a content both of historical importance and of high present relevance. From the Christian viewpoint these beliefs concern the salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ. In Christian religious education they can validly be presented as such in an objective manner which states them clearly, presents the evidence, replies to apparent difficulties and objections, and relates them to the current human condition. Where the teacher is a believing Christian he may preface his teaching by saying: 'This is what we Christians believe' and 'This is why we Christians believe what we do'. If, in a secular school, the teacher may happen not to be a Christian he may preface his teaching by saying: 'This is what Christians believe', and, 'These are the reasons which Christians give for believing what they do.'

The Christian content in the Christian religious education lesson can be both compellingly interesting in itself and fascinating in its implications for the extent of God's love for mankind. Its objective presentation may elicit many questions from the young people in the classroom. These young people deserve to have their questions answered both precisely and sympathetically. As Hulmes has commented the Christian commitment of the teacher, humbly admitted, is a positive educational advantage for the young people as a yardstick for their own observations and thinking.<sup>(41)</sup> Indoctrination is not an issue where the teacher - as all good teachers should - respects the personal integrity of his pupils and where his classroom (whether in the secular or the church-related school) - is a place for openness and a commitment to pursue the truth.

In the Christian school where the ethos bears witness to the Christian commitment of both parents and teachers, the prayers at morning assembly, the occasions of worship, and the various other signs of the schools's Christian character provide an atmosphere and general Christian stance to the world which embraces a spirit of friendliness and caring for the young people of the school - often noticed and remarked on by visitors. The school is a Christian one. It is dedicated to the principles and assumptions of Christian education. These of necessity include a deep respect for the unique individuality of every young person within its care. The content of Christian doctrine will have an especial significance in the Christian religious education classroom but, as McCauley has shown, this need not preclude the maintenance of critical standards in the teaching process. While finally, as has

been said above, there is also the wealth of Christian cultural and historical matter for study and evaluation in the religious education class which adds immeasurably to both the educational content and value of the subject.

### 5.13 The positivist/empiricist roots of Analytical Philosophy

Following the above analysis of religious education it will be useful to examine some aspects of Analytical Philosophy, firstly because of its influence in supporting the changes that took in the 'new R.E.' during the late 1960s; secondly because of its continuing influence in much of contemporary philosophy of education; and thirdly because the positivist/empiricist roots of Analytical Philosophy together with Kantian rationalism and the positivist idealism of neo-Kantian philosophers such as Hans Vaihinger (1852- 1933) and Harald Höffding (1843-1931) form that rationalist/empiricist axis which has been the genesis of modern relativism and agnosticism.

In Analytical Philosophy or Linguistic Analysis as it is also termed, the question of language takes on an overriding importance since it is in language categories that concepts are typically expressed. In a conceptual inquiry the criteria which denote a concept are articulated and as a result the concept's meaning is thereby held to be established. But human language is an immensely complicated phenomenon. Does language have ontological reality? What is the nature of meaning - or indeed of its genesis? Can language express universals? Can it be said that universals exist? Can concepts express universals and thus can certain concepts be understood as having normative implications? Or is language tied to linguistic use and social custom? What is to be thought of the Analytical view whereby the origin and formation of concepts are held to be tied solely to empirical experience, and the criteria of meaning tied exclusively in discourse to accumulated instances of contemporary usage? Is description the only justifiable approach to language? What is the status of usage in relation to meaning? Can there be 'continuations of meanings'?

For the proponents of analytical philosophy concepts are not mental but *logical* entities and the process of concept formation, it would appear, merely involves the identification of important characteristics and assessing how these are logically linked. Gilbert Ryle (1949) speaks of what he terms the 'logical geography' of the



mind. Linking and defining criteria are developed in relation to the world as *we* find it, states D. W. Hamlyn (1970), stressing the personal 'we', and going on to remark that the development of concepts 'is normally an interpersonal social matter'. Thus, 'against a background of public, interpersonal standards of behaviour', and, 'a complex web of understanding that is part and parcel of the world that we have developed', are concepts both formed and described.(42) Hamlyn, it seems, is speaking from a position that embraces paradigms of personal and social experience contained as it were within a context of actual language use, as the critical factors in concept formation:

Thus a view of the world is developed through learning because (causally because) we have experiences, and because we have the capacity to develop concepts and to apply them in accordance with the framework that we are in effect taught through our relations and communications with other human beings. (Hamlyn 1970 186)

That the framework mentioned is not by any means thought of as being sufficiently all-embracing by everyone is admitted by Hamlyn. Criticisms have been made that the empirical basis upon which the framework is erected is insufficient to account for a whole range of concepts:

Philosophers who have not accepted the empiricist thesis...have been quick to point to the concepts of logic and mathematics, as well as to such concepts as those of space, time and causality. (*ibid.*,56)

Nevertheless, 'It is this framework', continues Hamlyn, 'that provides the possibility of giving application to the concepts, and it is only in terms of it that we can speak of such things.' It will shortly be seen, however, that such a tying of language to situational-use parameters is an inadequate method of proceeding as McSweeney (1973) makes clear in his criticism of sociological ethnomethodology.

The philosophy of language which this view encompasses is, of course, that of the later Wittgenstein (1953) of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Earlier (1922) in the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (which opens with a statement not about language, but about the world - 'The world is, whatever is the case'), Wittgenstein had expressed the view that words pointed to some other reality whereby an attempt could be made to say *what* a proposition essentially was. This in fact accorded with the beginnings of analytical philosophy which, James Alfred Martin

(1966) argues had a clearly metaphysical intent, as is evidenced in Bertrand Russell's (1918) 'logical atomism', which, while it was concerned with logical analysis, 'had as its aim the laying bare of the basic atoms or units of the real.'(43) So far as Russell was concerned he 'had thought of language as transparent - that is to say, as a medium which could be employed without paying attention to it.'(44)

It was Logical Positivism which laid a completely new emphasis on the importance of language in philosophy. The extreme stance adopted by the Logical Positivists (they explicitly stated, for example, that any statement that was not empirically verifiable was meaningless) finally led to the breakaway of Linguistic philosophy (or Linguistic Analysis) which, pursuing a less constricting path, proposed and upheld the *variety* of different forms of discourse. Philosophy was then deemed to be, as Bernard Williams (1978) put it, 'the business of becoming self-conscious about the way we use words, about the kind of meanings they have, about the forms of life that these are part of.'(45) The result of the breakaway was that linguistic philosophy had the effect of reinstating many fields of discourse which had been thrown out by the Logical Positivists. It is important to remember, however, that the roots of both philosophical systems remained the same namely, the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle and of the classical British empiricists such as John Locke.

The logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, developing in the early decades of the twentieth century, became popularized in England through A. J. Ayer, and the widespread influence of his book, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936).(46) All statements of ethics, or aesthetics, or religion were declared to be meaningless. In respect of metaphysics, the specific aim and attitude of the Logical Positivists were well encapsulated in the title of an article written by Rudolf Carnap (1932) namely: 'The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language'. The concept of God could only be pronounced as meaningless in the alleged absence of what was termed a 'hard currency' of verifiable reality that had reference to specific states of affairs in the world. Yet, as Martin perceptively asks, what sort of propositions were the Logical Positivists' *own statements* - analytic, or, synthetic? In other words, the 'hard currency' of verifiable reality was absent from their own statements. In the second edition of his book Ayer was forced to concede that the statement of the verification principle was 'definitional'. If, however, as

Martin puts it, it is 'merely' definitional, then - in terms of logical positivism itself - 'can it have the force and scope of relevance which the Positivists seem to claim for it?'(47) Ayer himself admitted: 'The verification principle, in its strong form, really didn't last very long.'(48)

The parent philosophy of the Logical Positivists, no less, indeed, than that of the Linguistic Analysts, was the positivism of Auguste Comte, that most influential figure of the post-Enlightenment period. According to Comte, it was man, and man alone, who was to create *his* society, and the laws and social *mores* of that society would emanate solely from him. Aided by his powers of reason, and developing science to the harnessing of nature, he would be the measure of all things. The material world constituted the whole of reality and man would be its master and governor. Only facts or knowledge based directly upon the observable phenomena of science were to be recognized. Metaphysics was to be rejected and replaced by the scientific study of man himself.

The positivist attack on metaphysics, powerfully supported by the empirical and rationalist philosophies of the eighteenth century, had been further aided by the remarkable multi-disciplinary advance of the empirical sciences of the nineteenth century, an advance that increasingly presaged deepening difficulties for religion. The publication, in 1859, of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, was a dramatic example of this and as the century progressed the philosophical climate became one of rationalist scepticism grounded upon empiricism. Husserl's phenomenology; the writings of Wundt - the father of empirical psychology - Nietzsche's philosophical pessimism and Freud's psychoanalytical theories made their contribution to a re-defining of man in his world in such a way as to make belief in a transcendental, loving, God begin to appear naive. The new science of anthropology described religion exclusively in terms of an observable phenomenon in human culture. Later, Mircea Eliade helped to establish the study of the history of religions as yet another discipline, with Christianity considered merely as a single phenomenon among a host of others. Later still, religion would come to be considered as an expression of unconscious psychological processes, or - following the rise of sociology as a discipline distinct from psychology - simply as being grounded upon emotion. Logical Positivism came totally to embrace and exclusively to articulate the scientific approach in its descriptive methodology and exclusive reliance upon empirical data.

Philosophy itself was thus reduced to analysing and criticising the theories, the concepts, of science. Ayer has described the stance adopted by Schlick, Carnap and the other members of the Vienna Circle as follows:

It wasn't so much that they used science in their philosophy as that they thought the whole field of knowledge was taken up by science. Science describes the world, the only world there is, this world, the world of things around us; and there isn't any other domain for philosophy to occupy itself with. So what can it do? All it can do is analyse and criticise the theories, the concepts, of science.(49)

Recently, and in the context of his referring to Theodor Adorno's (1976) definition of Positivism as 'the equation of technical or instrumental rationality with rationality as a whole, together with a refusal of reflection', Charles Davis (1980) presents the cogent criticism of the Positivist approach to knowledge enunciated by Jürgen Habermas (1972b), as follows:

Scientism refuses transcendental reflection upon the conditions of possible knowledge. Its principle, as formulated by Habermas is 'that the meaning of knowledge is defined by what the sciences do and can thus be adequately explained through the methodological analysis of scientific procedures. Any epistemology that transcends the framework of methodology as such, now succumbs to the same sentence of extravagance that it once passed on metaphysics.'(50) (Davis 1978 80)

## **5.14 Language, meaning and Linguistic Philosophy**

Somewhat similar criticisms have been made of Linguistic Analysis (or Linguistic Philosophy) which followed Positivism. While Linguistic Philosophy was, as Williams puts it, somewhat 'kinder towards religious language than Positivism had been', it nevertheless 'tended to regard religion, and religious belief, just as a form of human life, an expression of human needs.'(51) For the linguistic philosophers the meaning of language was tied solely to pragmatic situations of word use. As Magee has explained it: 'Language is a human creation: we invented the words and we determine their use. Understanding what a word means is nothing more or less than knowing how to use it.'(52) Williams puts it even more starkly: 'We have a responsibility to our words because, in the end, we don't have these meanings just inside ourselves, independent of what we're disposed to say. Our sentences are our meanings.'(53)

The view that philosophy was merely an explanatory tool in relation to language was initially propounded during the 1940s and 1950s by J. L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle at Oxford and Wittgenstein at Cambridge. In his *Philosophical Investigations* (changing his earlier view in the *Tractatus* that words pointed to some other reality), Wittgenstein advanced the argument that language was completely independent of all other reality: this being so, the rôle of philosophy, therefore, could only be one of linguistic analysis. It was actual language *use* that was the paramount consideration, and this being so, philosophy's rôle was, simply, one of description. According to Wittgenstein, 'philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language. It can in the end only describe it.' (54)

Such a position, it is clear, differs from the view that language is not merely (and certainly not exclusively) verbal description, solely rooted in sense experience but rather that language may be said cognitively to mediate the 'otherness' in linguistic experience. An example of such 'otherness' might simply be advertence to the fact that one is *having* a linguistic experience. Such knowledge, however, gives cognitive meaning to language and implies a conceptuality that transcends the confines of experiential use in a given situation - however situationally qualified. To base a philosophy of language upon a model of language use that is tied to paradigms of empirical verifiability and social custom alone, is to arrive in the end at a position of epistemological incoherence.

Ernest Gellner (1968) has made a number of criticisms that expose the weakness of the position adopted by analytical philosophy. Referring to the assertion of the linguistic philosophers that the problem of meaning is dissolved by what they term 'rubbing in the full complexity' - which, for them, will free us from 'the temptation to seek a reduction of one kind of expression to another' - he comments: 'Such a solution to philosophical problems is unfalsifiable. There is always the need to reveal further meaning.' (55) Gellner further states that while linguistic philosophy condemns models of usage and commends only descriptions, by that very fact, it raises the question of knowledge without general concepts. In claiming merely to be attacking *metaphysics* the linguistic philosophers were making what in effect amounted to an attack on *thought* and denying the possibility of any norms over and above actual linguistic use and social custom. Again, while they asserted that their categories (supplied by language) were simply a linguistic convenience and

not a listing of what exists in some independent world, the very use of language to describe and assert, prejudices the validity of the language which the method of linguistic philosophy was disposed to establish.(56)

Following Gellner's powerful critique many Wittgensteinian linguistic philosophers would now allow that 'use' can be overridden by other considerations. Bill McSweeney (1973) however, has pointed out: 'It is, of course, open to debate whether this modification does not destroy the position which it was intended to refine.'(57) Although McSweeney is discussing sociological ethnomethodology, his comment is valid, since it is a feature of this social theory to leave aside the 'reality' of social situations and focus attention on the properties of language such as 'indexical expressions' - utterances, that is, whose sense cannot be decided without knowledge both of the context in which they were made and of the biography and purposes of the person making them. Special attention is paid to the techniques by which ordinary people, speaking ordinary language are said to construct their social world. Since the conception of language underlying social ethnomethodology is identical to that of analytical philosophy, McSweeney's comment maintains its force.

Concepts are carried in words; but the tying of conceptual meaning to situational word-use destroys conceptuality as such. Universals are denied; metaphysical concepts are deemed to be meaningless. Concepts become merely mental *skills* mediated through the 'proper' use of words in rule-bound propositions. For Gilbert Ryle (1949) such concepts are exercised by means of words which 'are as it were, the *tools* by means of which conceptual skills are mastered.' According to Ryle, one has mastered a concept if one is able to use the relevant word, construction, etc., correctly.

Many people can talk sense with concepts but they cannot talk sense about them; they know by practice how to operate with concepts, anyhow inside familiar fields, but they cannot state the logical regulations governing their use...To determine the logical geography of concepts is to reveal the logic of the propositions in which they are wielded, that is to say, to show with what other propositions they are consistent and inconsistent, what propositions flow from them and from what propositions they follow. (Ryle 1949 10)

This 'correct use' of words, to which Ryle refers, is based upon a series of linguistic, situation-bound qualifications, or rules, which are taken to be capable

of monitoring the conditions for use and meaning. But to attempt to reduce the complexity of human language *exclusively* to such a system of rules is to beg a number of questions. The rules, for example, can only come to be articulated after the words themselves have already been both formulated and structured in language. They cannot, therefore, be other than post-factum efforts to grapple with a phenomenon of quite amazing intricacy, overlaid with emotive, psychological and historical skeins of meaning that give added depths to the syntactical schemata. Such factors both permeate and immeasurably complicate language meaning. 'Rubbing in the full complexity' of their nuances can never, in fact, be achieved. As Gellner has said, there is always the need to reveal further meaning. McSweeney has remarked that 'there can be no meaning which is completely situation-bound: the interpretation of a situation, in other words, demands abstraction from the uniqueness of that situation.' At the same time, however, he rejects, as 'equally erroneous', what might be termed a metaphysical conception of stable meaning overarching a variety of different concepts. For McSweeney, as for Hamlyn the meaning of a language situation must be viewed in terms of 'an interpretation within agreed boundaries of relevance.'(58) But what is meant by 'agreed boundaries of relevance'? Social custom would seem scarcely adequate as arbiter in the matter, especially in a plural-liberalistic society where the prevailing philosophical climate tends increasingly towards an all-embracing relativism. In such a climate and in such a controversial area as language and meaning - where empirical methodology has proven to be a blunt and inappropriate instrument - it may not be altogether implausible to question the grounds upon which 'relevance' is struck, no less than the 'boundaries' that are drawn and the constituency belonging to 'agreed'. The difference between the empirical and the cognitive/metaphysical conceptions of language is a fundamental one, but it seems increasingly premature to imagine that 'agreement' has finally favoured analytical philosophy - even in Western liberal society.

Stuart Hampshire (1959) has questioned whether a language can be properly understood by looking at it in abstraction from the function it performs. 'It is necessary first to view the using of language as a particular kind of human behaviour, before viewing the forms and rules of language independently and for their own sake.'(59) For Hampshire - discussing the language games adumbrated by Wittgenstein - the different uses of language (in, for example, the ethical language game),

have ultimately to be understood as acts of communication, and thus, as parts of the different forms of social life. 'Philosophy as linguistic analysis is, therefore, unwillingly lured into a kind of descriptive anthropology', states Hampshire. Such a situation is not without its difficulties and anomalies, however, as the perplexities of social ethnomethodology have demonstrated. But why are the language games played? According to Hampshire, 'We are driven to reflect on man and his experience...We cannot adequately understand the language apart from the basic experience, or types of experience.'(60)

But in the religious language game for example, how is it possible to *have* talk about God when the empiricist thesis to which the analytical philosophers subscribe does not allow his existence? The author is aware of the anomaly, which he states as follows:

We can also understand why some people remain convinced that in spite of any peculiarities or oddities which may be detectable in it, talk about God is talk about something; that if all the oddities were ironed out, talk about God would no longer be talk about *God*; and that, if antecedent belief in a subject of predication is cancelled out, so to speak, inquiry into talk about God becomes a purely academic discussion of a dead language.' (Hampshire 1959 234)

The dilemma is scarcely resolved by describing talk about God as, 'basically a way of referring to and speaking of what a man regards *as that which discloses itself* in certain types of experience' since firstly, the phrase 'that which discloses itself' can be argued not to mean God, at all; secondly, the 'experience' - denied to many, and, equally, denied by many others - is a purely subjective one; while thirdly, even were the 'experience' universal, the referent of the talk about God would still be held to lack ontological reality. In this context and speaking in terms of meaning as it relates to theological language, Martin (1966) refers to the ontological status of the referent of language categories that have to do with religion. 'No assessment of theological or religious language is complete, or, completely responsible', he states, 'that fails to consider also what Frerè calls *the semantic question*.' Discussing Wittgensteinian language games, and theology understood as one of these, Martin comments as follows:

Theology understood as a language game, with its own internal syntactical rules, is not itself *about* - does not itself finally refer to - simply the



theological game itself. And if theological or religious language is successfully to perform the moral, aesthetic, psychological or other functions emphasized in 'interpretic' analyses, it must do so in a framework of conviction regarding what is known and what is real. This conviction need not, and should not, be the vaguely defined convictional 'persuasion' indicated by Zuurdeeg, Horden and others. It may be critically reasoned and may seek to take into account all that is known as fact in natural and social science as well as all that is believed to constitute the basic 'facts of faith' in theology. It may, in other words, address itself to what Frerè calls 'metaphysical fact'. (Martin 1966 170)

Martin's call for account to be taken of a 'framework of conviction' that is 'critically reasoned' may be thought of as supplying the deficiencies in the approach of the analytical philosophers to the problems of meaning in regard to talk about God.

Frederick C. Copleston, S.J., (1974) states their position succinctly:

If, however, we look at the writings of some modern authors, we find them insisting that the problem of meaning is prior to the question of existence, that is, before we can profitably inquire whether there is sufficient evidence for asserting the existence of God, we must first assure ourselves that the concept of God is free from internal self-contradiction and incoherence. For if the concept turns out to be a self-contradictory or thoroughly incoherent idea, it is a waste of time to ask *whether* there is a God. (Copleston 1974 57)

In other words, as logical analysts such as Anthony Flew (1955) put it, 'the question of consistency is logically prior to that of existence.' One can see what Flew is getting at, as he stresses the priority of logical possibility before taking the trouble, as it were, to look around for actual evidence of existence; bizarre concepts such as, for example 'a three headed giraffe' can indeed be formed by the mind, and might be thought of as lacking in 'consistency' as to logical possibility. But it should be remembered, perhaps, that such concepts, however bizarre, have their basis in other concepts already experientially formed. The concept of God is not of this type - grounded, that is, in phenomenism. In this respect, therefore, Flew's call for 'consistency' is categorically misconceived in the sense that there are other categories of meaning than those that are empirically constrained. Not only that, but the view of prior consistency within the Flewian paradigm would logically deny validity to the possibility of making such a proposition as *that* God

exists. Yet this seems the more logical way to proceed, after the manner adopted by Aquinas, namely, that 'before we can profitably reflect on talk about God, we had better assure ourselves that there is something to talk about.'(61) That there clearly *is* something to talk about is evidenced by human belief in God's existence, from the earliest times. Nor can it be said that the ontological argument of St Anselm has lost conceptual plausibility. Further, as H. P. Owen (1969) has said, to such persons who have what he calls 'the sense of God's reality' there is:

An element of absurdity in the notion that all belief in a divine reality should be suspended until the idea of God has been tidied up to the satisfaction of a logical analyst and until sufficient evidence for God's existence has been produced to satisfy the empiricist. (Owen 1969 192)

### 5.15 Insight, intuition and inference

The rationalist thesis presents its own difficulties in relation to its rejection of the possibility of a rational apprehension of God's existence. These may be described as problems of incompleteness, that is to say, to limit human understanding to the phenomena of sensory experience, viewing reason as simply providing the principles for ordering such experience, is to limit the range and scope of human reasoning. In a sense, such a view might be thought of as phenomenizing reason itself by tying it into the phenomenal situation merely as an ordering agency, and denying it any transcending intellectual power that would have any epistemological validity. Secondly, while the rationalist claim to reason being able to attain to necessary analytical truth is, in itself, justifiable, the truth that is arrived at - by balancing logically complementary elements in a proposition such as, for example, 'This figure is a triangle or not a triangle' - is a merely tautologous one. The critically reasoned framework of which Martin speaks in relation to theology considered as a language game does not stop short at the phenomena of sensory experience. It might fairly be asked 'why should it?' since, to give an obvious example, in the very exercise of one's reason about the data of experience, reason itself can scarcely be thought of as a datum of such experience.

But further, insight, intuition (and especially inference) belong to man's powers of reasoning and rational judgement, such that his *decision* to subscribe to religious belief (belief, that is, in God) can be rationally justified. *Insight* is the 'penetration with the understanding *into* circumstances, etc.'(62) It is allied with

intelligence, an apt definition of which is given by psychology when dealing with insightful learning as 'the eduction of correlates.' Experimental psychology gives a simple example of this when 'the monkey reaches outside the cage to draw in the stick that is lying there, and uses it to knock down the banana that is just out of its reach.' The monkey correlates the length of the stick and the height of the banana. Man correlates the evidence of design in the universe with its Designer. *Intuition* is commonly understood as 'an immediate apprehension by the mind without reasoning'. At the same time it might plausibly be imagined that intuition does not take place 'in vacuo'. In the case of thinking about God it could very well occur in the middle of that process. Such a view would appear to approximate to that of H.D.Lewis (1959) who at the same time enters a *caveat* that 'we must not assimilate the intuition of ultimate being, which I have been discussing, too closely to the properly technical applications of the term elsewhere in philosophy.'(63) Lewis then proceeds as follows:

It must be stressed, however, that the elusive insight or intuition in question has the same compelling character as the apprehensions we have in logic or mathematics. It presents what we feel must be the case, and its elusiveness in other regards does not affect the certainty it brings....Its necessity, in short, is in the way it is seen to be true. (Lewis 1959 47)

*Inference* is the forming of conclusions from premisses. Properly drawn, an inference carries a high degree of probability and in the presence of sufficient evidence, inference may be argued to subsume certainty. The presence of clouds and a lowering of temperature - to give an example - generally presage rain. On observing such a situation, a person deduces the strong probability of rain and takes his umbrella with him, although it is not, in fact, raining at the time. His inference is justified, however, because the rain does in fact, come. Admittedly, the inference has been made on the basis of past experience, but what is argued here is that the process of making an inference has to do with the question of probability based upon plausible evidence. Given such evidence pointing to the existence of God, it is valid because it is rational to infer on the strength of the evidence that He exists. In the case of the argument from design in the universe, the inference is that there must be a Designer. A Designer implies purpose in the world and reference has already been made to the conclusion of an increasing

number of modern scientists as to the existence of purpose inherent in the *materia* of their discoveries. While descriptive properties of the Designer are not here in question, awesome as these must be, the evidence constrains us at least to infer His *existence*. Inferential conclusions, whether by deduction, induction or probability (that is, of stated likelihood) can justify, then, the holding of religious beliefs - beliefs, that is, about God; and ontological truth can validly be inferred from experientially-mediate knowledge. 'That the Designer exists' may be held to be such an ontological truth, based upon an inference, the evidence for the making of which would, rationally speaking, appear to be compelling.

In the rationalist/empiricist blend of philosophy, it is denied that truth can be arrived at in such a manner on the grounds that, from an examination of empirical data only synthetic *a posteriori* knowledge is possible. Any truth claim advanced about the existence of an unseen Designer, it is argued, would clearly need to be of an analytical kind. Therefore, since the claim being made conflates the synthetic and the analytical - being a proposed analytical *a posteriori* truth - it is incoherent. Yet might it not be argued that this is possible if the inference is looked upon as having a transforming function in the sense that the inference acts analytically upon the mediate knowledge gained synthetically. (In saying 'mediate knowledge', we mean knowledge of the reality that lies *behind* the immediate knowledge of direct sense data experience.) Kant, reflecting on how he could say that 'all events have a cause' - which is itself an *a priori* statement - had earlier adverted to the rationalist problem of apparent incoherence when he posed the question as to how it was possible to have synthetic *a priori* knowledge. His solution was to at least keep the way open for the possibility of 'any future metaphysics that can qualify as a science.'(64)

The contention has been made that the rationalist-empiricist thesis is unjustifiably constricting because, as Allen Brent (1983) has put it, within the determinism of a causally based Newtonian framework only one form of human sensibility is declared to be valid, namely, that 'sub-set' of common-sense reflections descriptive of those immutable laws of time, space and causality, which the mind imposes upon nature. Other sub-sets of common sense experience are simply 'ruled out', by a process which Brent describes as 'logical imperialism'. Speaking of Kant and Locke, Brent explains as follows:

Both Kant and Locke, each in different ways, illustrate the operations of this logical imperialism. Not only is common-sense experience of nature evaluated within their systems, with some items being declared valid and others invalid, but common-sense experience of art, morality, religion and society is ruled out of being capable of constituting knowledge. Kant came to the conclusion that things-in-themselves could not be known, and that only things-as-they-appear could be known. Within this causal (Newtonian) framework, 'chance', 'fate', 'destiny' were thus ruled out of the sphere of significant discourse. It is curious that at least 'chance' should have been in Kant's list, in view of the centrality of random probability to quantum physics. (Brent 1983 120)

Referring to the work of the later Wittgenstein and of Naom Chomsky (1975) as having 'in part shown the imperialist rejection of other sub-sets of common-sense on the basis of scientific understanding to be invalid', Brent calls for a new synthesis.

Our account will logically require the rehabilitation of the validity of other sub-sets of common-sense experience ruled out by Kant and the empiricists, such as those of aesthetics, morals and, lastly, religion. (*ibid.*,121)

For Brent, some form of a theory of semantic universals, such as that advocated by Chomsky and J.J. Katz( 1972) 'could constitute the basis for a new synthesis'. It would seem that such a synthesis by virtue of attempting to make good the deficiencies of the rationalist/empiricist orientation would necessarily have to take account of the ontology and epistemology of metaphysics. An indication from the field of analytical philosophy itself that ontological considerations cannot in all truth be avoided has come (as remarked earlier) from P. F. Strawson (1965) expressing his opinion that there is a need for what he has termed a 'descriptive metaphysics' which, while it does not 'differ in intention from philosophical, or logical, or conceptual analysis' differs in scope and generality, 'aiming to lay bare the most general features of our conceptual structure.'(65) Furthermore, as Martin puts it:

Its analysis must probe beneath the surface of the actual use of words - not only in order to describe the *use* sometimes obscured in *usage* , we presume, but also to get at the basic structure of conceptual use itself.' (Martin 1966 183)

Clearly this is an important step taken by some analytical philosophers, and the view now taken of the possibility and purpose of metaphysics (albeit what Strawson is careful to describe as a 'descriptive' metaphysics) is indeed 'a far cry from both the pretensions of logical atomism and the restrictions of logical positivism.'(66) The contemporary Thomistic philosopher, C. B. Daly (1961) however, while cognizant of such developments in analytical philosophy, has pointed out that the analysis of such key concepts as that of the *self* and of *existence* thus far produced by analytical philosophers has been 'inadequate'. Nevertheless, Daly continues, 'more adequate analysis of these, will, in turn, illuminate further the nature of metaphysics and the relation of metaphysics to the limits of language'.(67) Habermas is, if anything, even more specific when he comments: 'The time is now ripe for a revival of transcendental philosophy.'(68)

Thus is the way indicated for a breaking out from the shackles of a rationalist, empiricist paradigm which chains man within his own thought processes and binds him to the ground of mere sensation, denying also the possibility of transcendence and the reality of Transcendent Being itself. Empirical experiences cannot be denied; neither, equally, can be denied the self-conscious reflection of the independent human person who is both aware that he is having the experiences, while at the same time having the ability to formulate the fact linguistically, and to speculate as to their quality and nature.

The relation between subject and object has long been argued in philosophy. For Kant, in *The Critique of Pure Reason* - as Roger Scruton (1979) comments - 'My knowledge of myself as subject is possible only because I employ concepts that presuppose the existence of objects.' For the phenomenologists, however, it is all a matter of complete subjectivity. Scruton writes:

The phenomenologists reaffirmed the thesis that man's subjectivity is inescapable: it is the premise from which he begins, and the real problem is not how he can escape from being an object to himself, but how the world can be an object for him. (Scruton 1979 72)

Scruton then contrasts the phenomenology of Husserl, 'and especially of Heidegger, with the view of Wittgenstein and 'his devastating critique of pure phenomenology':

Wittgenstein argues that the privileged knowledge which we have of our mental states (the privilege of 'subjectivity') is possible only because we employ a language which identifies mental states as features of a public world. The argument has the corollary that a language designed to describe 'the immediate contents' of experience, while making no suppositions about the world of objects, is impossible. If that is so, then there can be no 'pure phenomenology' of the kind expounded by Husserl and assumed by Heidegger. (*ibid.*,72)

But does not the experience of common sense testify to a reflective self-consciousness whereby it is clear that the self as subject is having in actual fact and without any doubt an objective experience? If I receive a blow, I am aware of myself as undergoing an objective experience directly as a result of the pain inflicted by the blow. The pain is a sensation but I have a clear concept of myself as receiving the blow and experiencing the pain. I can express the whole experience linguistically: 'Someone, or something has struck me. I am aware of it. What and why is this happening?' My self-reflection is not *grounded* in the immediate here and now empirical experience. My language is a free expression of my awareness. I am not chained to pure sensory experience anymore than is my language bound to 'immediate' expressions descriptive of such experience.

## 5.16 The gift and miracle of language

It may not be judged inapposite at this juncture to refer briefly to the supposition that early peoples lacked complex language structures. More plausible would seem to be the view which considers it fallacious to suppose that sophisticated conceptualization belongs only to literate civilizations, or that the languages of illiterate or so-called primitive peoples were less structured, less rich in vocabulary and less efficient than the languages of literate civilizations. 'The idea that there are still some primitive, almost *fossil* languages, embodying a very low level of conceptualization, is a vain one'. (69) As Edward Sapir (1921) the noted anthropological linguist has pointed out:

When it comes to linguistic forms, Plato walks with the Macedonian swineherd, Confucius with the head-hunting savage of Assam.(70)

In the light of this it seems pertinent to add that the religious beliefs of primitive peoples ought not either to be thought of as necessarily simplistic or expressed

in language categories lacking in subtlety since, as research has shown, monotheism was predominant from the beginning; belief in a 'High God' was widespread among early peoples.(71) Given their sophisticated linguistic categories it may be assumed that their belief in God did not lack cogency in verbal expression.

The ability to use language is one thing. It is an ability, however, ineradicably tied to using it meaningfully. In a normally adjusted individual it must be accepted as a *datum* of universal experience that his utterances carry meaning - a meaning which others who speak the same language can share and understand. A fruitful avenue, perhaps, for understanding the 'givenness' of meaning may open up in the first instance from a consideration of cognitive development in the very young child - long an area of intensive study in the field of empirical psychology and, indeed, of neurology, where the infant is considered as being heavily dependent upon what is termed the development of 'phase sequences' in the brain - a process having critical implications for intellectual capacity.(72) This development is itself dependent upon the young child receiving a sufficient amount of close, tactile, physical nurturing (after the manner of cuddling) from its parents. The ensuing linguistic stage of indiscriminate cooing and babbling is described elsewhere as that of the young child 'filtering its phonemes'. Somewhat later, a more direct stage is reached when the child begins to imitate the sounds of speakers around it, but at this stage, even when it says something sensible, the child clearly does not know what it is saying. Then, - we can only call it mysteriously - the day dawns when the child begins to speak sensibly. He listens intelligently, assesses cognitive import and replies meaningfully. The onset or dawn of meaning has arrived.(73)

We can state this descriptively but it does little to explain the miraculous change from a child babbling and talking non-sense to the same child now speaking with meaning. Chomsky speaks of language ability as part of the genetic endowment of the child: 'He is born a speaker into a world of speakers.' True though the description is, it says nothing about the wonder of it - the very facticity of human speech, the fact that we *can* speak, the amazing and nuanced intricacy of what and how we speak. Scientific description, fascinating as it is, is a poor tool for properly expressing awe when confronted by the gift of speech. 'How wonderful are your works, O Lord !' seems, somehow, a better response than merely attempting to describe this and the countless other miracles of God's bountiful creation which,



inexplicably at times, we so often take for granted when, with the prophet Daniel we ought to exclaim:

*O all you works of the Lord, O bless the Lord,*

*To him be highest glory and praise forever. (Dan 3: 57-88)*

In Christian education, not only are the findings of science admired and studied, but all the amazing aspects of creation which science has been able to discover, including those concerning man himself and his extraordinary and unique abilities, become the source of acknowledging the over-arching miracle of creation itself, and of paying due homage to the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things.

### **5.17 The intelligibility of the universe**

It is clearly true - and human experience ineluctably testifies to it - that there is more to life than the merely material and an ordered description of it. The questions were asked before but it remains no less valid to repeat them now. How does one measure poetry? Or weigh courtesy? What is there that is material about consciousness or self-reflective thinking? What possible connection can there be between the 'hard currency' of empirical data and the undisputed fact of human outreach towards the transcendent? The very contingency of scientific truth is itself an ineradicable source of dissatisfaction. Not only that, but contemporary science itself reports a whole succession of stunning discoveries that make any notion of man as mentor and imposer of order on the universe seem naive indeed. The phenomenon of order and design in nature and throughout the universe is the compelling 'given' - 'the baffling specificity of the universe' as Stanley L. Jaki puts it<sup>(74)</sup> - which makes the practice of science even possible. As Mark Doughty (1985) has remarked: 'Science would be impossible if physical phenomena were not ordered enough to be reducible to mathematical formulation.' Further, as the following citation from Doughty illustrates, there is a 'purposiveness' in nature which scientists increasingly feel bound to acknowledge:

In bio-chemistry, if a new series of compounds is discovered in an organism - the recently discovered cephalins are an example - the inevitable first question is: what are they for? We instinctively feel that purposiveness is part of the very make-up of all naturally-occurring entities

inside living matter... No scientist doubts in practice that a general ordered design operates in nature. (Doughty 1985 1092)

If this is so, then the universe is in principle intelligible. But this very intelligibility logically points to the existence of God. As Hugo Meynell (1989) has put it:

The fact that we can in principle understand the universe, as is both presupposed and illustrated by the whole scientific enterprise, gives adequate ground for belief that something like an intelligent will conceived the universe and brought it into existence. (Meynell 1989 276)

The intelligibility of the universe argues the existence of God. Meynell continues as follows:

The argument may be summarized, very briefly and schematically, as follows. If the universe were not intelligible, science would not be possible. But science is possible; therefore the universe is intelligible. If the universe is intelligible, there must be something like an intelligence at its base which accounts for this. But the universe is intelligible; therefore there is something like an intelligence at its base which accounts for this. And the something like an intelligence which is at the base of the universe is what we call God. (*ibid.*,276)

## 5.18 The Christian origin of modern science

The elevation of science to the plane of being the great and decisive arbiter of all aspects of the human condition had been celebrated by Herbert Spencer in 1885 when he extolled science as constituting 'the uniform reply...on all the counts' to the question he had posed, namely, 'What knowledge is of most worth?' 'Necessary and eternal are its truths, all Science concerns all mankind for all time.'(75) Spencer's paeon of praise of science was echoed throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and since. T. H. Huxley produced proposals for an education based overwhelmingly upon the sciences. The Logical Positivists, as has been said above, came totally to embrace and exclusively to articulate the scientific approach.

But what if the very genesis of science can be shown as necessarily emergent from natural theology and its only effective progression - as in our own modern science - as emanating from the matrix of Christian theism? Despite rationalist/positivist mechanistic theories, increasingly science is coming to be thought of

as necessarily nascent in both the understanding and the imagination. The formulation of hypotheses in science, for example, is not, clearly, an automatic process generated by naive data. The appraisal of that data and the statement of the hypothesis which informs the subsequent experiment clearly requires some exercise of the imagination, prompted by such questions as 'But supposing?', 'But what if?' Referring to Spencer's early attempt to find exclusive enlightenment in psychology concerning the genesis of science, Stanley L. Jaki (1978) has commented on those who 'disregard the fact that science is an act of understanding and as such demands for its proper interpretation, not only the tools of psychology but also those of epistemology.' Despite Spencer's 'evangelical zeal', 'this very same science, the alleged solution for each and every ill, would soon have to look for new foundations to cope with its own problems.'(76)

In his seminal work, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* (1978), his published Gifford Lectures of 1974-75 and 1975-76, Jaki convincingly establishes 'the presentation of a direct bearing of the history of science, my own field of interest, on natural theology.' The 'unabashed aim' of the lectures, he states, is to substantiate the claim: 'that the road of science, both historically and philosophically, is a logical access to the ways of God. The study of that road is the historiography of science.' (77)

For Jaki, the granting of perfection to science 'as a know-all and a cure-all' means depriving it of future history, 'and this in turn could but invite an oversimplification of its past.' Bacon and Kant's conception of the scientific method and its working in a mechanistic manner, 'could only promote indifference to the question of the origin of science both philosophically and historically.' Yet it is clearly of crucial importance for any understanding of science to be as fully cognizant as possible as to its origin. Referring to that origin, Jaki quotes the Enlightenment astronomer turned historian of astronomy, Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1777) as insisting (even if somewhat self-contradictorily in view of his 'absence of warm skies' theory to account for the failure of science in all ancient civilizations) 'that only that birth of science was genuine which was followed by growth.' It should obviously be possible to trace and understand the connection between the one and the other, that is to say between genesis and development. Jaki begins as follows:

Reflection, however brief, on the decisive impact of the embryonic stage on future development should make clear that a cursory or defective approach to origins will necessarily affect the handling of all stages. Historical processes are no exception to this rule....the same myopia about epistemology which prevented a careful weighing of the features of the origins of science also obstructed a proper understanding of the two great phases of modern science, the Newtonian and the Einsteinian. Moreover, the same myopia also supported all the attacks on the traditional proofs for the existence of God, attacks in which it was almost invariably overlooked that the proofs were ultimately the embodiment of reflections on what is the ultimate in intelligibility and being. As with the origin, the ultimate too cannot be wholly dismissed, only redefined. This process of redefinition inevitably affects reflections on science, especially when science is taken for the ultimate in explanation. Consequently, attacks on natural theology could readily become attacks on science whenever their principal presuppositions were rigorously and consistently applied in scientific methodology and historiography. This parallel is supported by a vast array of evidence... (*ibid.*,4, 5)

Jaki's thesis, which he documents magisterially, is that 'from Copernicus to Newton it was not deism but Christian theism that served as a principal factor in helping the scientific enterprise reach self-sustaining maturity' - a fact obscured by 'the smug spokesmen of the century of Enlightenment.'

This should have been evident to any careful reader of their texts even if he kept swearing by the scientific and intellectual darkness of the Middle Ages. But the smugness of the Enlightenment did not permit an enlightened reading of the classics of the newly born science, a restriction which has begun to be disavowed only recently. (*ibid.*,11)

Referring to A.N.Whitehead's 'famous statement' that medieval theism was a crucial factor in the emergence of science and to Pierre Duhem's (1913) 'overwhelming documentation of a solid interest in science from the twelfth century onwards and of the support given that interest by the Christian theism of the medievals'(78) - the crusading advocates of the Enlightenment 'wanted a theism wholly severed from historic Christianity' - Jaki proceeds to demonstrate the weakness of George Sarton's (1927) claim that science was the slowly accumulating work of all ancient peoples regardless of race, religion and culture. This claim was contradicted by the fact of the failure of science in all great ancient cultures that

preceded Christianity, and the reason for the failure lay in the absence of theism - of a cogent natural theology. In his *Science and Civilization in China*, for example, Joseph Needham (1954), 'in spite of of his avowed Marxism':

Gave prominent place among causes that prevented the escape of science from its blind alley in ancient China to a theological cause, namely, the early vanishing among the Chinese of a belief in a rational Law-giver. The Chinese could not bring themselves to believe that man was able to trace out at least some of the laws of the physical universe. (ibid.,14)

Failure in natural theology was equally apparent in Indian culture where time and again God is identified with creation (or nature) in the *Rig-Veda*, which describes the coming into being as an inevitable inner development within the pantheistic cosmic entity. Hindu cosmogony 'fell more and more under the sway of the idea of eternal recurrence in the cosmic unfolding of the Brahma.' Jaki proceeds to elaborate this crucial cosmological weakness as follows:

In the India and China of old the connection between the gradual withering of science and the ascendancy of belief in eternal recurrence stands out in bold relief. The same is also plausibly clear in the cultures of the pyramids, the Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Maya. The evidence for the same in ancient Greece and among Muslim Arabs has its special instructiveness for any historian of Western science. (ibid.,16)

In the first eight chapters of his earlier *Science and Creation: From Eternal Cycles to an Oscillating Universe* (1974), Jaki details and documents what he has said here. But the author's thesis is clear. The genesis and creative progression of modern science has only been possible as a result of the connection with natural theology, and, in point of historical fact, that has been Christian theism. Stating that it is not suggested that the philosophy and theology of eternal returns wholly accounts for the failure of science in all great ancient cultures, Jaki, nevertheless, continues:

Yet the philosophy and theology in question seem to be the only common factor to all those cultures. That factor is as much a major cultural pattern as the failure of science is in all of them a monumental fact. That it received so little attention in an age of avid research into far less significant cultural patterns is hardly an accident. The avoidance of the issue seems to be due to that positivist resolve reminiscent of

King Lear's reluctance to look in a direction in which madness seemed to lie. While theology in its natural form is not always called madness in positivist circles, it is always looked upon as evidence of intellectual feebleness. Whatever the merit of having keen eyes for the *odium theologicum* (but not for the *odium antitheologicum*) the usefulness of this one-way vision in historiography is doubtful. With the rejection of philosophical theology one is left with socioeconomical, geopolitical, and psychological types of explanation. They all appear puny in the gigantic presence of the failure of science in all great ancient cultures. (Jaki 1974 16)

It must be said that Jaki's thesis is convincing. Certainly, such reasons as have been advanced both at the time of the Enlightenment and subsequently, have not only seemed inadequate in themselves to account for the remarkable failure of science in great ancient cultures, but, in addition, the evidence is clear that the prophets of the Enlightenment such as Voltaire, Condorcet, Diderot and even the illustrious astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly were also determined enemies of the Church; and, as Jaki relates of Bailly, 'blindfolded by a deism suspicious of anything Christian in cultural history.' Subsequently, the heritage of positivist rejection of natural theology in any form - emanating from the post-Enlightenment writings of Auguste Comte and aided by the empiricism of David Hume (whom Comte greatly admired) contributed powerfully to the 'myopia' of which Jaki speaks. However one might judge the strength of the 'absence of warm skies' argument, or the 'equally unsustainable' arguments advanced by George Sarton in 1927 and 1936 ('the early burning out of a genius' in the case of the Greeks, and, 'the slowly accumulating work of all ancient peoples') the 'myopia' becomes all the more remarkable when it is realized, as Jaki points out, that Pierre Duhem's *Le système du monde*, 'a work that represented a Copernican turn in the historiography of science', had already been published - and virtually ignored. Duhem, however, was unequivocal in his exposing of the inadequacies in natural theology among the ancients, until the coming, that is, of Christianity:

To the construction of this system (of the divinity of the heavens revolving in units measured by the Great Year) all the disciples of Greek philosophy, Peripatetics, Stoics, Neoplatonists, have contributed; to this system Abu-Mashar offers the homage of the Arabs; this system has been adopted by the most illustrious rabbis from Philo of Alexandria to Maimonides. To condemn it as a monstrous superstition and to throw it overboard Christianity had to come. (Duhem 1913/17 2:390)

Considerations such as have been advanced in the present chapter suggest that our understanding of Christian education has been too parochial, too limited and too limiting. Christian education belongs to that world of tested assumptions and values which the intervention by God into human history two thousand years ago has crystallized into belief in a loving Creator whose Only Son is Jesus Christ our Saviour - a faith for mankind which solves his/her predicament both in respect of this present world and of the world to come. The time has come for a more positive and inclusive approach to Christian education as a salutary and realistic vehicle for the education of our children for that *dual* destiny. It is an education which can rest with confidence upon the soundness of its philosophical and historico-religious foundations. In an increasingly secularistic and agnostic world, these foundations continue plausibly to uphold both a theistic world-view and a doctrinally objective religion centred upon the person and mission of the historical Jesus Christ. It is of first importance that Christian educators and parents remain aware of this since the influence of rationalist/empiricist philosophies such as Logical Positivism and Analytical Philosophy has been such as to sap confidence both in belief in God and in Christianity itself. It is no less important to be aware that - as the present chapter has sought to illustrate - these philosophies are both logically flawed and demonstrably lack justification in their seeking to treat the body-soul composite of the complex human *persona* as a merely material entity embedded in and describable purely in terms of empirical phenomena. The distinctive purview of Christian education is not only more in harmony with the transcendental potentialities and ultimate destiny of the unique human person, but can refer to a convincing weight of evidence, human, social, philosophical, historical, religious and theological, to support its assumptions and to enhance its Christian educational task. To be aware of all this should be a source of encouragement to those whose privilege it is to be engaged in Christian education. In the next chapter the theological focus will turn to an elucidation of the validity of that Christian education in terms both of the historical educational remit adopted by the Christian Church and of the faith which informs it.

## 5.19 Notes and references

1. Roy Niblett, 'Authority in Religious Education', in *Theology*, September, 1978, pp. 336-342, p. 338. See also V. A. McClelland, *The Liberal Education of Eng-*

*land's Youth: Idea and Reality*, (Hull, University of Hull, 1978), pp. 21-2: inaugural lecture delivered in the University of Hull on 4th December, 1978. Citing this quotation from Roy Niblett, and in the context of discussing the lack of agreement today 'as to the nature of the ultimate reasons and sanctions' for providing moral education, Professor McClelland remarks: 'It will be obvious from this that Niblett does not share the confidence of those who think moral education divorced from religious teaching is enough to dispel our unease. In this attitude, of course, he is not alone.'(p.22)

2. Philip May, *Which Way to School?*, (London, Lion, 1972), p. 27. See also V. A. McClelland, *The Liberal Education of England's Youth: Idea and Reality*, p. 22.

3. Hugo Meynell, 'Faith and Reason', in *The Tablet*, vol. 243, no. 7756, 11 March, 1989, pp. 276-7.

4. See Crane Brinton, *The Shaping of Modern Thought* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1950), p. 35.

5. *ibid.*, p. 33.

6. *ibid.*, p. 34.

7. Voltaire and Thomas Jefferson might be cited as examples.

8. A. N. Whitehead, in his *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (London, Ernest Benn Limited, 1932), for example, is both explicit and concise: 'Pray, what is religious education? A religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence.' ('Duty arises from our potential control over the course of events. Where attainable knowledge could have changed the issue, ignorance has the guilt of vice. And the foundation of reverence is this perception, that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards, and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity.') p.23.

9. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (London, Image Books Edition, 1959) Discourse V: 'Knowledge Its Own End', p. 105. First published in 1852.

10. See, for example, Edwin Cox, *Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education* (London, Hodder and Staunton, 1983). Discussing the 1944 Education Act, Cox states: 'Though the wording of the Act never specifies what religion was to be taught, and what type of worship was to be conducted, it was assumed that Christianity was intended, and probably Protestant Christianity....That when the Bill said *religion* the word *Christianity* was to be read is clearly shown in many of the speeches in support of it in both Houses: *It is the intention of the Government and of the Bill that the religious instruction required to be given shall be Christian instruction, and that the corporate act of worship shall be an act of Christian worship.*' pp. 4-5.

11. See P. H. Hirst, 'Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?', in *Learning for Living*, 11, 4, 1972, 6-11.



12. See B. A. Cooper, 'Peter's Concept of Education', in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 5, 1973, pp. 59-76, (p.61).
13. R. T. Allen, 'Rational Autonomy: The Destruction of Freedom', in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 16, 2 1982, pp. 199-207.
14. See Marie Schilling, 'Knowledge and Liberal Education: A Critique of Paul Hirst', in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1986, p. 12.
15. See John Sealey, *Religious Education: Philosophical Perspectives* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 16.
16. Marie Schilling, 'Knowledge and Liberal Education', p. 3.
17. P. H. Hirst, *Knowledge and the Curriculum* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974a), p. 93.
18. Alvin Platinga, 'The Evidentialist Objection to Theistic Belief': Lecture delivered under the auspices of the Irish Christian Study Centre, at Queen's University, Belfast, November, 1987. As well as dealing with the self-referential incoherence of Foundationalism, Platinga made the following common-sense observation against the rational pre-occupations of the Evidentialists: 'The suggestion is that there are intellectual obligations. I would not contest this. Of course these would be *prima facie* obligations, but these can be overridden by other - *all things considered* - obligations.' Intellectualism is thus allocated its place in the sensitive complex of the human *persona*, but not a rigidly excluding one. Room needs surely to be left for insight, for example, or the 'Common Sense' concept of Pierre Duhem, the great and much neglected historiographer of science whose monumental *Le système du monde* (reference to which is made later in this chapter) appeared during the second decade of this century. See also, A. Platinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974) for a defence of the coherence of theism and arguments for reaching a religious understanding of the problem of evil.
19. Elmer J. Thiessen, 'Christian Nurture, Indoctrination and Liberal Education: Some Practical Suggestions': (Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat College, April/May, 1990), p. 5.
20. See Leslie J. Francis, *The Logic of Education, Theology and the Church School* (Abingdon, Culham Educational Foundation, 1983)
21. *ibid.*, pp. 9, 10.
22. Schilling, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
23. Francis, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
24. *ibid.*, p. 11.
25. See note 19, above. Paper read by Thiessen to a North of England Institute for Christian Education (NEICE) seminar, University of Durham, 4 May 1990.

26. *ibid.*, p. 7.

27. See P. H. Hirst, 'Religion: A Form of Knowledge? A Reply', in *Learning for Living*, 12, 4. 1973a, pp. 8-10.

28. See P. H. Hirst, *Knowledge and the Curriculum* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974)

29. Harold Loukes' problem-centred Implicit Religion approach in the late 1960s, for example, began to experience difficulties in holding on to a content that could be called religious. Ronald Goldman's 'readiness for religion' model was finally rendered obsolete through serious criticisms of Piaget's child developmental psychology (see below). Phenomenological models are generally pedagogically weak and have as well been criticised for failing in the most central issue of showing what religion really is. Personal quest/experiential models have been criticised for 'lacking satisfactory structures on which practical classroom work may be based.' It needs also to be said, however, that Loukes' own *Teenage Religion* together with a report produced by Sheffield Institute of Education entitled *Religious Education in Secondary Schools* - both of which appeared in 1961 - confirmed Basil Yeaxlee's earlier (1957) report (*Religious Education in School*) that all was not well in religious education, and this less than twenty years after the 1944 Act. Yeaxlee showed that 'the teaching was meeting at best with mixed success'. With regard to both the Sheffield report and Loukes, 'The former showed that many children were not retaining more than a little of what they were being taught, and the latter pointed out that they were misunderstanding most of what they were remembering.' The most significant conclusion of Loukes' book, however, would seem to be that while pupils at the top of the secondary modern school 'had a live interest in religion and a sensitivity to religious issues', 'the teaching they were receiving did not seem to them to relate to that interest.' Discussing this in the second chapter of his book, *Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education* Edwin Cox (1983) states: 'The first place where an explanation was sought was in the psychology of religious development in children.' (p.14) It might be thought, at least in retrospect, that this was unfortunate in view of damaging criticisms of Piaget's child developmental psychology, upon which Goldman and others so heavily relied. See, for example, Peter Bryant's (1982) editorial and the whole issue of the *British Journal of Psychology*, 'Special Issue: Piaget: Issues and Experiments': vol 73, Part 2, May, 1982; and Peter Bryant's (1984) 'Piaget, Teachers and Psychologists', in *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1984, pp. 251-9. Also see Margaret Donaldson, *Children's Minds*, (London, Fontana, 1978). The phrase, *A Permanent Identity Crisis*, is from the title of David Day's article 'Religious Education Forty Years On: A Permanent Identity Crisis?' (*British Journal of Religious Education*, 1984, pp. 55-63). Day's thesis is that the seeds of the identity crisis were sown in 1944 and have grown over the following forty years. 'The point is illustrated by the different names suggested for the subject: Religious Instruction, Scripture, Bible Knowledge, Divinity, Religious Education, Religious Studies and, even, Education

in Stances for Living.' (P.55)

30. Cox (*op. cit.*) points out that 'public opinion polls which have inquired into parents' wishes have shown a strong majority in favour of retaining the subject, which may account for why there has been no inclination on the part of politicians to consider any modification of the religious clauses of the 1944 Act.' *New Society*, 5, 139, May, 1965, records one such poll. Philip May summarizes the findings of the investigation which he and O. R. Johnson had conducted in *Learning for Living*, 6, 4, 1966. The *Dictionary of Education*, referring to the 1965 poll states: 'A national opinion survey in 1965 gave a 90 % support for the continuation of religion in schools. 78% per cent thought of Britain as a Christian country. All the Agreed Syllabuses were 'unmistakably Christian'. (*Dictionary of Education*, pp. 607- 609).

31. See 'A Reply to my Critics', in P. A. Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore* (London, 1942) p. 665.

32. See 'The Thought: A Logical Inquiry', translated by A. M., and M. Quinton, in *Mind*, lxxv, 1956, pp. 309 ff.

33. L. Jonathan Cohen, *The Diversity of Meaning* (London, Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1966, 2nd edition) p. 2.

34. *ibid.*, p. 21.

35. *ibid.*, p. 2.

36. *ibid.*, p. 16.

37. See note 30 above.

38. See article by Norbert Schiffrers in Karl Rahner (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Theology: A Consise Sacramentum Mundi* (London Burns and Oates 1975), in the section 'Religion: 1. Concept of Religion: A. Religion in General': pp. 1357- 1362.

39. See the Swann Report: (*The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups*), March, 1985. The statistics for the West Indian and Asian populations are for the year 1981 and were supplied by the Ethnic Statistics Unit, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. They are given in Swann in a footnote to Page xii of the Preface.

40. Thiessen, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

41. See Edward Hulmes, *Commitment and Neutrality in Religious Education* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), pp. 33, 34, and *passim*.

42. D. W. Hamlyn, *The Theory of Knowledge* (London, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1971), p. 72.

43. See James Alfred Martin *The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology* (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1966), p. 181.

44. Brian Magee, *Men of Ideas* (London, BBC, 1978), p. 126.
45. *ibid.*, p. 137.
46. A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic* (London, Victor Gollancz) appeared in 1936. His revised second edition appeared in 1946.
47. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
48. See Ayer's conversation with Brian Magee in the latter's *Men of Ideas*, p. 123.
49. *ibid.*, p. 120.
50. Quoted in Charles Davis, *Theology and Political Society* The Hulsean lectures in the University of Cambridge, 1978, (Cambridge University Press, 1980) p.80. See also Jürgen Habermas' *Knowledge and Human Interests* (translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro) (Boston, Beacon Press, 1972b), p. 67. See, also, Theodore Adorno, et al., (eds), *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (London, Heinemann, 1976)
51. See Magee, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
52. *ibid.*, p. 136.
53. *ibid.*, p. 147.
54. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 124.
55. See Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things*, (London, Penguin, 1968), p. 53.
56. *ibid.*, p. 58.
57. See Bill McSweeney, 'Meaning, Context and Situation', in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie: European Journal of Sociology*, XIV, 1, 1973, pp.137-153 (p. 147). McSweeney sets out to show that 'ethnomethodology, by its denial of theory, and its undersocialized conception of man, is as inadequate in its treatment of meaning as crude positivism.'
58. *ibid.*, p.149.
59. See Stuart Hampshire's discussion on this point in his *Thought and Action*, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1959) pp. 233-4.
60. *ibid.*
61. See Frederick C. Copelstone, S.J., *Religion and Philosophy*, (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1974, p. 57.
62. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1976), p. 559.
63. In relation, that is, to 'modes of knowledge'. See H.D.Lewis, *Our Experience of God*, (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 47.
64. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomenon to Any Future Metaphysics*, (New York, The

Liberal Arts Press, 1951). James Alfred Martin (1966) paraphrases Kant's enunciation of the problem as follows:

He continued the distinction embraced by Hume between rational-deductive, or 'analytic' and experiential-inductive or 'synthetic', propositions. But he was convinced that some statements, such as 'every event has a cause', do not fall neatly on either side of this rigid classification, particularly if one assumes that one 'knows' the truth of an analytic proposition *a priori*, prior to any experiential instantiation, simply from knowledge of the meaning of its terms, whereas the truth of all synthetic propositions is known only through experience. It seemed to him that propositions such as 'every event has a cause' are synthetic. That is, one cannot deduce from the knowledge that something is an 'event' the knowledge that it has a cause; yet, we seem somehow to 'know' that all events have causes even before we trace their causal connections. How, then, he asked, is 'synthetic knowledge *a priori*' possible. (Martin, 1966 26)

65. See Martin, *The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology*, pp. 181-4; and P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, (New York, Doubleday Anchor Books: London, Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1965)

66. Martin, *op. cit.*, 183.

67. *ibid.*, 184.

68. See Charles Davis, *Theology and Political Society*, p.81.

69. See extended article entitled 'Language', in *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol.10, 15th edition, 1991, p. 579.

70. *ibid.*, p. 575.

71. In his illuminating work, *Religion and Psychology*, (New York, Alba House, 1978), and in the course of his discussing Freud's view on the genesis of religion, E. F. O'Donnell states:

In the nineteenth century, from studies of comparative religion, it was thought that the evolution of religion was from primitive animism through polytheism to monotheism. Freud believed this. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1922) described the evolution of religious thought from primitive animistic belief in spirits dwelling in trees, streams, etc., through the idea of several gods, to a belief in one God. It is now known, however, that the polytheism and animism are degenerate forms: man begins with a belief in God but monotheism may degenerate over time to polytheism and animism. (p.10)

72. The neural function 'phase sequence' is named and described by the British

neurologist, Head. See, also, D.O.Hebb, *The Organization of Behaviour*, (New York, Wiley, 1949)

73. See, for example, M.M. Lewis, *How Children Learn to Speak*, (London, George G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., 1957). 'It is meaning rather than structure that becomes the most important factor in a child's linguistic development....At first they are interested in finding words for the things they see; later, in finding the meaning of the words they come across.' (p. 19.)

74. Stanley L. Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* (Edinburgh Scottish Academic Press 1978), p. 79.

75. Spencer's eulogy was delivered in 1885 to The Royal Institution of Great Britain, in a lecture entitled 'What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?'. It was later published in the *Westminster Review* of 1889, pp. 1-41, and in *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical*, (New York, D. Appleton, 1889), circ. p. 90 ff.

76. Stanley L. Jaki, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

77. *ibid.*, p. 13.

78. Pierre Duhem *Le Système du Monde: Histoire des Doctrines Cosmologiques de Plato à Copernic* (Paris, A Hermann et Fils, 1913), vol.i (1913) - vol x (1959)

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## Chapter VI

### THE VALIDITY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Over and over again the argument brings us back to the same questions, do we believe in God or do we not; are we and our children spiritual beings or are we not? This is the real issue for education and for all life; the forking of the ways, and there is no third path. (Spencer Leeson(1))

#### 6.1 Religion and psychology

Chapter 5 approached the post-Enlightenment rationalist/empiricist challenge in order to make some contribution, however modest, towards strengthening confidence in confessionally Christian education. The same chapter sought to establish the educational integrity of Christian religious education through its analysis of the concept of religious education. It was also shown that the claims of Christian education to educational integrity cannot be dismissed because of its confessionalism since all education, not excluding contemporary liberal education, is both purposeful in its aims and based upon commitment to underlying assumptions and values. In addition, section 5 of the same chapter dealt with the educational *competence* of Christian education as, in fact, pursued by the Church with some distinction over many centuries throughout Europe. The present chapter aims to elucidate the validity of Christian education with particular regard to the faith which informs it - that faith being seen not only as giving form and spirit to the universal religious tendency, but also as its culmination and apex. The issues, then, are complex. Indeed, as Jeff Astley (1987) has stated:

The study of Christian education raises some of the most urgent and the most difficult theological issues: not only about the relationship of human beings to God, but also about the nature of Christianity itself and the psychological and philosophical foundations of religion. (Astley 1987 26)

This clearly involves some consideration of fundamental issues such as broach upon the genesis of the religious tendency in man - the religious archetype as Jung

described it. Jung's archetypes are behavioural patterns which he saw as emanating from an innate 'readiness to behave in certain ways, given appropriate stimuli from the environment.' But the *religious* archetype becomes problematical in such a context if attempts are made to relate it either to psychological behavioural patterns or evolutionary development. The altruism of Christianity, for example, can scarcely be thought of in terms of natural selection or 'the survival of the fittest.' Discussing this, Russell Stannard (1985) has plausibly remarked:

It is tempting, therefore, to draw the conclusion that the religious archetype - the archetype that does not appear to be explicable in terms of evolution by natural selection - has arisen from the action of an imprinter: God. (Stannard 1985 3)

Stannard, however, then proceeds to state: 'But there is no proof of this; nor can there be any such proof, if all we have to go on is a religious experience of God.'<sup>(2)</sup> But does Stannard's putative conclusion need, in fact, to rely upon 'religious experience'? In any event, can religion be confined within the parameters of the purely subjective? In the previous chapter it was argued at some length on philosophical grounds that belief in the objective existence of God (the *prime datum* and proper object of religion) can, with a convincing degree of plausibility be arrived at by a rational and imaginative consideration of the evidence which in addition refuses to be bound within the flawed constrictions demanded by the empiricist orientation. Here, the same constrictions would appear to manifest themselves in the attempt to confine discussion on the religious impulse or tendency solely within the realm of purely subjective experience. Once again it needs to be reiterated that there is more to the complex body-soul composite, man, than the aggregate of his empirical experiences. But is there, in fact, such a thing as a 'religious' experience? E.F.O'Doherty (1978), for example, denies that there is. The following citation from O'Doherty illustrates what he terms a confusing of 'the subjective experiential dimension' with 'the supposedly religious value of this dimension.'

Most of the literature in the field of religion and psychology confuses the subjective experiential dimension with the supposedly religious value of this dimension. There is no channel of experience in the religious sphere which is specific to religion. There is no 'religious' way of experiencing. There is no 'quality' of religious experiences, no definable entity which makes something a religious 'thing'. It is the 'object' of the experience

that make it religious, for example, the fact that prayer is directed to God. The assumption of James (1902), Thouless (1956), Laski (1961), and other authors in this area is that it is the quality of the experience itself that defines it as religious. (O'Doherty 1978 48)

Not only, states O'Doherty, is the quality of an experience *not* a criterion of the religious nature of the experience, but to assume so 'can be misleading, unreliable and totally unrelated to any genuine religious activity.' If religion becomes such a subjective phenomenon, not only does it elude close study but 'it makes it possible for a person to reject it totally and become an atheist or an agnostic merely on the ground that these very elusive and deceptive experiences called 'religious' have not so far come his way'.(3) O'Doherty is concerned to counteract the notion that *the religious value* derives from the infrarational such as the Jungian concept of religion would have it - religion is a set of values deriving precisely from the infrarational. On the other hand, and describing his work as being 'grounded in faith and written frankly from the standpoint of a believer who is also a psychologist', O'Doherty accepts that religion is mediated at its deepest level in terms of the human *psyche*. The psyche he describes as 'the amalgam of all the functions of the organism in its organic existence', distinguishing it from the *soul* itself - 'the first principle or ultimate source of the functions of the living organism.' In other words, in the human person 'the functions of the soul (in other words, the psyche) are distinct from the soul as the source of the functions.'(4) The psyche *is* the complex amalgam of all the functions of the living organism. 'These derive from the soul, but the soul is not its own functions.'(5) This distinction has important implications as will be seen later in the chapter when discussing, for example, the view that religion is a form of psychotherapy. In respect of the religious tendency in man, it clearly has to be in terms of the psyche - 'there is only one psyche' - but, as O'Doherty puts it:

The fact that we discover that religion is in terms of the psyche as the psychologist discovers it to be, does not mean that religion is, therefore, not true. We have only one psyche and the fact that the same processes operate in the learning of religion as in other areas does not falsify either the one or the other. (*ibid.*,19)

When it comes to considering the question of revelation, O'Doherty is both unequivocal and illuminating.

If our understanding of mind and psyche bears any relation to reality, then we shall find that revelation, if it took place, will have been made in terms of the psyche that we know....The facts that the idea of God is borne in human images or that prayer is akin to ritual, appear to have constrained the analysts to say that therefore religion is a subrational process. On the contrary, however, since religion is God's revelation to man we should expect to find in it just those elements that cater to our needs. If God reveals himself to man he will do so in terms of man's nature and through the normal channels of acquiring knowledge. The fact that a religious function satisfies a non-rational process or need does not negate its religious value. But we must be clear that the religious value does not derive from the infrarational. (*ibid.*,19)

## 6.2 Early man and belief in God

It is a postulate of this chapter that man's incorrigible dissatisfaction with the temporalities of the space-time continuum in which he finds himself inevitably prompts the conclusion he keeps arriving at that there is 'something more' - which is the very ground for a coming to believe in a transcendent, absolute being, namely, God. The image of God formed on the authority of conscience in the mind of man, of which Cardinal Newman speaks, must surely have been known to early man. The image admits of being strengthened and improved 'by informations external to ourselves as time goes on.'(6) Might it not be the case that early religion helped to supply this function for pre-Christian man? The *human* condition of early *man* cannot, logically, have been significantly different from man of today. Edward Sapir's reference (*supra*, page 218) to the complexity of the linguistic forms of 'primitive' peoples prompts the remark that to attribute low levels of intelligence to these people seems, equally, implausible. It is, therefore, not surprising to discover, as Andrew Lang (1898) and other scholars such as Wilhelm Schmidt (1926/55 and 1933) and Paul Redin (1924) have stated (7), that a general theory of primitive *monotheism* is attributable to early peoples.

Commenting on the inability of those scientists - Humanists who strongly support evolutionary theory - to accept the existence of God, Albert Lalonde (1980) states:

It is ironic that these same scientists who cannot believe in God make a much greater act of faith when they declare their *belief* that the entire

order of the universe just happened through a chance interchange of atoms. (Lalonde 1980 9)

In his well-argued paper on Humanism, 'A Religion without God', Lalonde refers to the theory of evolution as 'the main pillar in the edifice of the Humanist religion.' 'If this pillar crumbles, the entire Humanist structure falls. It is a possibility they refuse to face.' The author concludes as follows:

Perhaps the best example of their position is found in a statement by the famous British anthropologist, Sir Arthur Keith: 'Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it because the only alternative is special creation and that is unthinkable.' Their position is understandable: for to believe in creation is to believe in God - and that, for the Humanist, is unthinkable. (*ibid.*,9)

Of the forms which early religion came to adopt, it might plausibly be said that each in its own way proclaimed the human need to reach out towards the Supreme Being, and to acknowledge a sense of dependence through worship. Thus, early man's world view may be thought of as, typically, a religious one, indicating, as Barreau (1976) has put it, that 'of all human impulses, religion is the most characteristically human.'(8) It might even be held that 'true religion' existed among early human peoples until finally completed and perfected by God's revelation to man, at a discernible point in time, in Jesus Christ. Is there a sense in which one can speak of a Universal Revelation, while still holding to the fact that Christ *alone* is the Saviour of the world? Gerald O'Collins (1968) points out that just as there is only one Saviour for mankind, so there is only one 'true light that enlightens every man'.(9) That light whether explicitly identified or not is Christ.

For all men there is an abiding possibility of knowing God from the external works of his creation and in man's own moral consciousness. Now Christ is not merely the goal of this creation, but he is himself the agent of creation: 'All things were created through him' as well as 'for him' (Col 1. 16). In knowing God through creation one knows - however dimly - Christ. (O'Collins 1968 70)

When Christian faith refers to a revelation which occurred at a particular place and time, namely, through Jesus of Nazareth in the context of Israelite history, it is not denying, O'Collins states, that revelation was possible and actual at other times and places.

It asserts that God's revealing activity reached at that point an expression in history and language which Christians acknowledge as definitive and normative. (*ibid.*,70)

St Augustine is illuminating on the matter:

That which is now called the Christian religion already existed among the ancients, and was never absent since the human race began, till Christ appeared in the flesh. From then on, the true religion, which had always existed, began to be called Christianity.(10)

In view of all that has been said so far, the agnostic's position might best be understood as one of reaction to the generality of human experience, and, in the light of Anthony Flew's (1955) demand that the debate on the existence of God ought to begin from the presumption of atheism, as not according with the evidence of this experience. To bind truth solely to the ground of man's sensory experience and at the same time philosophically to adopt an agnosticism that denies any possibility of reaching truth other than by the purely empirical is to fly in the face of human sensibility, rational thinking and the ontological breadth of human experience. There is clearly more to love, altruism and heroism, for example, than empirical criteria can supply. Wilfred Cantwell Smith's (1972) resumé, of man's apprehension that there is 'something more' to himself and his world than that which is predicated solely of sensory experience indicates the narrowness of the empiricist-agnostic position.

There is more to human life than meets the eye. More to oneself; more to one's neighbour; more to the world that surrounds us. There is more to the past out of which we come; and especially, it would seem, more to the present moment, maybe even infinitely more. There is more to the interrelationships that bind us together as persons. And the further we probe, men have always found, the deeper the mystery, or the reward, or the involvement. It is this 'more', perhaps, that provides at least one of the bases for human religion. We men have seldom been content to be 'superficial', to imagine that reality does not transcend our finite grasp; and throughout most of our history on this planet we have ordered our lives, both personal and cultural, in terms of that transcendence. (Cantwell Smith 1972)

At times, clearly, the worship of the Supreme Being among early peoples did degenerate into polytheism or some form of animism but, as has been said,



the trend from the beginning was towards monotheism. The historical story of the Jewish people provides a unique example of the continuous worship from very early times of the One True God, *Yahweh*, and of His communicative relations with them, as related in the books of the Old Testament, until his final revelation to all mankind in Jesus Christ, as the New Testament bears witness. Religion can be seen as the vehicle whereby man's innate sense of outreach to the Transcendent is formalized and directed towards its proper object. The Christian religion, by virtue of God becoming incarnate in Christ Jesus, the Lord, lays claim to being its unique and most perfect expression.

### 6.3 *Ersatz* religion

Aberrational forms can distract and mislead. Secularistic Humanism is one such example as the following citation from John Dewey (1934) illustrates:

In humanism are all the elements of a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant. (Dewey 1934 87)

In addition to this there are other faiths and ideologies which may not be immediately apparent as such but to which attention ought to be directed. Paul C. Vitz (1977) has referred to the Self-theories of Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Rollo May. He argues persuasively that psychology itself has become a religion, that is, as a particular form of secular Humanism based on worship of the self. Vitz, himself a psychologist and a Christian, is critical, indeed, of the harm Self-Theory has done to modern society.

Psychology as religion has for years been destroying individuals, families, and communities. But for the first time the destructive logic of this secular religion is beginning to be understood, and as more and more people discover the emptiness of self-worship, Christianity is presented with a major historical opportunity to provide meaning and life. (Vitz 1977 10)

Vitz's criticism is severe but it must be said that he provides evidence of the extremes to which Self-Theory has gone and how the worship of the Self has led to a deadening sense of personal alienation in so many people, particularly, in his experience, in the United States of America. He refers to a popular form

of Self-Theory called *est*, (Erhard Seminar Training), and quotes an *est* graduate, Carl Frederick, as follows:

You are the Supreme being. Reality is a reflection of your notions. Totally. Perfectly...You had the notion that communicating would be more fun. And you created all the rules. So you are responsible for the game as it is. All of it. And it has no significance. You're *IT*. Choose. It has no significance. Choose. Life is one big 'SO WHAT?' CHOOSE. (*ibid.*,31)

Lest it be thought that Frederick has trivialized and distorted the original message, Vitz quotes Carl Rogers as follows:

I am the one who chooses...I am the one who determines the value of an experience for me. (*ibid.*,31)

He compares what Frederick says with the existential philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre:

If I've discarded God the father, there has to be someone to invent values...To say that we invent values means nothing else but this: life has no meaning *a priori*. Before you come alive, life is nothing; it's up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing else but the meaning you choose. (*ibid.*,31)

The self-psychologists are, of course, only one segment of the discipline. Experimental psychology, as such, can be excluded from the present discussion and probably much of psychoanalysis. As well as this, there are psychologists who recognize, respect and respond to genuine religious issues in the lives of their patients. It is these psychologists, as Vitz remarks, who provide a basis for the hope that a strong, honest partnership may eventually develop between psychology and religion. E. F. O'Doherty (1978) may be taken as an example of such a psychologist as he addresses the issues of religion, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy on the one hand, and appraises revelation and the human psyche on the other. His analysis may be judged of some particular interest when compared and contrasted with the Freudian and Jungian paradigms. According to Freud, religion originates in man's helplessness before his own instinctive fears within (fear of his own aggression and the force of the libido), and the threatening forces of nature without. For Jung, however, all religions are schools of psychotherapy, God is a projection of an unconscious fantasy, religion is, in effect, 'a system of psychic healing.' It has been

noted earlier in this chapter, however, there is much more to religion than subjective experience. Indeed, as O'Doherty puts it, it is not the function of religion *as such* to make man happy, just as it is not the function of religion to make man healthy.

The formal function of religion as such is the worship of God, the manifestation of his glory in time and in eternity, and by this means the sanctification and salvation of human persons. In the vision of God, man achieves happiness, but it is not the primary function of religion that man should achieve happiness either in this world or hereafter. (O'Doherty 1978 29)

Some theologians have appeared to accept the Jungian view of religion as a form of psychotherapy - Josef Goldbrunner (1955) for example. Others - David Cox (1959) for example - have pointed out with more cogency that psychotherapy is not an alternative to Christianity. In this context it is apposite to refer also to the work of modernist Protestants such as Frank Lake (1966) who have been attempting to combine clinical psychology with theology in what has come to be termed Clinical Theology. But the *reality* of the 'theological' component in this psychotherapy is clearly open to questioning. Steve Bruce (1984) puts it as follows:

The important question is to what degree does Clinical Theology differ from secular psychiatries? There is much talk of Christ and the Holy Spirit but it seems that the traditional Christian doctrines have been psychologized and secularized. For example, the 'schizoid' condition (a common problem in Lake's view) seems to be the result of alienation from Christ, oneself and others. But Christ himself seems to have been 'existentialized' from being God incarnate to being some sort of psychological superman. (Bruce 1984 140)

Contrasting 'this surrender to the secular world' with the growing popularity of the Presbyterian Calvinist, Jay E. Adams (1974 1976 1977) and his 'assertively Christian' Nouthetic Counselling approach, Bruce traces the latter's recent development in Britain, describing it as being along an axis 'which has the Bible at one end and secular therapies and theories at the other end.' Fundamentally evangelical in its origins, this Christian counselling movement now has something of 'an eclectic flavour' - Adams' nouthetic counselling at the religious end, the Crusade for World Revival (another focus of the Christian counselling movement) somewhere in the middle, and 'the liberal Protestants who do engage in this sort

of thing (who) are found at, or near, the thoroughly secular end.' In 1975, for example, the Student Christian Movement offered a course entitled 'Gestalt Orientation and Alinsky Training'. Bruce's comment significantly indicates the chasm which exists between such personalist socio-therapeutic systems and courses - and religion.

The interesting feature of the SCM's rationale for putting on this course is the total absence of any specific reference to Christianity. The word 'Christ' does not appear and the only overt mention of religion comes in a curious passage that seems to owe more to the Manichean heresy than to traditional Christianity. (*ibid.*,141)

The tradition of seeking personal spiritual help and guidance from one's priest or minister is a hallowed one in the Church. The doctrine of the forgiveness of sin through the merits of Jesus Christ and under conditions of sincere sorrow and a firm purpose of amendment, promotes a spiritual healing in the individual that raises him to the tranquility of being at peace with God and with his fellow men. It seems only too clear that having resort to secularistic Rogerian-type psychotherapies for, as it is put, 'actualizing one's potential' is neither helpful - quite the opposite as Vitz's critique demonstrates - nor even a valid approach within the context of religion, given their atheistic or agnostic bias. The philosophical bases are polar opposites. One embraces a world view in which the individual relates to a personal and loving heavenly Father. The other promotes an inward-looking and alienating contemplation of the Self. Might it not plausibly be argued that it is the absence of religion, and of the sense of moral equilibrium which the practice of religion brings, which has allowed the substitution of disappointing and unfulfilling psychotherapeutic systems? In this context the sanity and mental balance of the great mystics of the Christian Church - Teresa of Avila and Francis of Assisi to name only two - come readily to mind. Yet if one thing characterized these saints (a status, it might be added, to which *all* Christians are called upon to aspire) it was their love of God and their practice of forgetfulness of self.(11)

In this may be glimpsed something of the importance of religion's contribution to man himself. While it is formally concerned with the acknowledgement and worship of God by his creatures, it is in his practical fulfilment of this concern that man - who, let it be admitted, is demonstrably *not* the measure of all things - strikes the psychological balance between himself, his world, and his Creator. In

the process, he harmonizes his God-given powers in respect of himself and of his world with chimes of the Divine made manifest in the historic intervention of the Incarnation. In such a situation the practice of religion can be, and indeed ought to be, deeply satisfying both for the individual and for the believing community of which he is a member. The extrapolation is outwards and away from an alienating self-contemplation. Indeed, the focus of attention is the Creator Himself, in whose service resides the ultimate realization of human potential.

## 6.4 The Church and the Academy

In the early Christian Church Tertullian's question 'Quid Athene Hiersolymis?' was effectively answered by Origen and the founding of what might be termed the first Christian university at Alexandria. Yet the kerygma is simply a preaching of the Good News to those who will listen, and if these are 'men of good will' then by the grace of God the gift of faith may very well come to them. In the event, the great injunction is to 'preach the Gospel to every creature', 'teaching them to observe what I have commanded' and to baptize those who accept Jesus as Saviour 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. In the early Church it was the credibility of the apostles as witnesses that counted. Perhaps it ought to be remembered that the action of the Holy Spirit played an open and significant part in the conversion of the first five thousand Pentecostal Christians.

Philosophical debate would appear not to have played any great part in the early growth of the nascent Church although St Paul did address the philosophically minded Athenians. Tertullian, however, viewed the philosophical approach unequivocally as the breeding ground of heresy and the unsettling of minds already contented in unaffected acceptance of faith.

What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem; what between the Academy and the Church? ...Philosophy is the subject matter of this world's wisdom, that rash interpreter of the divine nature and order. In fact, heresies are themselves prompted by philosophy. ...Wretched Aristotle! who taught them dialectic, that art of building up and demolishing, so protean in statement, so far-fetched in conjecture, so unyielding in controversy, so productive of disputes; self-stultifying, since it is ever handling questions but never settling anything. Away with all projects for a 'Stoic', a 'Platonic', or a 'dialectic'

Christianity! ...After Jesus Christ we desire no subtle theories, no acute enquiries after the gospel.(12)

Discussing the controversy from the aspects of catechesis and education in the early Church (Tertullian's concern, it might be remarked, was purely catechetical) Nichols comments that confrontations occurred quite early between the Church and education because the Church 'could scarcely avoid taking some kind of a stand in relation to the Greek philosophical schools.' The response of Christians like Tertullian has just been noted; 'but others saw that Christian faith could no longer be private and esoteric. It must stand up for itself in the intellectual market places of the world.'(13) The school of Alexandria where Origen had begun 'instructing catechumens of superior intelligence into the philosophical disciplines' could be seen by all as rejecting the idea of Christianity as an arcane mystery religion and, in the process, asserting the unity of truth. 'There is,' wrote Clement of Alexandria, 'one river of truth and many streams fall into it from side to side'.(14) 'The answer to Tertullian's question, then,' remarks James Alfred Martin (1966), 'is that dialogue between Athens and Jerusalem is unavoidable, and that it may be profitable for philosophers and theologians alike.'(15)

Unavoidable though the dialogue might be, the striking of a 'proper' balance between belief and reason in respect of claims to truth and the giving of assent - between theology on the one hand and philosophy on the other - has been a perennial problem particularly from the period of the Enlightenment when the perception of philosophy's rôle as being that of 'handmaid to theology' largely ceased. Indeed the influence of the rationalist philosophies of the eighteenth century upon certain theologians has been such as almost to merit in their case the attribution of the phrase 'handmaid to philosophy' to theology. The close alliance between the Ritschlian school of theology and the neo-Kantian philosophers of late nineteenth century Germany provides a case in point.(16) That development saw a progressive erosion of the content of Christian doctrine and thus of theology itself of which the examination and explication of that doctrine constitutes its proper object. A rehearsal of the major themes of theology namely God, man, the world, salvation, and eschatology highlights the great perennial questions to which theology and philosophy both, obviously, have contributions to make. The influence of the purely secular in today's world, however, has seen the great theological themes

often made indistinct and confused by philosophical questions which purport to pursue 'the meaning of life', or man's 'quest' for what constitutes the dignity of human existence. Such philosophical questions, in the view of Paul Tillich (1967) for example, can with justification be regarded as theological questions in a disguised form.(17) It is difficult, however, to consider them as other than what they overtly are, namely, philosophical questions, especially if it appears that theological matters - having, that is, to do with Christian belief and content - are being eschewed. Yet theology by its nature and tradition has had, and still has, it is argued, a direct relationship with the Christian faith as it attempts (i) to represent statements of the Christian faith consistently; (ii) to explicate these statements out of the basis or fundamentals of the Christian faith; and (iii) to assign to such statements their place and applicability in relevant areas of human discourse.(18) The 'dialogue' which theology and philosophy conduct can be both valid and fruitful. The 'dialogue', however, leaves both their specific rôles intact and separate. And while Tertullian's excoriation of philosophy - a noble discipline crowning one of man's greatest gifts, that of rationality - may be judged misconceived, his 'protectiveness' of the integrity of the Gospel together with his obvious concern for the continued theological rectitude of his Christian flock deserve understanding and even admiration.

The Christian views everything through and in the light of his interpretation of traditional Christian belief and practice. This perspective provides the necessary conceptual framework for understanding the destiny of man as a spiritual being capable of knowing and loving God. The Christian's world-view is, therefore, personal as well as Christocentric and ecclesial. This has important educational implications. That is to say, it highlights the need for guidance in the development of this essential personal element in the world-view in question. It is the Christian's joy to believe in a loving God, in Jesus Christ his Saviour and Son of God, and to love the Church which the Saviour founded. The distinctive Christian assumption is that man's future is bound up not only in his life upon this earth but also in a life hereafter when his transcendental potentialities will be fully realised and transformed by his union with God in heaven. Implicit in this is the belief in the existence of a personal and loving God and in his revelation to mankind in Jesus Christ as Saviour.

## 6.5 The Enlightenment

With the Enlightenment came something radically different. The disjunction of philosophy from its pairing with theology in unequivocal support of the Christian ethic can be seen to have had its roots in this period, but indeed the genesis of the whole temper of modern society lies rooted here - in the latter years of the seventeenth century and, ever more progressively, in the eighteenth. Its influence persisted throughout the nineteenth century and up to at least the middle of the present century. It is a period of special interest since the retreat from religious confessionalism can be traced back to it. So too can the relativization of values and the onset of secular-atheistic Humanism, influential in our own day and not least in the sphere of education. Paul Hazard (1953) has eloquently and incisively described the extraordinary change of spirit and attitude which characterized the period. The following quotations from Hazard are cited in order to provide a descriptive background for an understanding of some of the philosophical, sociological, educational and religious developments that subsequently occurred and to which further reference will shortly be made:

For a civilization founded on Duty - duty towards God, duty towards the sovereign - the new school of philosophers were fain to substitute a civilization based on rights - rights of the individual, freedom of speech and opinion, the prerogatives of man as man and citizen. (Hazard 1953 xviii)

Never was there a greater contrast, never a more sudden transition than this! A hierarchical system ensured by authority; life firmly based on dogmatic principle - such were the things held dear by the people of the 17th century; but these controls, authority, dogma and the like, were the very things that their immediate successors of the 18th century held in cordial detestation. The former were the upholders of Christianity; the latter were its foes. The former believed in the laws of God; the latter in the laws of Nature; the former lived contentedly in a world composed of unequal social status; of the latter the absorbing dream was Equality. (*ibid.*, xv)

The champions of Reason and the champions of Religion were, in the words of Pierre Bayle, fighting desperately for the possession of men's souls, confronting each other in a contest at which the whole of thoughtful Europe was looking on....Inch by inch the assailants gained ground.... Reason was no longer synonymous with good sober



sense, with serene and benevolent wisdom. It became critical, aggressive....The Divine was relegated to a vague and impenetrable heaven somewhere up in the skies. Man and man alone was the standard by which all things were measured. He was his own *raison d'être*. His interests were paramount....The ancient fabric which had provided such indifferent shelter for the great human family would have to come down....A political system without divine sanction, a religion without mystery, a morality without dogma - such was the edifice man had now to erect. Science would have to develop into a power capable of harnessing the forces of nature to the service of mankind. Science - who could doubt it? - was the key to happiness. The material world once in his power, man would order it for his own benefit and his own glory and for the happiness of future generations. Such are the 'notes' by which the eighteenth century is readily recognizable....ideas so pregnant with life, so rich in power whether for attack or defence, that even now the force of that movement is far from spent. (*ibid.*, xvii-xviii)

Other historians speak in similar vein. H.R. Trevor-Roper (1967) refers as follows to the transformation of European life that occurred somewhere in the middle of the seventeenth century:

Intellectually, politically, morally, we are in a new age, a new climate. From the end of the fifteenth century until the middle of the seventeenth century we have one climate, the climate of the Renaissance; then in the middle of the seventeenth century we have the years of change, of revolution; and thereafter, for another century and a half, we have another, very different climate, the climate of the Enlightenment. (Trevor-Roper 1967 50)

For Trevor-Roper, the age of the Enlightenment was an age in which the great achievements of the Renaissance are resumed and continued to new heights 'but from a new basis.'(19) The new basis was the completely changed climate in European society that followed the succession of revolutions which occurred around the middle of the seventeenth century in England, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Denmark and Sweden. In so far as these were indicative of a general crisis, it was a crisis in the relations between society and the state. The Renaissance state which earlier had broken and corroded the old power of the cities, now faced its own crisis and dissolved. The Thirty Years War had also produced its own weariness and deep disaffection with rulers and their perpetual demands and requisitionings. The universality of these mid-seventeenth century revolutions suggests, as

the same author puts it, that the European monarchies had developed serious structural weaknesses which the general state of war exposed. Contemporaries saw the revolutions as political struggles between those two traditional organs of the ancient system of 'mixed' monarchy, the Crown and the Estates. The end result was that 'the concept of *mixed* monarchy, so admired in 1600, was utterly extinct in 1700.' The conflict was graphically and succinctly described in 1656 by the English political philosopher, James Harrington as follows: 'Nor shall any man show a reason why the people of Oceania have blown up their kings but that their kings did not first blow them up.'(20)

Looking at the year 1700, Trevor-Roper comments:

Politically, intellectually and economically, Europe is upside down. Its dynamic centre has moved..Religion is deeply involved in this shift. Whereas the Renaissance was a Catholic, the Enlightenment was a Protestant phenomenon. (*ibid.*,2)

In the process the dynamic centre of Europe moved from Catholic Spain, Italy, Flanders and south Germany to Protestant England, Holland, Switzerland and the cities of the Baltic. Intellectually as well as economically the leadership fell to the northern nations as philosophers of the Enlightenment enthroned the individual as the proper and compelling subject of attention. The German Cameralist, Christian Wolff, writing in 1721, made his point of departure *the individual* upon whom he conferred specific 'rights of man'. The state, he held, is a voluntary contract between individuals and the purpose of the state is 'the furtherance of common welfare and security'.(21) The 'enlightened despots' of the eighteenth century were careful to bow to the influence of the political philosophy of the Enlightenment as manifested in the writings of such as the German administrative Cameralists and the French Physiocrats. That being the case, and, in accepting that the individual had specified rights and that the state had a voluntary contract with him to promote common welfare and security, the way was then open for the state, as Fritz Hartung (1957) puts it, reciprocally, 'to insist that its citizens obey its orders'. In the end, the Enlightened Despot became a new version of the old conception of 'The Prince, the Father of his Country', except that now he organized his regime according to Reason, under the influence of the widely propagated ideas of the Enlightenment.(22)

Not only in terms of political theory but in every aspect of man in his society, the groundswell of change continued to place emphasis on man himself and on the appeal to Reason. The seeds of a new humanism were to find expression in the philosophical positivism and the sociological views of writers such as Auguste Comte.(23) Only observable phenomena must be taken into account. Metaphysics and theism were to be rejected. For Comte, as for those great figures of the Enlightenment themselves such as Vico, Montesquieu and Saint-Simon, it was the scientific study of man himself and human society - a society that was to be *post-theological* in its complexion - that had now arrived 'leaving in its train the age of the gods and of the heroes'. And, let it be clear: 'The world of civil society has certainly been made by man... Humanity is known by what *it* has *created*.(24) Later, the new discipline of sociology would extend the view of religion as a merely human phenomenon to that of its being grounded on emotion, and Malinowsky would declare its various elements 'translatable into categories of social function.'(25) The spirit of the Enlightenment was hostile to organized Christian religion. The writings of Comte are a case in point but the literature of the eighteenth century generally, from Bayle and Voltaire to Jefferson and Paine exhibits the same tendency. The deism of Rousseau and even of the English poet and professing Catholic, Alexander Pope, was symptomatic of the hostility of many to the organized religion of the Church. The criticism directed at priests and ministers was severe, as this comment by Thomas Jefferson exemplifies:

In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own.(26)

Yet while the whole temper and spirit of the Enlightenment was inimical to organized religion and therefore to the doctrines and teachings of the Christian Church, there were formal parallels between traditional Christianity and the Enlightenment which are of interest, especially in relation to confessionism. As Carl Becker (1932) has indicated, both are efforts to give some sort of systematized answers to the great questions that confront mankind; both are systems of moral values: of ends and means. Both, in other words, are confessional systems. Notwithstanding their dedication to natural science and rational thinking 'the new faith of the Enlightenment' was held passionately by the proponents of its ideas. Becker has been at pains to show that it had its own eschatology as definite as

that of the Christians - a heavenly city that stands ahead as the goal of earthly struggle.(27) The 'heavenly city' might indeed be on this earth but it lies in the future. For men like Condorcet it might be the near future, but still, not in the here and now.

Crane Brinton, (1950) writing in similar vein, points to the most striking thing traditional Christianity and the new faith of the Enlightenment had in common.

A feeling that man is no misfit in this world which is a world in some sense designed for man's good living, and that, though something in man - for the Christian, original sin, for the enlightened man of the eighteenth century, ignorance, faulty education, poverty, privilege, bad social environment - keeps him from attaining the good life on earth, he can yet by a serious moral and intellectual effort attune himself to this good element of design in the universe, to God, Providence or Nature. Both Christianity and the faith of the Enlightenment are intensely active melioristic faiths; both have essential ethical goals, peace, moderate bodily satisfactions, social collaboration and individual freedom, a life quiet but not dull; and both have similar conceptions of evil - cruelty, suffering, jealousy, vanity, selfishness, self-indulgence, pride. (Brinton 1950 137)

That the Enlightenment was in effect a form of religion, a new faith and type of confession subscribed to with a commitment not to be doubted by the radical thinkers of the age, is clearly a matter of considerable interest, considering the influence of Enlightenment ideas on modern society on the one hand, and what might be termed the belief factor in the proponents of *any* system, philosophical, sociological, political, religious, on the other. This consideration sheds something of a more penetrating light, perhaps, on what has come to be termed by some as the 'fallen concept' of confessionalism, especially when appraising the commitment with which current tendencies are often advanced. The present chapter was introduced by Spencer Leeson's challenging comment on 'the parting of the ways and there is no third path'; that is, 'do we believe in God or do we not; are our children spiritual beings or are they not?' Current approaches both to religion and to religious education, however - the phenomenological and experiential approaches come more immediately to mind - often blur such fundamental questions and avoid making answer. The basic assumptions underlying such approaches were

subjected to critical evaluation in the previous chapter and and hopefully, a more encouraging light was brought to bear upon the validity of affirmative answers to the crucial issues posed by Spencer Leeson both in respect of the children we teach and the quality of the education we offer them.

## 6.6 Secularism and the denial of the Transcendent

Peter Berger (1979) has pointed to the denial of transcendence and to 'the repressive triviality inherent in much of our secularist world-view' as characteristic hallmarks of modernity. Discussing this in a recent article, Ursula King (1985) has commented as follows:

Yet many are the signs today that the heritage of an empirical and positivist approach to knowledge and experience is faltering and that a new religious sense, atrophied for so long, is being born. (King 1985 139)

In her article entitled 'Spirituality in a Secular Society', Ursula King is concerned 'to recover an important dimension of human experience which points to the possibility of transcendence and liberation.' Spirituality is understood as 'a search for meaning and transcendence outside and within us.' While pointers to this can be found within contemporary secular society itself (Berger refers to 'the contraband transcendence which creeps in from many sides in the most unexpected ways'), her references to the writings of the great Christian anthropologist and mystic, Teilhard de Chardin and her concluding reference to developing 'a deep concern for what is promised as possible at the heart of all religious teaching' including 'hope for ultimate goodness and glory', seem, at least to the present writer, to indicate an inclination to extrapolate towards transcendence in its religious and therefore (in our western culture) Christian context. The approach may be still empathic but association with the reality of Christian spirituality (the soul's search for union with God, considerations of the immensity of God's love for each human person, the practice of the imitation of Christ, the conspectus on life *sub specie aeternitatis*), could not but lead to a realization that inner transcendence might well have an outer referent, God, himself, whose ways - 'How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!' (Rom 11:15) - might well involve his communicating with man after the manner of the Christian revelation.

For the faith of the Enlightenment, as for its lineal descendant the faith of secular Humanism, there is no logical place for a personal God accessible to human prayer, a God not bound by any limitations or rules of the kind men come to discover in a study of themselves and their environment. In this, both differ fundamentally from Christianity - as they do also in the doctrine of the perfectibility of man, a doctrine somewhat eroded in this century, by two world wars, the nuclear arms race, the grinding poverty of millions in the Third World and the *Angst* of other millions in the affluent First World. Despite this, the masterly technology and brilliant scientific discoveries of the present day continue powerfully to contribute to the belief that man is the measure of all things. As the American satellite, *Voyager Two* sends back to earth fascinating pictures of the planet Neptune before setting off for the nearest star some billions of miles away in space, the denial of the supernatural above the natural seems verified for many by pragmatic evidence, without having to have recourse to philosophical reasoning. Yet the human paradox remains. The 'heavenly city' of man on earth persistently fails to arrive. Man's existential anguish attests to the universal experience of ultimate dissatisfaction with this world. This 'restlessness' highlights the problem of human fulfilment. Man fails to find the total happiness for which he yearns, and which his world continues to deny him.

The Victorian poet Robert Browning could speak of the wonders of human achievement (in this case, that of the painter) and relate them directly to a munificent Creator:

*The beauty and the wonder and the power,*

*The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,*

*Changes, surprises - and God made it all ! (28)*

Typically apposite also, however, is the following comment by Gemma Loughran (1987):

Man is forever to some extent disillusioned with himself, with the world he makes and with the thought that there is nothing more to serve except man. And so he looks elsewhere and beyond for fulfilment. (Loughran 1987 1)

It needn't be a cause for surprise, then, that despite the panoply of scientific achievements in a battery of disciplines 'the heritage of an empirical and positivist approach to knowledge and experience is faltering', as King remarks. 'The repressive triviality inherent in much of the secularist world-view' of which Berger speaks is further qualified by him as 'a world without windows on the surrounding wonders of life.' (29) This 'blind' world clearly disappoints and disillusion. The denial both of transcendence and the possibility of a realm of meaning beyond the category of the solely human, leaves man's innate desire for ultimate happiness and fulfilment not only unrealized but, it would seem, unrealizable. As a result of eliminating transcendence, man may recover the totality of the human realm and proclaim 'the death of God', but in the process he becomes threatened by the determinism of the natural sciences which consider him merely to be a complex of determined reactions. Under the influence of the social sciences his individuality is absorbed into some collective representation of the environment. He comes to be regarded as existing only as either biological or social matter that has its *own* meaning and validity without regard for particular human beings. The logical outcome has been the proclamation by some that 'man is dead'; that his personal identity and individual existence are illusions and this being so, that all justification of being and of coherent thought disappears. 'The world as it evolves comes to assume the form of a disorganized frenzy.' (30) In such a situation it becomes absurd even to speak in terms of 'man's fulfilment'. Life in the world becomes itself absurd, the conclusion arrived at by Albert Camus (1955). Yet, despite his pessimism, Camus is obliged to acknowledge that man possesses a fundamental propensity for reaching out towards the fulfilment of his deepest needs. There is 'the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart.'

At this point of his effort man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. (Camus 1955 24, 29)

Camus' nihilism leaves man lost in the depths of his own obscurity. But St Augustine's earlier cry: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee!' (31), springing from faith and reaching towards the Author of life, would seem to propose a better promise of fulfilment and human liberation. Karl Rahner (1968) opines that this very restlessness represents the *beginnings* of fulfilment:

The experience of infinite longing, radical optimism, discontent which cannot find rest, anguish at the insufficiency of material things, protest against death, the experience of being the object of a love whose absoluteness and whose silence our mortality cannot bear, the experience of fundamental guilt with hope nevertheless remaining. (Rahner 1968)

The striving for total human fulfilment would seem to point to some kind of experience that transcends the solely human. For Jean-Claude Barreau (1979) this necessarily involves recognition and acceptance of 'the religious impulse' in man and his relationship with a transcendent God who is, in fact, 'at the heart of all reality but identified with none.'<sup>(32)</sup> That there is something mysterious here may readily be admitted. But it must also be admitted that, even in terms of the beliefs and assumptions of secular Humanism, man's notorious and chronic dissatisfaction with the world of material things and his ineradicable tendency to reach for the immaterial is, equally, mysterious. As Barreau puts it, he has a 'thirst for the absolute and he finds no absolute in this world.'<sup>(33)</sup> In his *Summa Contra Gentes* and after an exhaustive analysis of human experience and the problem of human fulfilment, St Thomas Aquinas arrived at the conclusion that man could only be totally fulfilled in a relationship of knowledge of love with a Perfect Being. It would seem, then, that the question of the transcendence of God retains its place at the very centre of human inquiry.

## 6.7 Image and idea

For the philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Locke, Hume, Condillac and Kant, it was the transcendence of God as being beyond the range or grasp of human experience, that doomed to failure any attempt to encompass him within the framework of human discourse. Locke and the Empiricists, however, failed to distinguish between the *idea* of God as against the *image* of God. They tended to use the word 'idea' to mean 'image' whereas there is an important distinction to be made between them. An image is sensory in character but an idea is a concept and concepts are formed by the intellect. An image of God such as a person might make, of an old man in the sky with a long beard, is in no sense the same thing as an idea of God as of the omnipotent, omniscient Being, uncaused cause. It cannot sensibly be held that ideas must always and inevitably be thought of as being ultimately grounded on physical matter. What is in any sense physical about



the idea of 'courtesie' (the 'gentillesse' of medieval times personified in Chaucer's 'parfit knyghte')? Or in the idea of 'puckishness', or, of 'humour'? There is more, surely, to such ideas than the aggregate qualities of all those persons to whom they are attributed? Their status as universals can hardly be doubted. In the controversy about universals the weight of reason and logic would appear to bear heavily upon those who deny their existence. To give an example - the view that the concept of 'goodness' solely relies on serial instances of its exemplification, logically implies, it would appear, that at some future date, what is now thought of as 'badness' could putatively be substituted for what may presently be taken for 'goodness'. The relativism of consensual morality cannot logically assert the impossibility of such an occurrence. But such a situation makes nonsense of the very concept of *meaning*, a concept which, itself, pays no tribute to physicality. The ability of the intellect to form ideas or concepts in the universalist sense under discussion underpins St Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God: - if one can conceive of an all perfect Being, then, among the perfections such a Being necessarily ought to have, is that of existence. Therefore, concludes Anselm, this all perfect Being - God, that is, - must have existence, that is to say, he exists.

Since the eighteenth century Empiricists did not distinguish between image and idea - adhering in their arguments only to sensory based imagery - it seems clear why they held that God was beyond the bounds of human discourse. The transcendence of God, understood as God as He is in Himself, is obviously beyond any descriptive abilities human *discourse* possesses, but this is not to deny the ability of humans in their discourse to arrive at a conclusion *that* he exists and to express their *idea* of him. This, historically and typically man has done whether by means of analogy, or through imagery itself, and by understanding that discourse about God must necessarily be of a negative character since nothing we can say about God defines him. As St John Damascene wrote:

God is infinite and incomprehensible, and the only thing we can say about him is his infinity and his incomprehensibility. Every thing we do say about him is inadequate. God is not like other beings - not that he does not exist, but that he is above all beings, even above being itself.(34)

Philosophical notions of perfection prove, finally, to be inadequate, although such notions can be helpful, as Plato's Theory of Forms proved to be for St Au-

gustine. It is not difficult to understand how the title 'father of natural theology' came to be applied to Plato. As Aristotle's succinct account of the Platonic Theory of Forms has it: 'There must, besides things accessible to the senses, be certain other entities which persist.'(35) This 'something more' of Plato's philosophy is his pre-existing world of spirit, mind and ideas, of *that which is*. But we are not completely spirit, for then we would possess total knowledge; nor are we completely body because then all that we would have would merely be opinion. The Stranger in *The Sophist* states that 'true existence consists in certain incorporeal Forms which are objects of the mind.' For Plato, our true home is in the world of ideas - where we pre-existed as spirit and mind and back to which we shall return after death - our great release. As well as this, Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul points to a world other than the merely material. As Socrates put it: 'Before we began to see and hear and to perceive in other ways, we must somehow have acquired knowledge of Equality itself'. This 'knowledge of Equality itself' also includes knowledge of the Good, and the Just, and the Holy. In a word, we must have acquired knowledge of 'all those things which we stamp with the seal of *that which is* and this points to a world other than the merely material. The Stranger in *The Sophist* condemns the Giants because 'they maintain that *that alone* exists which can be handled and touched.' This is the basis for their condemnation, as well as that they 'drag down *everything* from heaven and the unseen to earth, rudely grasping rocks and trees in their hands.' Socrates' comment that '*somehow* we must have acquired knowledge of Equality' (that is, Equality itself, and, *inter alia*, Beauty itself and Goodness itself), can plausibly be thought of as pointing to some transcendent Source of such knowledge, and indeed this passage in the *Phaedo* has been referred to by Christians to propose a theory of divine illumination. On the other hand, Aristotle's resumé that 'there must *besides* things accessible to the senses, be certain other entities which persist', also frees Plato from the charge of absolute idealism. There *is* a material world of things 'accessible to the senses.'(36)

The Platonic Theory of Forms was to prove of much assistance to St Augustine in his search for God:

But then, having read those books of the Platonists, and having been taught by them to seek incorporeal truth, I descried your invisibilities, understood through the creation; and though cast back, I perceived

what it was which through the darkness of my mind I was hindered from contemplating. I became certain that You exist, are infinite, and are not diffused over finite or infinite space, that You truly exist, being always Yourself the same, in no part and in no motion another or different and that all other things are truly from You for this single surest reason that they are.(37)

## 6.8 The nature of faith in God

The quotation from the *Confessions* is a classic embodiment of Anselm of Canterbury's *fides quaerens intellectum* or, 'faith seeking understanding'. Augustine's faith in God is strengthened by the intellectual exercise of 'seeking the incorporeal truth' and, as he says, he 'became certain' that God did, indeed, exist. Augustine is clearly speaking of himself and his statement is a compelling one. It is one, at the same time, that might be used to illustrate what E. F. O'Doherty (1978) has described as a common confusion that faith is somehow an experienced state of certitude or conviction.

There is a confusion between the certainty of the truth in itself and the subjective state of certitude whereby an individual holds a truth. Faith is neither subjective conviction nor experienced certitude but may be at its best where doubt exists. (O'Doherty 1978 70)

For O'Doherty, faith is 'an act of free choice of the reality of *things unseen*'. It cannot be a simple assent of the intellect, because the intellect is constrained by evidence to give its assent. Rather, faith is 'the choosing of a frame of reference', by which is meant 'the initial consent of the *person* to the reality of *things unseen*'.

If faith were simply a matter of a simple assent on evidence to the truth of some proposition, the doctrines of faith would become scientifically verifiable, and thus there would be no room for faith. Neither is it just a consent of the will, although it is a choosing. We lack a third word but it can be put as follows: it is the consent of the *person* who brings about, as it were, the consent of his intellect to the reality of things unseen. This is the frame of reference. This is possible only through the operation of grace. 'Flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven'. (Mt 16: 17) (*ibid.*, 70)

O'Doherty, writing 'frankly from the standpoint of a believer who is also a psychologist', asserts that a distinction must be made between knowledge grounded

in evidence, opinions based on probabilities and belief in non-verifiable truths.

It is misleading to imply or to assert that there is a possibility of evidence, empirically verifiable, similar to the kind of evidence used in the sciences, upon which belief may be grounded; that somebody, somewhere, has another dimension, another facet of experience which guarantees that there is a supernatural order of reality. There is nothing in the spiritual sphere experienceable or discernible which is not a dimension of an event in the space-time order; a state of feeling, an act of the will, an act of knowing, desiring, etc. If the phrase 'things unseen' is really understood we shall realize that there cannot be evidence. There is no test which can be applied which will provide sensory evidence in the temporal order upon which belief in the supernatural order could then be predicated: if there were this kind of evidence there would be no room for faith. (*ibid.*,71)

In the light of all this, the free choice of faith without subjective certitude or felt state of conviction 'is in itself a more mature and more valuable thing than a faith based on any kind of presumed evidence.'

O'Doherty's description of faith is intellectually appealing, perhaps, and is convincingly stated. In relation to the realm of empirical science and sensory experience in 'the space-time continuum', it would seem impeccable. Yet it might be argued that to his actual statement of 'things unseen' - expressed, after all, within the parameters of human language - he attributes at least the fact of their existence, although warning that 'there cannot be evidence.' His description appeals, one might also think, to the person who actually has faith. At the same time, while the description might be termed clinically accurate, it is rather stark from the point of view of human involvement. 'There is no criterion outside itself whereby one can establish it or lead an unbeliever to accept it', says O'Doherty. Faith, however, clearly does not take place *in vacuo* but rather within the human personality who, one might surely think, is something rather more than a naive receptacle for the arrival of faith within him. Augustine 'read', 'descried' and 'perceived.' Is there not some 'describing of invisibilities' in every person, even if often not consciously adverted to? Finally, that faith is a gift of God may be granted, but some personal participation, if only in the acceptance or realization that one has come to faith, seems unavoidable. Speaking of 'the consent of the person who brings about, as it were, the consent of his intellect to the reality of things unseen',

O'Doherty remarks: 'This is possible only through the operation of grace.' For the free, human person whom God has created there is the option, however, of his co-operation or non co-operation with grace. A gift, after all, may be refused. On the other hand, the reality of free will - our being free to choose - is God's greatest gift to us, and, even in the presence of his enabling grace, it would appear that he is uniquely pleased by our freely coming to have faith, and opting to serve him.

It has already been argued (*supra*, page 215) that belief can come in dimensions that are not beholden to the demands of either the empirical or the experiential and yet be acceptable to man in his condition as a rational person. If human reasoning can arrive at the strict probability of God's existence then the making of an inference which transcends the evidence in the time-space continuum and proposes the fact of God's existence, cannot really be regarded as other than a validly rational thing to do. Reference has also been made to the 'restlessness' which lies at the heart of every man and to his incorrigible aspirations to transcendence. There is also the way of historical affirmation consequent upon the advent of the Christian dispensation. That is to say, from an acceptance of the historical Jesus Christ as Saviour and Son of God, revealed in Scripture and in the tradition of the historical Christian Church, a person may come to believe in God.

It becomes necessary to discuss the different aspects of the terms belief and faith. The term 'faith' (or belief *in*) has been described as 'a subjective feeling of greater or lesser assurance that a proposition that something is the case will be verified.' H. R. Niebuhr (1961) classifies this among the Greek meanings of the word and contrasts it with the Hebrew meaning whose affinity is closer to the English word 'trust' than to 'believe'.<sup>(38)</sup> In this latter sense, believing in God is a matter of trusting that he will sustain us, and that he will manage things properly even if it may not seem so at any particular moment. At the same time it is important to realize that the different kinds of faith or belief mentioned are, logically speaking, neither mutually exclusive nor lacking in cognitive reciprocity. Personal attitudes to faith cannot really be separated from assent to propositional truth since the former presupposes the latter. As John Kleinig (1982) has argued:

Trust in God and obedience to God presuppose, for instance, the belief that He, in whom we trust and whom we obey, does exist and has

the characteristics that make it appropriate to trust and obey Him.  
(Kleinig 1982 213)

'We cannot, therefore,' Kleinig goes on, 'evade the rationalist challenge by supposing that the Christian faith involves no constative beliefs.'(39) It has been a perceived *emphasis* on faith 'that has encouraged the view that it is alien to reason'. Writers in both the Jewish and Christian traditions have, however, as Kleinig states, regularly distinguished between different kinds of faith the dominant distinction being twofold, that is, between *fides* and *fiducia*. *Fides* is used to express assent to propositions. It is faith or belief *that p*. *Fiducia* is used to signify trust. It is faith or belief *in X* (where X is usually though not necessarily some person). *Fides* may be seen largely in terms of intellectual commitment whereas *fiducia* refers more generally to a person's whole orientation. This distinction is of some importance not only in elucidating aspects of the theological perspective but also, in Kleinig's opinion, with respect to arriving at a more helpful understanding of the concept of Christian education. In Kleinig's view, it has been a conflation of *fides* and *fiducia* by many writers that 'has been responsible for much of the disrepute into which *religious instruction* classes have fallen.' So far as Christian understanding is concerned the central concept is *fiducia*, with its primary opposite 'unbelief' (lack of trust) rather than 'disbelief' (intellectual doubt.) Yet most of the debate concerning the conceptual possibility of religious education has been predicated on the idea that the central concept of Christian understanding is *fides*. As a result, 'there has been a slide from *fiducia* to *fides* to non-demonstrability.'

The attitude underlying the 'slide to non-demonstrability' Kleinig characterizes as 'the unjustifiability of the rationalist demand'. At the same time it might be said that the propositional challenge in *fides* can plausibly be met at least within the parameters of a 'reasonable' rationality which takes into account insight, intuition and inference as properly belonging to the intelligent, evaluating human individual in his sophisticated ability to perceive probabilities that touch the circumference of certainty. *Fiducia*, however, seems more nearly and more meritoriously constitutive of a person's belief in God. It would seem clear that God is better pleased by a trusting belief than by a rationalized belief. Thomas the Apostle believed when the Lord Jesus stood before him. Yet that was the moment when Christ said: 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.'(Jn

For Cardinal Newman, the problems of faith and certainty were ones with which he had long been grappling. He accepted the actuality of knowledge but was concerned to show how faith can possess certainty when it rises out of evidence that can never be more than probable. In the matter of one's education it was important that intellectual and spiritual growth took place at the same time and in the same place - 'the same spots and the same individuals must be at once oracles of philosophy and shrines of devotion'(40) - but when it came to examining the nature of faith, Newman stressed other factors, namely, the part played by the will, and the rôle of the faculty of the imagination. Primarily, however, the sureness of one's belief in God rested on the moral sense, starting, not from extraneous factors, but from within the person, through the authoritative promptings of conscience. It is thus that the image of God is first dimly, yet surely, discerned. Newman considered conscience (which, he assumed 'has a legitimate place among our mental acts'), 'not as a rule of right conduct, but as a sanction of right conduct.'

Thus conscience has both a critical and a judicial office, and though its promptings, in the breasts of the millions of human beings to whom it is given, are not in all cases correct, that does not necessarily interfere with the force of its testimony and of its sanction: its testimony that there is a right and wrong, and its sanction to that testimony conveyed in the feelings which attend on right or wrong conduct. (Newman 1870(8th edition) 106)

Newman takes the example of an ordinary child ('but still one who is safe from influences destructive of his religious instincts'), to illustrate how the authority of conscience leads the mind to an image of God.

Supposing he has offended his parents, he will alone and without effort, as it were the most natural of acts, place himself in the presence of God, and beg Him to set him right with them. Let us consider how much is contained in this simple act. First, it involves the impression on his mind of an unseen Being with whom he is in immediate relation, and that relation so familiar that he can address Him whenever he himself chooses; next, of One whose good will towards him he is assured of, and can take for granted - nay, who loves him better, and is nearer to him than his parents; further, of One who can hear him, wherever he happens to be, and who can read his thoughts, for his prayer need not be vocal; lastly, of One who can effect a critical change in the

state of feeling of others towards him. That is, we shall not be wrong in holding that this child has in his mind the image of an Invisible Being, who exercises a particular providence among us, who is present everywhere, who is heart-reading, heart-changing, ever-accessible, open to impetration. What a strong and intimate vision of God must he have already attained, if, as I have supposed, an ordinary trouble of mind has the spontaneous effect of leading him for consolation and aid to an Invisible Personal Power! (*ibid.*,112-3)

Newman concludes:

Such is the apprehension which even a child can have of his Sovereign Lawgiver and Judge; which is possible in the case of children, because, at least, some children possess it...he has that within him which actually vibrates, responds, and gives a deep meaning to the lessons of his first teachers about the will and the providence of God. (*ibid.*,114)

Newman's intention was to show the first formation of the divine image within us and how a man can become possessed of such an image 'over and above mere *notions* of God.' The distinction is crucial to his thought and is a matter of fundamental importance for understanding his approach to the problems of faith and reason. It might be thought that the apprehension of God thus described could be interpreted as an experiential basis for *fiducia*, but Newman refused to admit that there is any such thing as a uniquely 'religious' mode of apprehending truth and argued for the *rationality* of 'simple faith' on the grounds that the structure of personal religious faith is the structure of 'personal knowledge' in respect of any subject whatsoever.(41) Hence the importance attributed by him to 'imagination.' As Nicholas Lash (1979) has pointed out:

In other words, the contrast between faith and reason is not, for Newman, a contrast between belief and unbelief, or between irrationality and rationality, but between two modes of rationality. Thus, although 'Faith may be viewed as opposed to Reason...it must not be overlooked that Unbelief is opposed to Reason also.' Or, as he put it in one of his *Parochial Sermons* 'When faith is said to be a religious principle, it is...the things believed, not the act of believing them, which is peculiar to religion.' (Lash 1979 6)

Newman's distinction, then, is not between rational cognition and some other activity which is non-rational, 'merely subjective' or irrational. It is, rather, as Lash has suggested, between two modes of rationality, or, in Newman's own words,



between two 'habits of mind.' Equally, his distinction between what he terms *notional* assent on the one hand, and imaginative or *real* assent, which he terms Belief, on the other - developed at length in the *Grammar* - is both arresting and crucial to his thinking.

While in notional assents 'the mind contemplates its own creations instead of things', 'in real, it is directed towards things, represented by the impressions which they have left on the imagination'...Because real, unlike notional, assents are not common but personal and individual, they may be devisive and unreliable, but ultimately they are what give us our intellectual moorings, as well as stimulating us to action through the power of the imagination. (Ker 1985 xiv)

For Newman, 'theology, properly and directly, deals with notional apprehension; religion with imaginative.' Both, however, necessarily have their place. And if, as he puts it, so much may be traced out 'in the twilight of Natural Religion' (his theology of a religious imagination);

It is obvious how great an addition of fulness and exactness is made to our mental image of the Divine Personality and Attributes, by the light of Christianity. And, indeed, to give us a clear and sufficient object for our faith, is one main purpose of the supernatural Dispensions of Religion. (Newman *op. cit.*, 118)

We are back in the field of doctrine, the articulation of propositions and the employment of intellectual thought. a field which it may be said, Newman never left. 'Without a proposition or thesis there can be no assent, no belief, at all.' Commenting on the relationship between theology and religion, he concluded as follows:

Theology may stand as a substantive science, though it be without the life of religion; but religion cannot maintain its ground at all without theology. Sentiment, whether imaginative or emotional, falls back upon the intellect for its stay, when sense cannot be called into exercise; and it is in this way that devotion falls back upon dogma. (*ibid.*,121)

## 6.9 The integrity and validity of Christian education

In the process of making the case for Christian education on educational grounds, it has been necessary, naturally, to make clear the significance of the

qualifying adjective since, without the attempt to clarify the meaning of the adjective 'Christian', the use of the phrase *Christian education* becomes increasingly subjective. The unique values and assumptions of Christianity and the theological fundamentals which characterize it give distinctive support to the ensuing educational structure. Catechesis, too, it has been pointed out, can have a valid educational purchase and reference has been made to Kevin Nichol's (1979) argument (*supra*, pages 189/190) that 'there is a mode or style of catechesis which can legitimately be called educational,' particularly in respect of its understanding, thoughtfulness, and reflective-experience aspects. With regard to the question of tradition, the teacher can, in educational terms, 'work within a tradition of faith and be concerned with handing on its heritage'. That heritage of the Christian tradition as has already been stated is extraordinarily rich and multifaceted, is a continuing source and resource for European culture, and thus gives an additional and merited sense of relevance to Christian education itself. As Nichols remarks:

A tradition is a living and growing thing; it does not involve blind learning of a static body of stuff. It is therefore an ambient within which real education can happen. (Nichols 1979 21)

The Christian tradition stands upon a solid foundation of faith, values and scholarship. Its assumptions and values, no less than its actual achievements, not least in the educational field, can bear the closest scrutiny. Its Christian content is based upon the historical life and teachings of Jesus Christ himself. The heritage of Christianity, as has been said, is such that no educational subject claiming to be *religious education* - certainly in Europe - can avoid a study of its content. Quite simply, its cultural claims are immense. It is in this context that Lionel Swain's (1986) comment on the relation between culture and faith is apposite;

Culture and faith are two sides of the same coin as far as Christianity is concerned and it is impossible to dissociate the one completely from the other. (Swain 1986 276)

The fact that Christianity is a living religion calling for acceptance ought not to preclude its 'privileged' presentation in state classrooms. The pupils can be made openly aware of this fact as, equally, they ought to be made aware that the Christian tradition is their heritage.(42) Nor ought such a religious education be

construed as interfering with personal autonomy. The 'presiding spirit' of Christian humanism of which Spencer Leeson has spoken, (*supra*, page 200) will ensure that there is nothing 'cramping to the growing personality of the child, nothing to suggest imprisonment in a hothouse, nothing sanctimonious, unnatural or illiberal.' On the contrary, as has already been argued (*supra* page 176) it has been the current refusal of guidance in the phenomenological approach which has had the effect of leaving the young person bewildered amid a plethora of religious typologies - scarcely a satisfactory method of educational procedure. Despite this, however, and as any experienced educationalist will confirm, it is true to say that young people have a greater ability for coming to their own personal decisions than is often supposed. In addition, they are well able to discern the status of the teacher's own commitment in regard to the religious position being examined, and could probably plot it quite accurately on a positive/negative continuum. Edward Hulmes (1979) has earlier remarked (*supra*, page 182), that teachers' personal convictions and beliefs neither should, nor can 'be clinically separated from their professional obligations as teachers to present material as objectively as possible.' Here, it is apposite to refer to his comment that the teacher in fact 'has an opportunity, amounting to an obligation to declare his commitment.'(43) Hulmes elucidates the educational implications of this in the following perceptive comment:

A teacher who has first-hand experience of how a set of beliefs can change a way of life is in possession of evidence to which a child needs access. This is a *primary* source material....There is no point in pretending to take religions seriously, and admitting the *possibility* that religion has this effect on human lives, without allowing for that possibility in the lives of the teacher and of the child. There is no drawing back from the crucial decision on educational grounds. (Hulmes 1979 33)

As to the child's autonomy:

Children, precisely because they are inexperienced and need guidance, require help in *decision-making*, in choosing for themselves on the basis of the evidence presented to them. (*ibid.*,33)

Often the child is, in fact, 'denied freedom to exercise his autonomy'. Yet, 'freedom means not only freedom of choice, but choice itself.'

Christian education, then - that is to say, education which is intended to be

both distinctively and recognizably Christian - is concerned to prepare the young person to develop his or her abilities and to take his or her place as a member of the human family, taking into account a religious world-view that is theocentric and Christocentric. It is to be noted that Christian education, though necessarily informative and evaluative, ceases to be Christian the moment it becomes coercive. A young person benefitting from a Christian education will have received what is commonly accepted as 'a good education', and one that is informed by a set of values based upon the distinctive assumptions of the Christian revelation. First, the right to explore with guidance from the teacher but also with a measure of freedom with regard to personal decision will have been accepted as a necessary principle which any system of education that claims to respect the uniqueness of human individuality must adopt. In the intellectual, physical, social, moral and religious spheres, the student will have been enabled to develop his own powers and potential so that he can take his place in society, skilled in his chosen vocation, living his life and bringing up his family according to his lights and conscience, and making whatever contribution he can to the general welfare. His education will have met the demands of what might be termed a 'sound education' He will have studied the subjects of a modern curriculum designed to meet the challenges of today's world; have been taught by professional teachers; and have benefitted from good teaching methods and modern texts and equipment. Secondly, his world-view and personal frame of reference will, very likely, be religious. His religious education will have been Christian. His code of values will be Christian. He may have come to accept and become a believing and practising member of the Christian Church. Equally, it needs to be stated, he may not, since options for personal belief and committed membership of the Christian community are open.

The religious world-view upon which Christian education is founded will be recognized as having a reputable and well argued basis - even by those who adopt other viewpoints on which to base their own educational systems. The religious education which Christian education offers ideally is Christ. This is natural enough for Christian education begins and ends with the Christian story. It can also be stated at this point that since religious education allows for the transmission as well as the description of different systems of belief, *Christian* religious education provides a focus for the study of Christianity in all its aspects. In a European

school it should naturally be Christianity which figures prominently in the curriculum given, as has already been said, the cultural and historical experience of two thousand years of European civilization. It could scarcely be Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism. The young person who has received a Christian education will learn to respect these religions however, as indeed any other faith to which others hold; and, at a suitable point in his or her educational development, will come to have an informed and comparative knowledge of their fundamental postulates.

The well-founded beliefs and salutary system of values, personal, moral and social, which inform Christian education, provide a much needed anchor of stability in the confusing seas of agnosticism and relativism. In the mild and settled ethos of the Christian school, permeated by the values of Christ himself, and dedicated not only to the ideal of educational excellence but also to that of an objectively based programme of personal development and Christian service to the wider community, the young person's education proceeds within the overall context of a thoughtful and caring educational community.

Brenda Watson (1987) has drawn particular attention to what she has termed 'the paramount need for education in beliefs and values'. This need, as the author rightly states, belongs to what it is for a school to be 'truly educational'.

For a school to be truly educational there must be awareness of the fundamental convictions inspiring the educational ideal. Furthermore, this awareness should permeate the whole life of the school so that everyone, including the youngest child, is encouraged to become more and more perceptive about it. (Watson 1987 74)

This educational need she relates to the efficient functioning of the school itself:

A shared-value system gives a sense of direction without which no school can operate efficiently. Shared values encourage vision. In underlining what the school is about, they help to develop - in all concerned - a proper self-respect. (*ibid.*, 1)

Somewhat earlier, much the same theme was underlined by the Chief Education Officer for Oxfordshire, Tim Brighouse (1985) in two addresses which he gave at conferences sponsored by the Farmington Institute.(44) Commenting that 'the first ingredient of an excellent school, in which relationships are good and learning

happens, is a shared value-system', he added that 'such a system enables young people to be comfortable in handling ideas and teasing out prejudices; without this ability people succumb to a mental form of slavery.' A technically well-run school, he continued, can come to have underlying assumptions serving to promote values which may well be considered educationally unsound as well as morally undesirable for children to incorporate into their personal frames of reference. The note of warning sounded by Brighouse in this respect can obviously be taken as having a more general application than those British schools to which he is referring:

Some of the shared value-systems we have are quite pernicious and they can be successful in a kind of pernicious way...Most of our schools beyond question have unspoken assumptions in their organization, their timetable and their curriculum which reinforce individualism, materialism, and minimize the need for co-operation. (Brighouse 1985b)

Watson is surely right when, referring to Brighouse's 'challenging observation', she remarks that 'schools cannot escape the responsibility of wrestling with these problems and seeking to make explicit their agreed starting points as yardsticks against which to measure practice.'(45)

The question as to what particular values are in fact held and shared is, therefore, a crucial one. Axiological considerations subsume values understood both ontologically and epistemologically and while values in Christian education can refer to a valid epistemology, their ontological status derives from Christian theistic belief. Kant's disjunction between fact and value, which can be seen as the interpretative genesis of modern relativism can be opposed - as discussed on pages 171-2 - by C.S.Lewis's (1967) review of 'the massive unanimity of the practical reason in man' in relation to moral values; such that a man 'will no longer doubt that there is such a thing as the Law of Nature.' To reiterate an earlier statement by Lewis: 'a philosophy which does not accept values as eternal and objective can lead us only to ruin.' In Christianity, that 'massive unanimity' of which Lewis speaks is 'the natural law' inscribed on the heart of every man and to which his conscience must answer. Christians further affirm that the coming of Jesus Christ on earth has raised the standard of human values immeasurably higher by the recognition of divine sonship for all. A sublimity of values ensues that embraces a love for all of one's fellow-men and not excluding our enemies. The unique dignity as a child of God which Christianity attributes to every human person, and the

high sense of purpose which man's ultimate destiny - to be with God in heaven forever - accords to his present life on earth, call for a life which freely and gladly accepts reciprocal duties both to God himself, and to the community at large. In such a regime the way is open for an authentic human development which allows full scope to the fulfilling of one's personal potentialities while at the same time acknowledging the legitimate claims of God and of our fellowmen. It is a way which tempers alienating excesses, - be they moral, social or intellectual - by means of a free, and therefore, liberating, acceptance of duties and responsibilities.

The deeply unsatisfying and alienating effects of what has been termed *ersatz* religion have already been discussed. Equally misleading and no less alienating, however, are the paths along which exclusive recourse to what Duncan Williams (1973) calls the 'unanchored intellect' can lead. In his article entitled 'Education for What?', Williams refers to 'an iconoclastic cleverness emanating from an unanchored intellect', which he then describes as 'the very quality with which Milton endowed Satan - the symbol of ultimately purposeless energy and rebellion.' The author elaborates the parallel as follows:

None of the romantics who glorify in the 'free' spirit appear to have noticed in their canonization of Satan as the 'hero' of *Paradise Lost* that both he and his 'angels' from the moment they decided to wage implacable war against God or the natural law became merely enslaved puppets:

*To do aught good will never be our task,  
But ever to do ill our sole delight,  
As being contrary to his high will  
Whom we resist.* (Williams 1973 11)

Williams is referring to the 'current orthodoxy', subscribed to by many leading educators one of whom, D.R.Laing, has declared that the aim of the teacher in contemporary society should be 'to sow doubts in the minds of his pupils.'(46) If the young were provoked to question everything, states Laing, the result would be 'such a burst of creativity that society would not know where to turn.' In the educational field, however, it has been found that the so-called 'creative approach' favoured by the Newsom Report (1963)(47) has largely been a failure. Indeed,

in recent years, there has been a groundswell of reaction among practising teachers against the unacceptably low standards of achievement among pupils brought along by this approach. In the first year classes in secondary schools, for example, teachers have complained about the poor standard of basic skills among their intakes of post-primary pupils. The demand was that these skills and what might be termed fundamental knowledge be taught formally and directly in the first instance. Even learning by rote was not to be eschewed. Creativity was certainly to be valued, and highly at that, but little value could be placed upon a 'creativity' which was largely characterized by what could only be described as educational incoherence. The problem, however, descends to a level even deeper than this. In his own discussion, Williams refers to Laing quoting with approval the following text from Jules Henry(48):

If all through the school the young are provoked to question the Ten Commandments, the sanctity of revealed religion, the foundations of patriotism, the profit-motive, the two-party system, monogamy, the laws of incest and so on... (*ibid.*, 10)

As Williams puts it:

But is there not a danger that the net result of such total questioning and probing may educationally result in a further reductionism - in young people seeing *through* everything and ultimately seeing *nothing*? (*ibid.*, 11)

Intellectual 'freedom' for its own sake, then, is fraught with obvious dangers if elevated to becoming a controlling aim or purpose in education, not only because it can lead to an 'unanchored' intellectual arrogance but also because, lacking either direction or purpose, this 'freedom' inevitably leads to a totally cynical attitude towards all those and everything judged not to subscribe to the reputed 'freedom' ideal; and also to 'a totally cynical attitude towards duties, coupled with an almost religious scrupulosity towards *rights*, though why the latter should exist in a meaningless world is curiously overlooked.' Williams pursues the argument by relating this inherently destructive egotism of 'free' spirits to an existential vacuum redolent of the cynical and the absurd, 'that might ultimately prove subversive of the progress of mankind itself.' He refers tellingly to Bertrand Russell's observations on 'supra-egotism and its eventual effects upon society.'



Such 'freedom' or more properly licence is directly contrary to the collective survival of the species since in an increasingly crowded society any aggressive and extravagant extension of one's own rights invariably and inexorably infringes upon another's. In his *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell makes the following observations upon supra-egotism and its eventual effects upon society: *Christianity has succeeded, to some extent, in taming the Ego, but economic, political, and intellectual causes stimulated revolt against the Churches, and the romantic movement brought the revolt into the sphere of morals. By encouraging a new lawless Ego it made social co-operation impossible, and left its disciples faced with alternatives of anarchy or despotism. Egoism, at first, made men expect from others a parental tenderness: but when they discovered with indignation that others had their own Ego, the disappointed desire for tenderness turned to hatred and violence. Man is not a solitary animal and as long as social life survives, self-realization cannot be the supreme principle of ethics.* (ibid.,12, 13)

The contrast is great between the 'lawless Ego' with its concomitants of anarchy and despotism vividly described by Russell, and the healing and socially co-operative values promoted through Christian education. The freedom to develop one's personality is, rightly, prized, and the creative, intellectual and social pursuit of extending one's abilities in the direction of discovery, to solve problems, or to propose solutions, in the wide and bustling world in which we find ourselves, is, equally, an honoured and prized constituent of human endeavour. But there are other people on the planet to be considered as well as ourselves. We need a restraint upon our selfishness and a vision of our fellowmen that is both sympathetic and self-denying. The Christian vision of man, both as to his personal status and as to his relationships with others, fulfils, satisfies, and elevates such exigencies in the human condition. To the dignity of being a child of God, it adds the sublime destiny of everlasting happiness in the world to come. The concept of universal brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ offers compelling reasons for a programme of striving to achieve social justice and equity among men on earth. In affirming this faith, incorporating this vision, and promoting this ethic, Christian education is further confirmed in its possession of defensible grounds of validity. In the next chapter the challenge to Christian education in the conflict-torn Province of Northern Ireland can be seen, perhaps, at its most taxing, especially in relation to the problem of inter-community reconciliation.

## 6.10 Notes and references

1. Spencer Leeson, *Christian Education Reviewed* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), p. 18.
2. See Russell Stannard, 'Science, Psychology and the Existence of God', Occasional Paper No. 19, (Oxford, The Farmington Institute, 1986), p. 3.
3. See E.F.O'Doherty, *Religion and Psychology*, (New York, Alba House, 1978), p. 59.
4. *ibid.*, pp. 22 and 23.
5. *ibid.*, p.23.
6. 'How far this initial religious knowledge comes from without, and how far from within, how much is natural, how much implies a special divine aid which is above nature, we have no means of determining, nor is it necessary for my present purpose to determine. I am not engaged in tracing the image of God in the mind of a child or a man to its first origins, but showing that he can become possessed of such an image over and above all mere notions of God, and in what that image consists. Whether its elements, latent in the mind, would ever be elicited without extrinsic help is very doubtful; but whatever be the actual history of the first formation of the divine image within us, so far at least is certain; that, by informations external to ourselves, as time goes on, it admits of being strengthened and improved.' *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 1870: 8th edition (1889), p. 115. See I. T. Ker's annotated critical edition of 1985 - based on the 8th edition (Oxford, Clarendon Press), p. 79. Newman's thought on the formation of the image of God in a man is truly arresting. He situates it in personal experience however dimly perceived in the promptings of conscience. Thus he draws attention to the fact that everyone *has* a conscience, and, years in advance, invades the realm of personal-experiential psychology.
7. Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion*, (London, Longmans Green, 1898); Fr Wilhelm Schmitt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, 12 volumes, 1926-55, and *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, (London, Methuen, 1931); Paul Redin, *Monotheism among Primitive Peoples*, (London, Allen and Unwin, 1924). For a conspectus on the general debate, see, for example, M.J.Charlesworth's survey in his *Philosophy of Religion: The Historic Approaches*, (London, Macmillan, 1972), and Charles J. Adams (ed.), *A Reader's Guide to the Great Religions*, 2nd edition, (New York, The Free Press, 1977). Many of the classic theories about religion (those by E.B.Taylor, Sir James Fraser and Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example), have, as Charlesworth puts it, 'explicitly or implicitly depended on some form of progressivistic evolution.' The works of Lang, Fr Schmitt and Redin criticized this trend by pointing out that many primitive peoples believed in a 'High God'. They were, that is, monotheistic in their religious beliefs. The universality of the religious tendency has recently been underlined by Stannard (1986, *op. cit.*, p. 3): '...there is always to be found

among peoples a tendency to worship God (or gods). Though there have from time to time been reports of tribes that have shown no such tendency, on each occasion these claims have been followed up they have been repudiated.'

8. Jean-Claude Barreau, *The Religious Impulse: How Can We Discern the Basis of Authentic Faith?*, (New York/Ramsey, The Paulist Press, 1979), p.16.

9. See Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *Theology and Revelation*, Theology Today Series, number 2, (Dublin and Cork; The Mercier Press, 1968), p.70.

10. *Epistola*, 12, 5. See, for example p.1360, in N.Schiffers, 'Religion: 1. The Concept of Religion', in Karl Rahner (ed.), 'The Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi', (London, Burns and Oates, 1968/70) pp. 1357-62.

11. The Christian ideal in personal development might be thought of as developing to the best of one's ability whatever talents one has in order to give glory to God who endowed us with them in the first instance, to use them in the service and for the welfare of our fellow- man and in the process, to achieve the personal happiness which comes from so doing and from the possession of a quiet conscience.

12. *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* viii, in Henry Bettenson (ed.), *Documents of the Christian Church* (London, Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 7.

13. See Kevin Nichols, *Orientations: Six Essays on Theology and Education* (Middlegreen, Slough: St Paul Publications, 1979), p. 21.

14. Clement of Alexandria (circa 150-215 A.D.), *Stromata*, 1, 5 (*Miscellanies*). See J. W. Donohue's article, 'Early Christian Education', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington D. C., The Catholic University of America, 1967), vol. 5, pp. 111-112.

15. James Alfred Martin, *The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology* (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1966), p. 9.

16. For a discussion on this subject, see John Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought: The Frontiers of Philosophy and Theology* (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1963), pp. 75-94.

17. See, for example, the article entitled 'Theology', by 'H. Th.', in *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 18th edition, 1986, (20), p. 610.

18. *ibid.*, p. 609.

19. See H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, Limited, 1967) p. 1.

20. *ibid.*, p. 51.

21. See Fritz Hartung, *Enlightened Despotism*, (London, The Historical Association, 1957), p. 11.

22. *ibid.*, p. 11. Hartung states that the Enlightened Despots (or 'Benevolent Despots') 'were at least governed by the conviction that the state had the right and even the duty to compel its immature subjects...to lead a life governed by Reason for their own and the common good.' (p. 11.)

23. The philosophy of 'Positivism' originated with Comte in his six volume *Cours de philosophie positive*, written between the years 1830-42. Positivism denies any validity whatsoever to 'knowledge' not derived through the accepted methods of science. Comte was greatly influenced by the British school of empiricism from Bacon to Hume, and also by the original social theories of Henri de Saint-Simon. His *Plan for Scientific Studies Demanded by the Re-organization of Society*, written in 1822, was reprinted 3 years later under the title, *System of Positive Policy*.

24. The middle of the eighteenth century saw the Enlightenment in full swing. It was a period of burgeoning development among the new sciences, the time when foundations were being laid, for example, in psychology and the social sciences. To the Italian, Giambattista Vico, and, among others such as Turgot, Montesquieu, and Condorcet in France, and Adam Smith in England, is credited the beginning of sociology and jurisprudence as sciences.

25. A functionalist, structuralist, sociological approach to religion emerges. Religion comes to be seen as 'a catastrophe-countering mechanism' (the phrase is Dr R.H. Roberts' at a Durham University seminar, 11 October, 1988) for dealing with fear, dismay, demoralization, etc., in society. Non-reductive typologies of religion, however, such as those proposed by Mircea Eliade and others are so concerned with 'common features', that little account is taken of the individual and the importance and significance of religion to him or her *personally*.

26. See Crane Brinton, *The Shaping of Modern Thought* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 134. Brinton further comments that 'the corrosiveness of the Enlightenment is nowhere clearer than in its attacks on Christianity.' At the same time, he illuminatingly addresses 'the subtlety of the problem of how Christian the Enlightenment is'. While men like Edmund Burke focused their attention on the eighteenth century doctrine of the natural goodness and reasonableness of man as a basic heresy, 'for men like the Christian socialists of the nineteenth century the Enlightenment is a prolonging, a fulfillment, of what Christianity was meant to be.' The 'fundamental heresy' remains, however. 'Its logical consequence is philosophical anarchy - the abolition of all external restraints on the behaviour of the individual.' (pp. 133, 138)

27. See Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1932). 'I shall attempt to show that the *philosophes* demolished the Heavenly City of St Augustine only to rebuild it with more up-to-date materials.' (p.31) 'Without a new heaven to replace the old, a new way of salvation, of attaining perfection, the religion of humanity would appeal in vain to the common run of men. The new heaven had to be located somewhere

within the confines of the earthly life...and in the future, since the temporal life was not yet perfected' (p.129)

28. 'Fra Lippo Lippi', lines 283-5. See Ian Jack (ed.), *Browning: Poetical Works*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 496.)

29. See, for example, Ursula King's article, 'Spirituality in a Secular Society: Recovering a Lost Dimension', in *British Journal of Religious Education* 1985, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 135-147.

30. See G.P.G., 'Atheistic Philosophical Anthropology', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, p. 569.

31. St Augustine (354-430), *Confessions*. St Thomas Aquinas discusses the problem of human fulfilment in his *Summa contra Gentes*, Book I, Chapters 27-36. In Chapter 37, he comes to the conclusion that man can only be totally fulfilled in a relationship of knowledge of love with a Perfect Being.

32. See Jean-Claude Barreau, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

33. *ibid.*, p. 69.

34 See Barreau, *ibid.*, p. 69.

35. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1078, B13-35. There is no single passage in Plato's writings which gives a complete account of the Theory of Forms. However, a piecing together of various passages such as the above from Aristotle, and the conversation between Socrates and Simmias in the *Phaedo*, indicates Plato's thought on the issue.

36. The passage in the *Phaedo* referred to as being utilized by Christians to propose a theory of divine illumination is \*\*74A-75E. The extract discussed is \*\*245E-246C. In *The Sophist*, one of Plato's later dialogues, although Socrates does appear at the beginning, the main participants are Theaetetus and a 'Stranger' from Elea.

37. St Augustine, *Confessions*, vii, \*20.

38. Niebuhr's view is discussed in Michael Wyschogrod's chapter, 'Belief and Action', in Sidney Hook (ed.), *Religious Experience and Truth: A Symposium*, (New York, New York University Press, 1961). For a fuller exposition see H.R.Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, (New York, Harper, 1960)

39. Kleinig's use of the word 'constative' is unusual. The sense is 'substantive'.

40. The phrase is John Coulson's. See page 35 of his Introduction, in John Coulson (ed.), *John Henry Newman: On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, (London, Collins, 1961)

41. See, for example, Newman's 'The Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason', the eleventh of the *Oxford University Sermons* (1826-1840) where, as I.T.Ker (1985) puts it: 'Newman clearly recognizes that *Faith is not the only exercise*

of Reason...which is, in the common sense of the word, irrational. Faith is no longer viewed as diametrically opposed to reason but is seen as a particular kind of reasoning upon presumptions rather than evidence...Faith, then, belongs to that kind of reasoning which depends upon antecedent probabilities as opposed to demonstration, or, evidence.' See I.T.Ker's discussion in I.T.Ker (ed.), *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent: by John Henry Newman*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. xxii-xxvi.

42. The anti-Christian spirit of the Enlightenment is by no means dissipated. Those, for example who call for parity of treatment in our schools as between Christianity and other religions, somehow manage to ignore the special significance which Christianity must have, in so many and multifaceted ways for European people and their children. Yet many foreigners can't avoid noticing the Christian ambience. In her recent book *Education and Belief*, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1987), Brenda Watson states that 'visitors to Britain comment upon how Christian Britain is.' (p.4)

43. Edward Hulmes, *Commitment and Neutrality in Religious Education*, (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), p. 33.

44. The conferences took place in fact in Westminster College.

45. Brenda Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

46. Quoted by Duncan Williams in 'Education for What?', one of three papers presented at an International Conference on the 'Moral Dimension in Education', Princeton University, November, 1973: *The Princeton Papers*, (Oxford, The Farmington Trust, 1974), pp. 7-23, (p.10).

47. *Half Our Future*, The Newsom Report, (London, HMSO, 1963)

48. Duncan Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

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## Chapter VII

### WAYS AND MEANS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5: 23, 24)

#### 7.1 Achievement and disappointment for Christian educators

The analysis so far has confirmed the difficulties and tensions associated with religious and cultural difference in Northern Ireland. The question remains, what can be done to ensure that the fullest resources of Christian education are deployed so as not only to mitigate the worst effects of social divisiveness, but to achieve a substantial measure of new understanding between individuals and groups in the Province. Not surprisingly, this penultimate chapter focuses on the concept of reconciliation. In making a number of practical suggestions which are considered to be helpful, a number of points arise directly out of the arguments so far considered.

In Christian education it is clearly necessary that parents, teachers and other educators explore as fully as possible the potential of *Christian* education as much in the curriculum as in the school's ethos and in projects and initiatives of lively outreach towards sister schools and the wider community. The planning needs to be done at the adult level before the pupils themselves can come to make their own contribution. There is a clear sense in which progress at the adult level has a *sine qua non* priority. Progress is consequently envisaged as being made on two levels, namely, the adult level and the pupil level. It is submitted that in the Northern Ireland of today Christian education presents challenges which need to be taken up at both these levels, that is of *Educators and Parents*, and *Pupils*.

An exploration of the principles considered as an integral part of the Christian educational process will illuminate the Christian way amid the difficulties facing educators and the children they teach in Northern Ireland. First, it will

help to clarify the standards to which any school claiming to be Christian might reasonably be expected to conform. Second, it could provide a calculus for indicating the level of *deviation* in any given case from those standards of Christian education which are frequently alluded to but seldom discussed.

It is relevant at this juncture to state that the work of many dedicated and professional teachers and other educators in Christian education in Northern Ireland is deserving of praise and admiration. The experience (both teaching and research) of the writer makes him very much aware of this. The present chapter might be considered as something in the nature of an *in situ* meditation on the theology of education amongst the complexities and perplexities of Northern Ireland, and a suggested paradigm of response for an authentically Christian education assuming a distinctive and salutary rôle in the life of that divided society. Whatever ensues in the discussion which follows will, it is hoped, be viewed in this light. Secondly, although the perspective adopted is that of a Roman Catholic the use of the term 'Christian' continues to be preferred except for necessary purposes of denominational identification. Cardinal Cathal Daly(1) has on occasion used the term 'Catholic Christians' which has the great merit of drawing attention to the term 'Christian' - the critical, substantive and authoritative description. Cardinal John Carmel Heenan was even more specific when he once remarked that all Christians, whether they be Catholics or Protestants, should begin to call themselves *Christians*.

When Ordinary of the diocese of Down and Connor, Cardinal (then Bishop) Daly had been unequivocal in his praise of the Province's teachers. Speaking to a Conference in Newcastle, Co. Down, organized by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools he referred in the first instance to the contribution made by Catholic teachers as follows:

Catholic teachers have been and are devoting their best energies to the inculcation of attitudes of Christian love and forgiveness, peace and non-violence and reconciliation. Particularly in the most deprived areas and often in very stressful circumstances, Catholic teachers have succeeded in creating oases of peace in the midst of community violence, they have instilled love and forgiveness where others were fomenting hate, they have maintained discipline where all around were the elements of indiscipline and disorder, disruption and lawlessness. (*The Irish News* 5 October 1989)

The bishop had then proceeded to praise, equally, *all* the Province's teachers as follows:

Teachers in general, in all school sectors, and at all levels of education, have given an example to the whole of society in the way in which they have upheld the highest standards of their profession through the trials and tribulations of these 20 years. (*ibid.*)

This is a generous and not undeserved tribute which serves to underline the vital contribution which Northern Ireland's teachers have made to the maintenance of stability when, to paraphrase Gallagher and Worrall (1982), the foundations of society were being shaken. The school in Belfast in which the writer taught was in one of the deprived areas to which Bishop Daly referred, and during the 1970s in particular it was, indeed, a haven of peace and normality for the pupils of that area racked as it was then by grave civil unrest. The determination of the headmaster and the staff to ensure that the school operated as normally as possible in the interests of the pupils they taught was wholly admirable. Here were teachers - and many others in other areas which suffered most from 'the troubles' - whose whole demeanour and practice preached peace and an ordered outlook upon a disturbed scene; and whose schools likewise became bastions of stability in troubled times. Dr Daly added:

Catholic teachers and schools have been, through the past twenty bitter years, strong factors for stability and normality at times when conditions in society brought serious risks of instability, and in areas where powerful forces were actively working for destabilization. For Government spokesmen to pay tribute to the contribution of Catholic schools for their service to society, and specifically to reconciliation in society, would be not only to recognize a significant reality of these troubled years, but would be a contribution to mutual understanding. (*ibid.*)

It will be noted that while Dr Daly naturally concentrated his attention upon Catholic teachers and schools he also went out of his way to praise 'teachers in general in all school sectors' for upholding 'the highest standards of their profession' throughout the most troubled years. Throughout the Province, then, teachers have maintained the integrity of their schools as places dedicated to the instruction and education of the young at a time when sinister forces were working for disruptions and confusion. As an Irish saying has it, they 'manned the *bearne bhaoil* ('gap of

danger') when Northern society was in turmoil especially during the late sixties and early seventies.

Yet, inevitably, and as Dr Daly himself undoubtedly is also aware, there is another aspect to the story, namely, the view expressed by Dr John Greer (1988) and mentioned in Chapter 2 of the study (*supra*, pages 55-6). For Dr Greer, some of whose remarks in the earlier context it is judged important to repeat here, the educational system in Northern Ireland must take account of what he has called 'a serious failure', in that members of the two communities, who, as he put it, 'have waged civil war with each other, with a ferocity and a cruelty which could never have been predicted or imagined', 'have all been through the school system in one or other of its forms.'(2)

There might at first sight appear to be quite fundamental differences underlying what Dr Daly and Dr Greer have each said but each of them possesses such an acute understanding of the complexities of the Northern Ireland situation that such a conclusion would need to be treated with caution. Dr Greer would be well aware of the excellent qualities and attitudes of many teachers and in many schools while no one would be better equipped than Dr Daly in noticing inadequacies in Christian education as it ought to be carried out, either in the schools or the teachers themselves. Part of the explanation might lie in the apparent purpose each had in mind when uttering his comments. Dr Daly was clearly mindful of the broader canvas in the potentially doomsday situation of the earlier years of the troubles. This was a situation which the present writer vividly remembers, and it is undoubtedly true to say that the schools, by the very fact of continuing to function as Christian institutions calmly manned by Christian teachers - and at a time of great civil unrest - made the kind of contribution to society which the bishop has rightly lauded. At a time when Northern Ireland seemed about to become a Lebanon, when community enmity was at its height (in August, 1969, for example, a whole Catholic street - Bombay Street - was burnt to the ground), when barricades were being thrown up at street intersections in Belfast and the death roll from shootings and other violent incidents was steadily mounting, the calming influence of Catholic and Protestant schools in continuing to function, to teach, to pray, to walk the way of the Christian ethic eschewing counsels of hate

or retaliation, was immeasurably helpful not only for the pupils but for the often distraught community at large.

Yet the remarks of Dr Greer - who might be said to be taking a longitudinal view of Christian education in the Province, questioning its effectiveness in the face of both the occurrence and the continuation of the bitter conflict - are deeply challenging. It is the products of our educational system, he is saying, who are engaged in this prolonged episode of most un-Christian conduct. Despite long periods of Christian instruction, whether catechesis or Bible teaching, of upbringing in one tradition of Christian faith or the other, and of coming through our Church-linked Catholic and Protestant schools, members of both communities continue to show hatred instead of love, the will to retaliate instead of to forgive, a determined propensity towards murder and violence instead of towards peace and being reconciled. This - 'for whatever reasons' - is the 'serious failure.' Nor does it 'really meet the criticism to say that only a small number of pupils is involved or to argue that the situation would be even worse if it were not for the restraining influence of schools and teachers'.

## **7.2 The case for reappraisal**

This chapter, in its attempt to suggest initiatives of a reconciliative character in Christian education with respect to Northern Ireland will attempt to relate more closely to the people themselves since it is not communities, schools, or institutions *as such* which require consideration but the people who comprize them, be they parents, governors, administrators, teachers or pupils. This being so, a pattern of human relationships, motivations, fallibilities and prejudices arises in a situation grown very much more complicated. It is a situation where an examination of individual responses seems better called for and where groups of individuals - parents and teachers, for example - might engage in mutually helpful debate. It is a situation where faults might have to be admitted and resolutions made to correct possibly unconscious stances adopted which, on reflection, might come to be seen as retarding the Christian education of our children and the much needed reconciliation of our divided communities. A degree of humility and heart-searching among those of us concerned with education in the Province seems called for. We claim after all to be members of a Christian society, yet our children seem

destined to continue to live in a society which is divided rather than united by first principles. In such a predicament our responsibility as Christian educators would appear to be two-fold, that is to say, one of practical concern as to the nature of Northern Ireland society itself of which we *are* constituent members, as well as a concern for the spiritual and moral welfare of the children we are educating *in* such a society. In a real sense, although we are educators, we may also be part of the problem. The teacher Unions are still to a large extent split along sectarian lines(3) and as E. E. O'Donnell (1977) has indicated we are as apt to what he calls 'stereotypic thinking' as any other segment of society. Bigotry, it has to be said, can also enter through our own school gates. Are we not too often 'prisoners' of our own community to the extent of failing at times as Christians sufficiently strongly to condemn, before the children in front of us whom we are educating, the un-Christian excesses of 'our own' people? This silence - or 'half silence' (we may make a comment or two and even say a short prayer or two for those who have suffered) - we may sometimes seek to justify by remarks such as 'we should keep the troubles out of the classroom', or, 'the school is no place for politics'. Yet the pupils who are looking at us are all in one way or another, and too many of them in a very immediate way, not only victims of the conflict but are only too well aware of its contradictions even from a quite tender age. If not bewildered by it all they are at times pathetic propagandists for their *side* of it. It is no surprise to learn from recent studies that children can come to adopt the attitudes of their own religious or racial group from as early an age as six years.(4)

At the same time it has also to be said that the situation for the individual teacher can be a difficult one. Passions can run high and attitudes become so ingrained that it could happen (and on occasion it has happened) that a teacher's forthright condemnation of the excesses of his 'own' side might result in controversy involving disagreement with colleagues and even with parents complaining about his reportedly 'biased' attitude, and this especially in schools - and they are not inconsiderable in number - where tragedy has touched the lives of attending pupils and by extension those of their classmates.(5) This is the last thing that any headmaster, board of governors, teachers' union, or indeed the generality of teachers or parents would want to happen. This is the 'delicacy' of the situation that can be engendered in schools by the conflict. It is the 'delicate situation' of the inevitable presence and influence of political and other ideologies within the

school community itself which, being a microcosm of the wider society, will reflect to varying extents among its members - be they parents, teachers, ancillary staff or administrators - prevailing ideological influences such as, for example, Nationalism (of the Irish or British variety), Republicanism or Loyalism. Malcolm Skilbeck (1976) has referred to teachers as 'relatively naive bearers of culture' in Northern Ireland, a culture which he describes as being 'militant' and 'constrained by the need to establish and to fix identities'.<sup>(6)</sup> It is not only teachers however whose influence and attitudes, crucial as they are, affect the cultural ambience but all the elements in the school family.

Reference has been made on several earlier occasions (Chapters 1, 2, and 3, for example) to the problem of ideological influences and how these can offer a serious challenge to religion. Indeed, ideological stances can become substitutes for religion in the sense that where the ideology - of whatever variety - comes into conflict with the prescriptions of religion, in this case the Christian religion, the ideology may be awarded precedence. The slogan 'My country right or wrong' succinctly encapsulates this at the extreme end of the ideology of Nationalism. The Northern Irish political ideologies have their own heaven, their own saints and martyrs, their own tablets of commandment. Christian prescriptives for the attainment of the Kingdom of God, notably that of love of one's neighbour, can come to be ignored in the pursuit of ideological goals such as the achieving of an Irish Republic or a British Ulster; while Christian denunciations of violence such as that of Pope John Paul II on the occasion of his visit to Drogheda on 29 September 1979, can be given scant attention or ignored.

What Christianity does forbid is to seek solutions to these situations (unjust social or international situations) by the ways of hatred, by the murdering of defenceless people, by the methods of terrorism<sup>(7)</sup>

Where this happens it is clear that ideological influences are presenting serious problems for some Christians. The incipient ideologue experiences a reluctance to accept - or perhaps suffers from an inability to perceive - that an erosion of basic Christian precepts is in fact what is taking place. He might, for example, mollify a Christian disposition to condemn a violent outrage from his 'own' side by allowing consideration of counter outrages from the 'other' side to plead its justification, thus in effect closing his ears to the words of the Apostle Peter (also quoted by



John Paul II at Drogheda) 'Never pay back one wrong with another.' (I Peter 3:9) The signs of his deviation from the Christian way might be discerned in a growing degree of estrangement from the Church and a propensity to swift condemnation of statements by the leaders of that Church. On occasions he may have even walked out in protest in the middle of a Church service. He may attempt to 'Christianize' the ideology by stressing human rights and the concept of justice for all and by asserting that true peace must be founded upon justice - at the same time not accepting that violence is the enemy of justice:(8) or that the obligations of love go further than the obligations of justice: or that love in any event never falls short of our obligations in justice.(9) He may attempt to use the predilection for justice to attribute moral sanction to the methods of violence as 'the only way' to achieve that justice and thus peace. The fact that Christ is the 'Prince of Peace', (Is 9:5) who says to us 'My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you' (Jn 14:27) is often forgotten. Not adverted to either is Pope John Paul II's teaching that 'Peace is more and more clearly seen as the only way to justice; peace is itself the work of justice.'(10)

Might it not also seem, then, that some Christians in Northern Ireland (no less perhaps than others in similar situations elsewhere) are not as fully conversant as might be supposed with the fulness of the Christian solution to the problem of violence in situations perceived as unjust, oppressive or exploitative? This might point to a further explanation for the ambiguity of response which can obtain on occasions when violent occurrences take place. The root of such inhibitions might thus conceivably lie also in a weakness both of Christian understanding - as well as conviction - which ideological influences can the more easily exploit. Whatever be the case the necessity would seem to arise for providing a continuing Christian education up to and including adult level. Today, there is evidence of a greater awareness that such should be the case in the growing number of pre-marriage and pre-baptism courses that are provided to involve parents more fully in their children's approach to the reception of the sacraments. Bishop David Konstant (1984) of the English hierarchy has recently stated the case for a fuller utilization of Christian educational resources in respect of adults. Referring to a Report commissioned by the Catholic bishops of England and Wales on 'the educative task of the Catholic community' Bishop Konstant points to the Report speaking of 'the absolute centrality of sustained adult Christian education...as the single

most important educational activity of the Church', on which all other educational initiatives depend.(11) The practical implications of this are directly related to the proposal which is made later in the present chapter that Christian educators and parents in Northern Ireland should engage in discussions and debate upon critical aspects of the Christian education of their children.

The fact that the Christian in his non-violent pursuit of justice cannot 'fight back' by resorting to violent methods does not mean that he or she is unconcerned with human liberation. This, it would seem, is often the kernel of difficulty for unduly ideologically influenced Christians disturbed by their perception of unjust and oppressive circumstances. They allow the sectional and retaliatory logic of the ideology to obscure the revolutionary universalism of the peaceful Christian solution. James McPolin (1986) is illuminating at this juncture. Writing about Jesus, McPolin comments as follows:

He set out to liberate Israel by persuading people to change. (Mk 1:15)  
A way to be liberated from your enemies, he said, was to love them: do good to those who hate you, pray for those who treat you badly. (Lk 6: 27,28) This was not a matter of resigning oneself to Roman oppression nor was it a matter of trying to kill them with kindness. Rather one had to reach down to the root cause of all oppression: lack of compassion. (Mt 18:35) (McPolin 1986 84)

McPolin continues:

True liberation means taking up the cause of man as man. To love your enemies is to live in solidarity with all. Jesus offered the kingdom to the poor of the entire Roman empire without regard for race or culture. Also, he was able to see that there was at least as much violence, oppression and exploitation from within Judaism as from without. (*ibid.*,84 )

This is something which the partisans of one 'side' or another would do well to ponder. The phrase 'solidarity with all' gives the clue to the revolutionary non-violence of Jesus.

The solidarity of all was the key for Jesus, giving rise to a new structure or community with a new vision of humanity as brother and sister, as children of a loving Father made visible in Jesus. (*ibid.*,85)

McPolin continues:

The aim of Jesus' struggle, the work of the kingdom, was to make brotherhood and sisterhood possible without violence. He was a brother equally to all, since he ignored the boundaries set by politics, culture, class, nation or religion. He was a brother of Pharisees since he broke through the barriers of ritual and social conventions in order to widen their vision of what it meant to be children of God, brothers and sisters. He was a brother to Romans and gentiles, a brother also to men of violence of whom there were many at a time of political and national unrest. He was a brother of enemies: 'Love your enemies...Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.' (*ibid.*, 85)

McPolin then proceeds to elucidate his statement that 'the cross is the cost of being a brother and sister.' He refers to the West German theologian, Dorothy Sölle's (1981) suggestion that taking up the cross in a political, social and religious conflict involves breaking with neutrality (decision) making the invisible visible (compassion) and sharing a vision.(12)

Breaking with neutrality means breaking with the neutrality of silence in the face of violence and injustice. Christ saw the world with the eyes of the victimised and it was this one-sidedness which took him to the cross. (*ibid.*,86)

The struggle to create brotherhood/sisterhood, states McPolin, springs from an all-embracing compassion that spans all divides. In Northern Ireland 'we hear examples of Protestants and Catholics reaching out across the divide to families of victims of violence on either side to create brotherhood/sisterhood.'

It is part of the civilization of violence, intimidation and injustice to make its victims non-persons, invisible....Jesus fought against an order which counted the life and health of these people as of less value than the preservation of the kind of order found in the laws about the observance of the sabbath, for instance....To make visible the people who are invisible, whose sufferings are hushed up, and to care for them is a work of compassion after Jesus' example. (*ibid.*,86)

Finally, states McPolin, 'shared vision is another dimension of taking up the cross as brother and sister. It is not enough to have an individual dream of a better life.'

We need a communicated dream. It is a vision of society without violence or domination. Without this shared vision of what it means to be a brother or sister, it would be impossible to take up the cross.

Jesus' own vision during his life in a violent society where men and women can become brothers and sisters, along with his struggle to achieve it, is the vision which is our strength and hope in Ireland today. (*ibid.*,87)

This is the vision which surely must inspire our Christian educators in their crucial rôle in Christian education in Northern Ireland. It is a challenging rôle requiring among other things an examination as to whether ideological influences might be causing attenuation in the quality of the Christian education offered by the school. This might well in the charity of Christ involve the head and his or her staff considering how their own ideological predilections may be getting in the way, however subtly, of their Christianity and thus be preventing a fuller *realization* of the Christian way in their school. In a serious situation of community conflict such as ours only this, it might be accepted, will serve. It is a difficult and challenging situation to face up to the possibility that such problems may exist within the school establishment and to be prepared to look into them. It calls for an uncomfortable reappraisal to which some members of staff might take exception, deeming it controversial perhaps, or unrealistic and unnecessary; asserting that the school is 'doing alright' in its Christian education programmes and pointing out that such a reappraisal could even prove damaging to the even tenor of what is presently being achieved.

Others, however, might well conclude that the time has come to be more courageous and to launch out into the deep of a much more ambitious programme of Christian education. Some proposals in this direction have already been suggested by Christian educators and reference ought also to be made to the then Archbishop Cathal Daly's comment, for example, that 'a Catholic school is not worthy of the name unless it is actively promoting reconciliation between denominational communities through ecumenical contact and all forms of ecumenical dialogue.'(13) The suggestions made in the Report, *Violence in Ireland: Report to the Churches*, of the Working Party to the Joint Churches (1976) are also full of potential for an ambitious 'sharing' between schools. Its programme is referred to in some detail later in the chapter. As well as this, the 1988 *Peacemaker: Module One of a Post Primary Peace Programme* published by the Joint Peace Programme of the combined Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, and the Irish Council

of Churches is only one of a number of this body's professionally constructed modules for a Peace Programme for post primary schools.(14) The Programme is a comprehensive one with the stated aim of facilitating 'the growth of peacemaking skills and attitudes in students.' Peace education it envisages as follows:

A process which seeks to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills which will help people understand and cope with conflict at different levels in their own lives and in the wider society, national and global. Its aim is to enable people be more at peace with themselves and with others, whoever and whatever those others are. While the process does not seek to promote specific religious or political views, it does encourage the recognition and development of certain skills. The Programme reflects the conviction among Churches and others in Ireland that a continuing and appropriate educational basis is an essential part of any comprehensive approach to the task of building peaceful relations in society.(The Joint Peace Programme 1988 1)

At the same time it is difficult to understand why the obviously Christian Joint Peace Programme does not unequivocally propose the pre- eminently suitable Christian values of love and forgiveness and the concept of being children of the one loving heavenly Father as the basis for their peace programme. Christian education is itself able to provide the 'continuing and appropriate educational basis' for the task of building peaceful relations in society of which the Joint Programme speaks. The assumption here might seem to be that it cannot. The inadmissability of such an assumption has already been demonstrated in the study's exposé of the claims and criticisms of liberal educationalists such as Paul Hirst and other proponents of Philosophy of Education, in Chapter 5 when, for example, the overriding emphasis placed upon the concept of understanding was shown to be insufficiently explanatory or descriptive of the complexity of the individual's response. For one thing understanding by itself will not necessarily lead to corrective or moral action. It was also shown that far from liberal education being 'objective' and 'open' in contradistinction from other systems of education, its proponents are as much committed to such values as they subscribe to as those who might advocate Christian education. As Hulmes has remarked, all education is inevitably 'value-laden'; and therefore informed by the belief systems which - however philosophically or otherwise defended - underpin it. Finally, it might be thought somewhat anomalous for the Christian Joint Programme to state that its peace process 'does not seek to

promote specific religious (or political) views'. While in fact many of the examples and activities in the programme are directly Christian and many other examples and activities are entirely excellent, the implicit disavowal of a specifically Christian commitment and the espousal of an apparently 'neutral' approach is both disappointing and misconceived. There is no such thing as a 'neutral' approach. To adopt such an approach is in effect to make a statement of commitment to the values which underlie *that* approach. In the case of the liberal approach these have been seen both logically and inevitably to lead from philosophical relativism to religious indifferentism.

An elegant contribution has been that of John E. Greer and Eugene P. McElhinney's (1985) Project on Religion in Ireland, published under the title *Irish Christianity*. While adopting Skilbeck's reconstructionist strategy - that the school has the capacity to facilitate, promote and possibly guide certain forms of social change - the authors then proceed to speak of 'a new model for religious education', the aims of which they define as follows:

- (1) To increase pupils' understanding of Christian traditions in Ireland, and of the language and thought forms underlying them: (2) To encourage in pupils a sympathetic appreciation of differing traditions and current trends: (3) To develop the ability of pupils to discuss rationally and to investigate forms of religion. (Greer and McElhinney, 1985 15)

Clearly this 'new philosophy of religious education' (page 40) incorporated into the *Irish Christianity* project is the 'new religious education' which developed in England concomitantly with 'the crisis in theology' of the 1960s. The aims as adumbrated above can be summarized under headings of understanding, phenomenology, and empathy, three of the most typical concepts employed in the attempt to change the nature of religious education as logically conceived and normally practised. That attempt has lacked justification as will be recalled from the treatment of the issue in chapter 5. It was also pointed out then that the pedagogical models of the new approach had not proved to be particularly successful and it was argued that comparative and phenomenological approaches to the study of religions - that is, education *about* religions - do not constitute religious education; that religious education - logically, analytically and traditionally - means education *in* a religion, a religion which, in European culture, can only be thought of

as Christianity. Religious education is consequently held to be necessarily confessional both in approach and as to content.

It must be stated that the authors of *Irish Christianity* are aware of the confessional nature of religious education in Northern Ireland. They state that 'maintained Catholic schools and Controlled schools will continue to see Religious Education as education in a particular religious tradition.' (page 41) They continue, however, as follows:

We accept and understand this position, but we believe that schools on both sides of the religious divide have a responsibility to complement their existing Religious Education with the kind of approach and materials which the project has developed. In other words, the project is not a cuckoo in the nest, trying to establish itself in schools as an alternative to the existing practice of religious teaching. Our hope is to share the nest, not to usurp the rights of others. (*ibid.*,41)

There is no doubt, as Greer and McElhinney imply, that Christian education ought (and indeed with gratitude) to take advantage, in so far as it can, of the many sound sociological models, projects, units and materials which educators in Northern Ireland have put forward in the cause of reconciliation in our troubled society. They provide a valuable resources-base for a Christian education attempting to reach out in practical ways to sister-schools and the wider society. A Christian education, while dedicated to Christian values and beliefs, does not eschew the real world or the practicalities of relating to it. It does, however, seek to inform its educational and sociological outreach with the unique values of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the provision for Cross Community Contact Schemes envisaged in the Northern Ireland Department of Education's (1988) *Education for Mutual Understanding* initiative is an earnest of the Government's judgement that 'our educational system has clearly a vital rôle to play in the task of fostering improved relations between the two communities in Northern Ireland.'(15) Malcolm Skillbeck's (1973) conclusions on the positive reconstructionist rôle schools must adopt point in the same direction.(16) In addition there have been and currently are many other projects, studies and initiatives by a variety of voluntary, religious and statutory bodies having similar aims in view. Of these Greer lists ten as being

of more immediate relevance describing them as 'social and religious rather than political in their perspective.'(17)

The results of a more dynamic and Christian outreach by the schools will hopefully contribute to the goal of a more balanced and harmonious society. Such a Christian education will see Christian educators prepared precisely to meet the more difficult challenges and to answer more fully the 'delicate' questions. No one would wish to see 'upsets' to the smooth running of the school but these can be avoided by the Christian school's preparedness within its educational programme to provide opportunities for discussions, with parents as much as with pupils, about the provision of what might be termed socio-Christian models of community outreach. Since parents come up to the school regularly to discuss matters such as the vocational guidance of their children it should not be thought remarkable that they would also come to have discussions on the even more important question of how best might the Christian education of their children be implemented in the difficult circumstances of present society.

The 'debate' should include everyone belonging to the school family since all should be aware that to work in a school is to work in a privileged place hallowed by the presence of the young and that this has its special responsibilities. Everyone matters. The enterprise is a co-operative one. Cardinal Basil Hume (1988) has put it succinctly as follows:

People matter; eventually everything depends on them. So it is better to say that a school can succeed only if teachers, parents and priests are prepared to work together for the sake of the young. If these fail to undertake their own share of responsibility, it weakens and puts at risk the total Catholic formation of the pupil.(18)

### **7.3 Parents as partners in a child's schooling**

Cardinal Hume's words on the co-operative nature of Catholic/Christian education were echoed in a recent series of articles in a Belfast Catholic newspaper, *The Irish News*, which featured an 'Education Debate' to accompany a Catholic Schools Week Campaign during 4-11 February, 1990. The described aim of the Campaign is of significant interest emphasizing as it does the family of relationships in Christian education:



Schools Week is about 'the family', the community family of children, parents, grandparents, teachers, priests and the parish. It is about the members of that family uniting and working together so that all may grow in the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the part which each must play in the education of our young.

We all have the same hopes and aspirations for our children as they grow towards adulthood; we cannot afford to fail them. Only by working together towards a common purpose can the school, the home and the Church help the young of today become the committed and caring Catholic adults of tomorrow.(19)

Stressing the contribution that a child's home background can make to his or her education and stating unequivocally that 'the Catholic school and its Board of Governors now accept contact with parents as one of their principal duties' the 'Debate' is further illuminating on what it is that the school looks for from its parents:

Schools have well-founded and clearly-established purposes, aims, hopes and aspirations for all their pupils. They want parents and others to share them, to believe in the school's philosophy and to give that philosophy its place in the life of the home as well as the school. Schools want parents to know about the structures they have established; to learn more about their organization and management. They want parents to come to terms with how the teachers teach - whatever the subject - and to appreciate the quality of the relationships existing between the teachers and their pupils. Schools want parents to know about the links they have forged with the Church and its priests, with neighbouring schools, with local industries and with the wider community. The teachers for their part are calling on parents to support them as members of a team working in harmony for the good of every child. (20)

That not every school has reached in its actual practice the fulness of the situation as described, is adverted to in what follows next:

Each school is at a different stage in its openness to parents and the community. Consequently, those who visit the schools will be presented with a varied range of activities matched to the stage of their particular school's own home/school liaison development. (21)

Nevertheless the guidelines are clearly set out and it can be accepted with confidence that genuine attempts are being made to implement them - in some

cases, it will be admitted, more comprehensively and more successfully than in others. Again, while the degree of parental involvement in co-operative decision making may not yet have reached a significant level, this is clearly envisaged:

Parents will also be able to plan for future meetings with teachers and become involved in decision-making about their children's education.(22)

The admission that difficulties have existed in the past in school- parents communication is an encouraging sign of a determination to effect their remedy. One such difficulty has been the question both of attitude and feelings of inadequacy which some working-class parents can experience with regard to monitoring their children's education and to relating effectively to what the school may be doing for them. This can be a problem for such parents who are in no sense nor in any way less interested in their children's educational welfare than more articulate or successful middle class parents. Their contribution is equally important to the school-parent partnership and consequently sympathetic and intelligent efforts need to be undertaken to win these parents' confidence and to demonstrate to them that the school *welcomes* their contribution and needs their support. Finally, a number of important points and admissions are made which call for ameliorative action:

There has been too little communication between school and home. For many reasons it is more difficult to develop or sustain partnership programmes in secondary schools than in primary schools. The attitude of some parents to the work of the school can make close relationships difficult. The Catholic school, for its part, hasn't always made things easy for parents, either in the way it received them, or how it sometimes responded to a written or phoned enquiry. Teachers, too, on occasions, were overly critical of parents, believing that they knew so little about their own children and the way they develop. How to get parents involved in the life of the school today for the 'right' reason is exercising the minds of many teachers who wish to promote a harmonious parent/teacher partnership.(23)

Since, except in totalitarian societies, the teacher is generally thought of as being *in loco parentis*, the parent-teacher bond in Christian education might be conceived of as being especially close in that both share the same Christian faith and thus subscribe to the same distinctive Christian values. Where, as in Northern

Ireland, these values are under threat in an un-Christian situation of division and conflict, then the need is surely greater for parents and teachers to come together to discuss principles, ways and means of ensuring that the Christian education of their children neither suffers nor fails to make the contribution it can towards reconciliation in the wider society.

## 7.4 The crucial rôle of teachers

In such a situation, it must, surely, be a matter of primary importance that the head and members of the teaching staff will, themselves, have discussed, formulated and structured Christian education responses to the dilemmas and problems posed for the pupils of their school. Many of the issues that can generate controversy out in the divided community should be courageously faced within the school environment and the Christian answer arrived at and openly articulated: issues such as the 'right' to retaliate in kind; using violent methods for political ends; the withholding of sympathy for victims on the 'other' side; the giving of moral approval to paramilitary groups; the tendency to ignore the Christianly endowed characteristics of those perceived as enemies; a disinclination to respect what is good in traditions different from one's own. If our pupils leave school without matters such as these being *specifically* referred to and discussed, and without having the implications of the Christian ethic of love and forgiveness related specifically to their life in the wider community, can it be said that Christian education has faced up fully to its responsibilities? To help pupils, especially in the secondary sector, both to understand and to make Christian informed decisions when they enter Northern Ireland society as young adults, is the goal. It must be reiterated that issues such as those mentioned above are by no means beyond the intellectual comprehension of a great many of the children we teach.(24) It is true that their level of cognitive development is not that of an adult and that there are categories of understanding they have not yet attained. Nevertheless, the issues can be put before them within the terms they themselves formulate. Often many of our children carry about with them a burden of unanswered questions regarding the religious and political anomalies which they have come to perceive in the society in which they live - garnered from the often unguarded comments and hostile attitudes of their elders, from media reports or the stark discussions of the peer group. In the absence of the Christian view being thoughtfully put before them

- presented, that is, at the level of their understanding and discussed before the tribunal of their questioning - they will inevitably come to adopt the logic of 'us' and 'them'; the 'we're right and they're wrong' stance typical of many in their own community. Dominic Murray's (1982) identification of 'the kernel of the problem of Northern Ireland' is apposite:

At the educational level, in keeping with other sections of society, both sides judge each other across a gulf of ignorance. Arising from this ignorance come the negative responses of suspicion and antipathy. (Murray 1982 303)

From Murray's study of two primary schools in a Northern Ireland country town (one Protestant - 'Rathlin' - and the other Catholic - 'St Jude's') two rather poignant examples of this might be mentioned. A Protestant child referring to 'St Jude's' wrote: 'I don't know anything about *St Jude's* except that they train terrorists there.'(25) A little Catholic girl observed grimly to Murray at a match with the 'other' school that 'the Protestants are winning five nil.'(26) The 'gulf of ignorance' is deep indeed but might it not also be stated that this is the logic of the young people's frame of mind in the absence not only of adequate knowledge but of the healing challenge of the Christian way being put before them in a thoughtful and direct manner? It needs to be put before them with a degree of pedagogical skill and above all with commitment. They need to be brought face to face with the *unambiguous* command of the Lord Jesus himself to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Mt 19: 19): to forgive the brother who has sinned against you not seven times 'but seventy times seven' (Mt 18: 22): to 'love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you' (Lk 6: 27, 28; Mt 5: 44); - to come to understand that love for one another is an essential attribute of a follower of Jesus Christ:

A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (Jn 13: 34, 35)

Clearly, the life and teaching of Jesus as model and guide need to be studied. That life and teaching brook neither hatred, enmity nor retaliation. If it be the case that the pupils come to see the disparity between what their elders hold as Christians and what they do in practice, so be it. The unambiguous teaching

of Jesus on love for one another cannot be abrogated. It must be *taught*. The children will come to appreciate that while the Christian way is the way to peace and harmony it is not an easy one. They will realize also that many of their elders are failing to follow it but they will be capable of appreciating the challenges which Christ's way presents. They will not in the nature of things become estranged from their elders but will instinctively appreciate their honesty in putting the Christian way before them and sharing, as it were, the challenge of endeavouring to follow it. The inspirational example of the Lord Jesus will win them to make the effort themselves. Suggestions and methods of approach will begin to flow from them. These should be courteously listened to and followed if at all practical. Suggestions such as the following, for example, might well be made. 'Why don't we write a friendly letter to the children in the same class as us in the 'other' school?' 'Could we not become pen friends?' 'Perhaps that class could come and visit us in our school and we will make them welcome?' 'We could pray together for peace.' 'Would it not be possible for our parents and their parents to meet in one of our schools?' 'Or for our teachers and their teachers to meet together also?' 'We should all try to stop hurtful name calling and from now on to think of 'those' children as children of God, just as we are!' Any experienced teacher in a well prepared classroom debate/discussion will treat such proposals with the respect which they deserve and as a Christian educator he ought in all conscience to consider how the children's proposals might be implemented without undue delay. He will be surely failing both as a Christian and as a teacher if he too readily dismisses his children's suggestions as being impractical or difficult to implement. Suggestions which begin to impinge upon the area of parental and teacher involvement he might, too easily, dismiss as being outside the scope of plausibility. His own personal views are now in question as are those of the children's parents.

Yet an ongoing state of 'debate' between Christian parents and Christian educators and the children in school itself must surely lead to a more thoughtful Christian community and to the formation of future citizens not only well educated in all the necessary subjects of the secular curriculum, but endowed with the unique and distinctive values of a reconciliative Christian education. Where a school is already a viable Christian educational institution it will, presumably, have an open stance to the community at large, have the reputation of being prepared to confront un-Christian influences on its children - from whatever source - and be

known equally for its patent willingness to engage in inter-school and indeed inter-community programmes of a reconciliative character. All that is required then is to press forward with somewhat more of a sense of urgency: *Caritas Christi urget nos*.

The envisaged 'debate' would in practice encompass teacher-parent discussions on the one hand and teaching in the classroom on the other. It would not be without experiencing difficulties. There would be the fear of and perhaps even the actuality of disruptive interventions from some whose ideological commitment might not be fully exorcised by their sense of Christian responsibility. What might be termed the 'what-about-ery' phenomenon - 'What about this injustice?', 'What about that outrage?' - could operate powerfully to keep generating bitterness against 'the other side' while exculpating the excesses committed by one's own 'side'. Clearly the temptation would be strong to do nothing very much, if anything at all, beyond what previous custom has confirmed and the 'safe' routine arrangements for curricular requirements.

There is an apparent additional difficulty namely that, as R. M. O. Pritchard (1975-6) has argued, teachers are themselves inclined to be resistant to innovation:

Since the available research on internal school reforms indicates that teachers are unenthusiastic innovators it would seem unreasonable, in the face of discouraging findings, to cast teachers in the rôle of catalysts of change, destined to transform the whole of their society. (Pritchard 1975-6 7)

On the other hand it can be argued that teachers are innovators by the very nature of the demands their profession makes upon them. They must have innovative skills for devising teaching schemes to catch and hold the interest of their pupils, for example. It may well be because of this that they are only too well able to 'read' whether this proposed scheme or that would in fact be viable. Their reluctance to spend valuable time on some proposed initiatives might be because they have already mentally appraised them and found them wanting. They are often, therefore, understandably difficult to convince, which is not the same thing as not being open to conviction. If proposed changes are in any sense radical then as professional men and women they require a measured, well-argued and carefully structured exposition by the head and others concerned; and a good sufficiency

of time over a number of staff meetings to examine such proposals in detailed debate, and then to make their own considered contributions which, once they are convinced of the necessity, desirability or feasibility of what is being suggested, can suddenly make everything possible. With principles agreed, policy drafted and professional input discussed and accepted, difficulties can be quickly ironed out, a ground plan of action drawn up and a viable programme implemented throughout the school. Subsequent staff meetings might see the programme refined, other problems resolved, and the incorporation of further suggestions made in the light of experience.

In asking teachers carefully to consider the proposition that ideological and indeed other pluralist influences - that of secularization, for example - might be *eroding* Christian education within their school, the result might well see a more courageous and creative implementation of programmes of Christian reconciliative outreach towards sister schools across the 'divide' and the wider society. In asking teachers to consider all this, an indispensable prerequisite is that adequate provision be made for comprehensive discussion and analysis. Such models as are suggested later in this chapter would in themselves present no insurmountable difficulties. Indeed, there is no doubt but that they would be greatly enhanced and improved by the teachers themselves once they were convinced of the necessity of proceeding in such a direction.

Some arguments have been advanced for such a reappraisal. It is also important to acknowledge the great deal of thought and effort which has already been expended in recent years with a view to improving co-operation between the schools, to encouraging peaceful attitudes and values among pupils and to exploring ways in which education can be shared across the sectarian divide. Integrated education has been discussed at some length in Chapter 4. Reasons were then advanced to indicate its inappropriateness for Northern Ireland society on *de facto* grounds as well as on grounds of its incompatibility with an authentic Christian education which takes its children's education and nurture seriously, a *nurture* not in any sense at variance with the idea and reality of their *education*. This is not to discount the vision of those who sincerely proffer integrated education as their considered solution. Other programmes currently under way (to which some reference has already been made) can also be understood as encouraging signs of a

practical awareness of the need for our children to reach out across the community divide.

The will to adopt a more courageous approach in Christian education may be weakened by a perceived necessity to be careful not to alarm the susceptibilities of others in the volatile society of Northern Ireland. Skilbeck (1976) has remarked that the culture is 'highly ideological'. It is 'dominated by images and symbols and myth-making processes' It is 'thin and translucent...it lacks complexity...it lacks openness.'(27) Given the history of troubled relations between the two communities there is undoubtedly a need to proceed with some understanding and a degree of discretion. At the same time it might be thought equally important not to be overawed by difficulties. A *Christian* approach which of its nature is founded upon Christ's principles of love and forgiveness *ought* not to pose a threat to anyone and certainly not to fellow-Christians. How could such an approach occasion rejection or even controversy in an avowedly Christian country? In Northern Ireland such a question risks accusations of naivety since opposition *between* the two communities both of which claim to be Christian is a fact of life. The anomaly of the situation is underlined by the following finding by Richard Rose (1971):

74 per cent of the people of Northern Ireland think it 'very important' that theirs should be a Christian country. What they disagree about is whether it should be a Protestant Christian or a Catholic Christian country. (Rose 1971 274)

Whether or not one agrees with Rose's stated conclusion the question arises as to the amount of 'common' Christianity subsisting between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland. Neither denominational differences between the major Churches nor the refusal of fundamental Protestantism to recognize the Catholic Church as even being Christian can alter the validity of the question since the denominations do in fact exhibit something of a common core of Christianity. If this be the case, can it be said that there is anything more basic to Christianity than to have love, one for the other, and even for one's enemies? If Christian love does subsist between them the further question arises as to why, in a broadly Christian confessional society, Christian initiatives for peace and community harmony make so little effective progress. Among interweaving influences it has been emphasized that ideologies and especially those of the political kind,



can assert a powerful sway. In the Irish instance this has been described as follows by the hierarchy:

Thus to the Irish Protestant the reunification of Ireland seems to be a betrayal not only of his British nationality but of his Protestant heritage: a person supporting that policy is both a 'traitor' and an 'apostate'. Likewise, for the Ulster Catholic to forgo his aspiration to unite Ireland is not only to deny his country 'one of her four green fields' but also to continue forever living in what to him is easily made to seem a sub-Christian or non-Christian state. (Irish Episcopal Conference 1976 191)

The Northern Ireland conflict must surely present Christian denomination-ism in its most unfavourable light in that some who call themselves Christians will not co-operate with others also called Christians, not even in the dire circumstances of more than twenty years which have already caused untold suffering. The fundamental question at this stage - in spite of all possible reasons which might be advanced to obscure the answer - is whether the teaching of Jesus on love and forgiveness is accepted or not by both communities. Such acceptance is the very touchstone of Christianity. There is nothing which can abrogate it for any Christian no matter how deeply he differs denominationally or otherwise from any other Christian. He is bound to love everyone whether Christian or not. It is the acid test proposed by Christ, himself: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.' (Jn 13:35) 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me;' (Jn 14: 21).

Such, equally, are the principles of Christian education to which Christian educators subscribe. A level of deviation from the Christian ethic might well be calculated by the degree of reluctance to co-operate with initiatives which emanate from a school in the 'other' community - whatever the reasons given. Principals and others might consider that it is they themselves who are being alarmist if they conclude, as some have, that a programme attempting in a practical manner to promote reconciliative Christian values and initiatives in a divided society would, in their school, 'alarm' parents and 'be bound to generate controversy' - especially when it is a matter of proposed educational programmes based upon the most basic and universal Christian principles of love and forgiveness. Were they instead to use both their very considerable influence and expertise to set in train an introductory

series of interviews and meetings with their parents it would surely be possible to create a climate of opinion favourable towards attempting a more thoughtful as well as a more active Christian way in education which envisaged the whole school community and the active co-operation of the parents themselves. Christian parents might well respond by feeling that such an initiative was deserving of support as being consonant with a fuller appreciation of Christian values in education and as an acceptable way of Christian community outreach. The fact that a certain amount of self-appraisal might become necessary on their part might not and need not necessarily be thought of as a source of embarrassment or controversy. Rather, it might just as easily strike the parents as an opportunity they were prepared to accept and an initiative to which they would be happy to contribute what they could. The example and assistance of such Christian parents would be salutary indeed for the Christian education of their children as well as for themselves and the wider community of which they form such a critical part.

## **7.5 The Christian spirit of peace at work in Northern Ireland**

There have been many occasions during the troubles when Christians in Northern Ireland have demonstrated openly and courageously for peace. They have marched across 'peace lines' from Catholic into Protestant areas and from Protestant into Catholic areas and engaged in common prayer that the violence might cease. On occasions they have been subjected to abuse both verbal and physical: on other occasions closed doors or a staring silence have been their reception as they marched. They were accused of political machinations, of betraying their own 'side', of being 'middle class' and without any real social conscience. Many would not join them for political, sectarian, or ideological reasons even on occasions when Christ's cross was carried at the head of the procession. They just did not turn up. But many across the Province, Protestant and Catholic, did turn up and did pray for peace. Their example shows that Catholic and Protestant people can indeed act together and pray together and provides a highly significant paradigm example for Christian education. Parents among such as these would be strong supporters of any initiatives undertaken by Christian education. Gallagher and Worrall (1982) describe them as follows :

There have been Christians praying for their enemies - and in Northern Ireland that cannot be an abstract or formal activity - in every part of

the Province every Sunday for twelve years.' (Gallagher and Worrall 1982 210)

Connecting this with the Church leaders' consistent condemnations of violence and with other church-based initiatives Gallagher and Worrall pay tribute to those dedicated Christians in the Province who have sought courageously to follow and to implement the promptings of their Christian conscience in the face of the conflict. It is in a spirit of humble tribute to these noble people that the following quotations from the same authors - including their reference to the words of Pope John Paul II on his visit to Drogheda, 29 September 1979 - are added here:

To translate this pervading Christian spirit into a political solution has not so far proved possible. But to apply it to the situation in terms of restraint, fortitude, and goodwill is something that a vast number of Christians have tried, not without considerable success, to do. The results can only be measured hypothetically against what might have been; but they should not be ignored. Some words of Pope John Paul II at Drogheda are worth remembering:

'I pay homage to the many efforts that have been made by countless men and women in Northern Ireland to walk the paths of reconciliation and peace. The courage, the patience, the indomitable hope of the men and women of peace have lighted up the darkness of these years of trial. The spirit of Christian forgiveness shown by so many who have suffered in their person or through their loved ones has given inspiration to multitudes. In the years to come when the words of hatred and the deeds of violence are forgotten, it is the words of love and the acts of peace and forgiveness which will be remembered. It is these which will inspire the generations of men.' (*ibid.*, 210)

Clearly reflecting, it might be presumed, upon the enigma of 'the countless men and women in Northern Ireland' who have walked 'the paths of reconciliation and peace', and the continuation of the present conflict (now eight years even further on) Gallagher and Worrall comment:

The corollary of this basic Christian charitableness has been a profound feeling of regret and shame at the continuing strife. (*ibid.*)

Part of the problem of violence in the Province is that the sufferings which one community has received at the hands of the other (often in tit-for-tat patterns of retaliation) act to erode that force of unequivocal condemnation which the violence

deserves. An atrocity, whenever it occurs, in whichever community, generates deep compassion for the victim or victims. But inevitably also, in the community to which the victim has belonged, deep feelings of bitterness well up against the perpetrators, feelings which often become generalized to include the community out of which the perpetrators are known to have come. Remarkably, it is from the grieving families that calls for forgiveness most often emanate. But it is the feelings of bitterness sown into the community by the atrocity that often generate or are made use of to justify retaliatory deeds. Then, conversely, such deeds do not receive the full weight of universal condemnation which they should. It is not that the people of Northern Ireland are incapable of and do not feel genuine sympathy for the victims of violence, and their relatives, whenever any atrocity occurs. But there is undoubtedly a tendency among many in both communities towards not a self-justificatory but rather a self-exculpatory frame of mind which has been described by Father Denis Faul (1988) of the Archdiocese of Armagh as the phenomenon of 'what-about-ery?'. The term might be paraphrased as follows:

This is a terrible atrocity which has been committed by persons from our community. It is both disgraceful in itself, the cause of so much suffering, and shameful to us. But what about the atrocities that have been committed by those others against *our* community?

Writing on the superb example of Christian forgiveness shown by Gordon Wilson after the tragic murder of his daughter by an IRA bomb, at Enniskillen on 8 November, 1987 - which killed eleven people and injured dozens of others - Father Faul referred to the Christian force of that example. Gordon Wilson's words of forgiveness after the death of his only daughter 'reverberated around the world and were talked about and discussed long after the explosion and the subsequent funeral had faded from the public scene'. Referring to 'whatabout-ery' as 'part of the opposition to forgiveness', and to the grieving relatives of victims of atrocities many of whom, like Gordon Wilson, have forgiven publicly, 'and many have worked hard to help other victims of the Troubles without distinction of religion', Father Faul described forgiveness as a natural virtue as well as a supernatural act. He continued as follows:

Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, spoke extraordinary words about forgiveness: 'But I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you': and to

Peter's question, 'How often must I forgive my brother?' Christ said, 'Not seven times but seventy times seven.' What Christ is telling us is that forgiveness is normal: it is part of normal living: that the holy person is a normal person: that sin is abnormal and disruptive of the normal pattern of life....The impulse to forgive is not a betrayal of the loved ones or of oneself attacked and injured by the other person, but an affirmation of the value of our common humanity and community. (28)

In that affirmation must lie, surely, the seeds of the possibility of a mutuality of response, in terms of a recognition of a common humanity that reaches out, without reproach, from the victim to the perpetrator, requiring an answer from the latter that preserves his claim to the common humanity. Often, however, and sadly, the answer fails to come, but the dismissal of the proffered forgiveness must lead to feelings of a diminished humanity. Martin Buber (1947) speaks of the 'testing threshold on which a man is transformed or becomes a lie.' In a moment of elementally experiencing the other side of a situation, the erotic as well as the catatonic assurance of a man can be shattered, bringing him to contemplate the *reality* of a situation and, in the process, forcing a reversal of instinct. One example which Buber gives is the following:

A man belabours another, who remains quite still. Then let us assume that the striker suddenly receives in his soul the blow he strikes: the same blow; that he receives it as the other who remains still. For the space of a moment he experiences the situation from the other side. Reality imposes itself on him. What will he do? Either he will overwhelm the voice of his soul, or his impulse will be reversed. (Buber 1947 96)

This 'experiencing the other side', as Buber calls it, depends for its effectiveness, in any real sense, upon the person undergoing the experience, coming to act 'inclusively', that is, 'realizing' or taking into account the full reality of the other person: and as a result of this, being brought into a full understanding, 'not by fancy but by the actuality of the being', of the evil which, in this case, he is doing: as a result of which, his impulse can be reversed. But, he may decide not to act - and so, to 'overwhelm the voice of his soul.' Again, he may not come to have the experience. Might one not extrapolate from this to a case where forgiveness has been offered, as for example by Gordon Wilson (and indeed, by many others)

and postulate that the perpetrators will not only have come to 'experience the other side' in a sharpened reality, but will find it difficult to smother the voice of a conscience demanding reversal of that instinct which led to the atrocities they have perpetrated.? Publicizing the forgiveness as widely as possible will at least ensure that the perpetrators and those who support them are placed in the position of 'experiencing the other side' of the tragedies that occur. But in Northern Ireland, since both communities have endured atrocities, experiencing the other side is often vitiated and 'the voice of the soul overwhelmed' by the 'what-about?' phenomenon.

## **7.6 The potential of Christian educators**

The school becomes more keenly 'aware' of its increasing responsibilities in Christian education primarily when the teachers become so aware. They will have taught religion according to provided syllabuses and have participated in discussions at departmental meetings presided over by the head of the religious education department in the secondary school, or possibly at staff meetings in the primary school. They will have taught the children professionally and well. In the primary school in particular they will have taught them particularly sympathetically, teaching them their first prayers in school and preparing them (in Catholic and Anglican schools) for their reception of the sacraments. Their work will have been, and is, both sympathetic and of high value. As the present conflict has continued to shock and appal they will have undoubtedly become more conscious of the increasing importance of education in the great Christian values and equally have sensed the threat to these values in the almost daily succession of murders and outrages - duly reported on television and viewed by most of their pupils. They will also perhaps have become more convinced of the necessity of a more lively approach to peace education programmes and of effecting realistic contacts with schools in the 'other' community.

Yet, it is argued here that the great potential of the teaching profession has yet to be fully exploited within Christian education. Within the school itself the tendency to compartmentalize religion into its subject and its department - even it has to be said, in some church-related secondary schools - often seems to have the result of inhibiting positive and relevant contributions from teachers in

the secular subject areas. Religion being thus reduced to the level of a subject - one among many - its distinctive Christian content is inevitably eroded by the often felt necessity to compare and contrast it with other religions before it has been properly learnt and absorbed within the natural setting of its own believing community, of which the Christian school is itself an integral part. The Christian ethos of the school thus becomes weaker than it should. Too few teachers it would seem (at least in the secondary school) feel called upon to exercise their competence as *Christian* educators. They teach their subject, whatever it might be, deferring to the prevailing propensity to leave anything of a religious nature to 'your R.E. teacher' or 'your R.E. class'.

Yet there are many valid educational opportunities for bringing Christianity into their teaching. The Christian origin of science is one such example which ought to have its place in any scholastic account of science and certainly in a Christian institution. The overwhelming influence of Christianity on European culture - from architecture and art to literature and music - should similarly find its way to the appropriate level of explanation in the Christian school. Other examples might easily be produced - from the A.D., *Anno Domini* convention in stating dates to the great social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, of Pope Leo XIII. In Christian education the pupils ought not to feel that Christian concerns are somehow foreign to the subject departments and teachers. Undoubtedly there is a case for some form of teacher in-service counselling in the matter of acknowledging the Christian-educational contribution to the general deposit of European learning and knowledge. Many teachers would, it is felt, appreciate the relevance of such a course especially if it were related to methods in pedagogical practice. More pertinently in respect of the Northern Ireland situation it might be felt that such counselling was as imperative as welcome particularly if related to the issue of the schools (both Protestant and Catholic) finding a common ground in being *Christian* schools. The resulting confidence could well aid the success of initiatives in Christian educational community outreach.

To what degree do Protestant and Catholic teachers look upon themselves as *Christian* educators? What are their self-perceptions in this regard? To what extent are they conscious of the responsibilities which emanate from the descriptive term 'Christian'? To what extent do they consider that being a Christian

is both a valid and an integral part of their being a teacher? Or have they in practice adopted the erroneous view that their Christian commitment must be somehow kept 'separate' from their teaching? It needs to be said that most of the teacher Unions adopt just such a stance. While their concern for the general welfare, working conditions and status of their members is both right and proper, their promotion of the concept of 'neutrality' as an integral part of teacher professionalism is, however, misconceived. As has already been argued, education is never a 'neutral' process. Values and beliefs of one kind or another are inevitably being transmitted and teachers are powerful agents in this process. Parents clearly have the right to be concerned not only about *what* values and beliefs are being transmitted but also, if they are Christian parents, that these are consonant with their own Christian commitment. By the same token, if professional teachers who are themselves Christians are working in the schools of an avowedly Christian society, they surely have an obligation to ensure that such is the case. It might be fair to question whether Protestant or Catholic teachers are sufficiently aware of the educational opportunities which that very commitment promotes - in terms of a devotion to truth, to open discussion, to a weighing of evidence and to personal freedom. It might also be fair to say that a considerable number of teachers may not have adverted to such considerations so directly or personally.

Most likely the majority - even in the denominationally segregated Northern Ireland system - will as a matter of course have entered the profession simply with a view to becoming 'a teacher'. While Protestant and Catholic teachers will find themselves in schools of their own denomination it is probably true to say that most of them think of themselves primarily as teachers who perforce (though without rancour) pursue their profession in the given denominational school. They fit naturally into their own denominational ethos and function easily enough in accordance with the *mores* and traditions of their school. Those who are deputed to take the different classes for religious education will undoubtedly be conscious of having a particular responsibility and will approach their task with sensitivity and a more particular care. The staff generally will also adopt a respectful attitude at morning assembly prayers or at other functions of a religious nature; and some of the staff will be seen as quite devout and extra solicitous that the children pay attention and say their prayers well. The RE teachers during the RE lessons will



teach competently and as has been said with that additional degree of sensitivity. The other subject teachers will pursue their educational tasks throughout the school. Thus the pattern is set, at least at the secondary level. Staff meetings discuss in great detail and evaluate the school's progress as an educational institution. Educational, organizational, administrative and disciplinary matters are regularly reviewed and the RE teachers make their contributions and appeals like everyone else. But while its educational progress comes thus under constant review, can it be said that the school's progress as a *Christian* educational institution merits the same attention?

It will be recognized that this question is one of the primary considerations of the present study, the effective extent, that is, to which an authentic Christian education both can, and ought, to inform the school's regime. It subsumes a further question which also bears repeating, namely, whether principals and teachers, parents and governors, are sufficiently cognizant not merely of their responsibilities, but also of the great potential they possess for truly salutary influence in both the schools and the wider community. To many of them, it might be thought, the conscious realization of this has not occurred with the strength of conviction it should. There are powerful obstacles in the way and some of these have been mentioned already - ideological influences, stereotypic attitudes, ultra-professionalism, contemporary liberalistic tendencies and the strongly flowing tide of secularization among the chief carriers of which Karel Dobbelaere (1979) has highlighted the professional classes, including teachers. Difficulties such as these can both be met and alleviated, however, by a Christian education which takes full account of all the resources it can command and which seeks to develop the potential for authentic Christian pedagogy in its educators.

It is in this area that the school principal can be seen to have specific pastoral responsibilities in relation to his staff; and, together with his staff, towards the pupils; and, in a consultative way, towards the parents. The principal has a very much greater potential for promoting and assisting the implementation of a much more comprehensive realization of the Christian education ideal in his or her own school than he or she often utilizes. This statement is not made lightly, nor is it intended to detract from the excellent attributes of most principals. But the issue is a crucially important one especially when it is considered that, as in Northern

Ireland, Christian education in its fuller remit might well become a significant vehicle for reconciliation in the wider society. It is for this reason that, in the present study, the principal is envisaged as exercising his or her full potential for the pastoral Christian/educational care of his or her teachers, pupils and parents. In respect of the teachers the principal is the natural initiator whose rôle within the context of the present discussion should encompass a teacher-centred pastoral approach such as the one suggested here and which now follows.

Speaking of 'the need for clear leadership within the school' Roy Wake (1986) is unambiguous as to where that leadership should reside.

This means the head, and it means that the first duty of the head is the pastoral care of the whole staff. (Wake 1986 249)

Wake is referring specifically to the Catholic school but what he says applies to any Christian school. It is with this in mind that a further observation by Wake is presented (where it will be noted that he employs the term 'Catholic Christian school'):

The characteristics of the Catholic Christian school should certainly be detailed pastoral care, detailed concern for individual problems and systematic care about children's futures, in close links with parents and parishes. (*ibid.*, 249)

Clearly there is an important challenge for school principals to provide opportunities for evaluative discussions by their teachers on qualitative aspects of their rôle as Christian educators in relation to considerations, for example, such as the following:

- (i) the extent to which the distinctive values and ambience of Christian education finds reflexion in their teaching competence:
- (ii) the way in which they have either taken or let slip opportunities to treat with pupils on the issues of love and forgiveness especially in relation to pupil attitudes towards 'them on the other side' and what they have 'done' to 'us':
- (iii) the times when they may have let the opportunity pass by of showing the deeply un-Christian nature of the actions of those purporting to be on

'our side':

- (iv) the possible extent to which ideological predilections may be inhibiting the quality of their own Christian response, this in turn resulting in a negative rather than in a positive model of Christian education offered to their pupils and therefore in a supine rather than in an active stance being adopted by their pupils and ultimately by the whole school to programmes of inter- school and community outreach:
- (v) their willingness or unwillingness to engage in teacher-parent debate on issues relevant to their pupils' Christian education in the divided society of Northern Ireland:
- (vi) the quality of their own responses which they are unavoidably communicating - recognizing the truth of Bishop Spencer Leeson's (1947) conclusion that:

The teacher must subject himself to the sternest discipline of thought and spirit if his response to the innumerable different challenges that meet him in the course of a single day is to be what it ought to be. The effect on his pupils may be incalculable for years to come. (Leeson 1947 4)

Our philosophy of life 'will speak in spite of us'.

It will radiate out of us, an intangible, unanalysable force, operating for good or ill, noble or base....There are certain assumptions, dogmas, scales of values, attitudes - call them what you will - ...(which)...will show themselves in loose unpremeditated comment, the chance word, the natural reaction...Our concern in all this is with that whole complex of will, reason, desire, affection and prejudice through which our fundamental values are expressed and upon which the scale of values in its turn operates for good or evil. (*ibid.*,4)

It will be at such staff discussions that enlightened observations by some colleagues will illumine others; where serious community problems affecting the school might be examined in the light of Christian pedagogical principles; and where the community of Christian teachers might find personal inspiration for perhaps a more open and confident Christian education approach.

Some school principals, especially those who seem more naturally to concen-

trate on their rôle as academic head, might find it a somewhat daunting proposition to initiate and steer such a pastoral-teacher initiative. Yet it is they who have the influence and the authority to make it a success. A good principal, as any teacher will agree, is one who is deeply concerned about his staff - about the well-being, competence, potential and prospects of all its members. A respected principal can usually bring his staff to see the merits of what he proposes. In ensuing discussions the principal's opinion most often is the deciding factor. A principal who is head of a Christian school in Northern Ireland must, presumably, be concerned to counteract deleterious influences affecting the proper progress of Christian education in his school. His perspective will necessarily include all who are involved in the enterprise and particularly his teachers. As a Christian teacher himself he may well have come to evaluate his own responses to the situation. Arising out of this he will therefore appreciate the usefulness of Christian-evaluative staff discussions on critical issues challenging the effectiveness of Christian education in his school - issues such as those which have been raised in the present chapter.

Therefore the principal might encourage developments in this area by taking a number of steps and articulating a number of aims.

1. He might set up a number of special staff meetings for the purpose of examining:
  - ways in which the Christian remit in Christian education might better be realized in practical terms throughout the departments of his school:
  - how teachers might evaluate their rôle not only as educators in subjects but as *Christian* educators:
  - whether problems can be identified as preventing the school operating to its best potential as an institution for the Christian education of its pupils and how these might be solved:

- how teachers might more fruitfully relate to the school's parents as partners in the children's Christian education in a Northern Ireland rent by a most un-Christian conflict.
2. He might request his head of religious education and the members of that department to draw up suggestions and possible guidelines for a Christian 'awareness' in relating to other subjects for discussion and evaluation by the rest of the staff.
  3. He could request the school chaplain to prepare and deliver a series of short talks to the staff at three-weekly intervals over the school year on aspects of the general subject, 'The Christian Educator': each talk to be prefaced by prayer and ended by a short period of meditation prior to discussion. These talks could be justified on the grounds of staff preparation for the pastoral care of pupils and the furtherance of school initiatives in socio-community outreach.

It is clear that once he has come to the decision to draft and implement these measures with his staff the principal would feel the necessity of approaching his board of governors. No difficulty should be envisaged in such an approach, however, since it is inconceivable that the governing board of any school dedicated to Christian education could disapprove of measures designed to promote and further the values of Christian education in their school and to assist that reaching out to the other community long advocated by the Church leaders themselves. In the case of a Catholic school where the chairman of the board of governors is usually the parish priest and the school chaplain often functions as secretary, the principal's programme could only, it must be thought, receive approbation and respect. In the case of a state school - and it has been shown earlier in the study that state schools in Northern Ireland are not only *de facto* but *de jure* Protestant - the ministers on the school management committee and the Christian complexion of such committees generally should ensure at the very least a sympathetic hearing for the principal's proposed programme.

It might also be assumed that the principal would wish to consult with other principals and especially with those principals of the sister schools in his area. These are his crucially important neighbours. Were three or four of his neighbouring principals to agree to set in train the initiating principal's evaluative programme

gramme in their own schools and to engage in continuing discussions and contacts with one another, then a vital redoubt for Christian education and reconciliation in Northern Ireland would be established. This is a better way of proceeding than in the first instance approaching a head teachers' conference. Later, however, were the initiative to succeed and perhaps other small groups of principals could similarly report success, an existing association of head teachers could, hopefully, express encouragement and give significant advice and assistance in respect of further schools throughout the Province. By the same token the co-operative success of the teachers in the programme overall might have an effect in weakening the deep sectarian divide which exists between Catholic and Protestant teachers and their Unions.

It has been stated above that the Christian board of governors/school management committee might be presumed as being fully supportive of the principal's programme. Its own important contribution at this stage might be envisaged as follows:

- giving its full permissive support to the discussions between the principal and staff:
- seeking ways by which it can practically support the initiative:
- sitting in on some of the staff meetings especially those which are to consider increasing and improving relations with the parents:
- considering methods of approach to the boards of governors/school management committees of neighbouring schools in order to exchange information and to seek discussions with a view to the promotion of a possible neighbourhood-schools project - perhaps in the way proposed in its passage on education by the Joint Churches Working Party's Report of 1976; or with modifications; or in some other way peculiar to the special circumstances of the particular environment; or approaching schools in other areas for particular reasons such as contrasting environments (city schools and rural schools); or known shared interests:
- informing the education authorities of the new evolving structures within the school as they make progress and, with the assistance of the principal, making

the management case for their educational validity particularly with reference to the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989.(29)

- As will be seen later in the chapter the board of governors/school management committee will have a crucial rôle to play in initiating dialogue between sister schools.

## 7.7 Approaching the parents

Reference has already been made to the dramatic growth in appreciation of the importance of the parents' *rôle* in the education of their children. One of the reasons for this has been the increased power parents now have as a result of the Education Reform (NI) Order of 1989 to choose the school (and type of school) they wish their children to attend. In Christian education, however, the rôle of parents in their children's education has always been of first importance. Indeed, they are quite properly looked upon as the prime factor in the enterprise. It should not be surprising, therefore, that a major result of the teachers' evaluative analysis would be to approach the school's parents in order to obtain the fullest measure of their co-operation in the task of the Christian education of their children in the challenging circumstances of Northern Ireland. It needs to be understood that the appeal envisaged is something quite out of the ordinary in that:

1. The parents will be asked to come up to the school and examine the nature and responsibilities of their status as parents in their children's education.
2. The present conflict in the Province is inevitably undermining their children's right not only to receive a good Christian education but also their right to expect that the adult Christians they are growing up among - their parents, teachers, other relatives and even neighbours - are making sustained and serious efforts to ensure a future without fear and in a more harmonious state of community peace.
3. The parents are invited to examine the possibility that their own Christian commitment is being eroded by ideological influences including Republicanism and Loyalism.

4. The envisaged consideration and planning with the staff of the school and the whole school community - themselves, the teachers, the children, the ancillary staff, the boards of governors/school management committees - might, in the first instance, set about removing such 'obstacles'; and in the second instance, might see a concerted beginning in devising ways, based upon the reconciling principles of Christianity, of approaching those schools and the community on the 'other side'

This is a seriously complicated challenge to the parents but the times are very bad and the situation wholly exceptional. *All* the resources in Christian education need to be used and *fully* used. There will be those who will think that the parents will be incapable of responding to such an appeal but the present writer is not one of them. What is required is that the more educated and articulate members of the school community take the time and care to enunciate in a properly structured way the issues for consideration. It will then be found that other parents will begin to make responses and to come up with suggestions - and criticisms - which will have much merit. There might well be some opposition and some parents will cease to come to further meetings. That is their right. But those parents who remain may well, together with the teachers and the children - and with God's help - come to achieve much in community reconciliation.

Initially, a letter of appeal to parents might be sent out by the school. Great care should be taken that it is well produced and attractively set out. Secondly the written style should not be exhortatory in character but carefully reasoned. Since it will be on the long side, it should take the form of a mini-booklet and have sub-headings. Schools produce such mini-publications regularly for parents on such subjects as general information for parents, introductory information and welcoming to first-year pupils in the secondary school, explaining home/school liaison, and other matters. Care should also be taken to ensure that every home actually receives the letter and it would be important that the first meeting, at least, took place in the evening, perhaps around 7.30 p.m. Efforts should be made to provide tea and biscuits for the parents as they arrive and time should be allowed for the staff, governors and parents to engage in friendly conversation prior to the meeting getting under way. The meeting should begin with a period of prayer asking the Holy Spirit for guidance.



The letter will have as its subject the deleterious effects of the continuing conflict upon the Christian education of their children and will request the parents' assistance as to the remedy. As parents, their responsibility in this matter is, at the least, co-operative with that of the school: not only are their children being educated for a dangerous and uncertain future, but their education in the great Christian values is being contradicted by many circumstances in the un-Christian conflict which surrounds them. The school by itself can only do so much and, therefore, the letter continues:

"The school earnestly requests your advice and assistance as a means of doing all that it can to ensure a genuine Christian education for your child. To that end, a preliminary meeting of parents is proposed to discuss what is meant by the Christian education of your child, and to seek ways of solving the problems that are holding it back. This, it will be appreciated, may be a delicate and potentially controversial matter, but as Christians we ought to be able to discuss it in an atmosphere of mutual charity. It might even prove to be a personally challenging occasion for some of us, bringing to the surface questions we may not wish to answer clearly. Yet the times are so serious that these and other important matters surely ought to be faced such as for example, how we and our children in school might as Christian people reach out to our neighbours in the other community in friendship and love, no matter what we - or they - may have suffered personally or as a community. One thing seems very clear, namely, that the interests of the Christian education of your child demand that we must now consult together on it.

"You might in all sincerity say: 'I leave all that to you, my child's teachers', but you, dear parent, have the *prime* or *first* responsibility, which is the main reason for our writing to you. You must also feel deeply concerned by the un-Christian nature of the terrible acts and incidents that continue to besmirch our society as well as by the suspicions and divisions which characterize our relations with many of our fellow citizens who also bear the name of Christian. We hope you will agree that the time has come - for the sake of our own Christian conscience and the promotion of Christian values in our society, as well as for the sake of the proper Christian formation of all our children - to examine how best we as Christians might make the contribution we should to the solution of our common problems. In doing this we shall be acting as God's people, rectifying the ills of our country in accordance with our Christian principles and making proper provision for the Christian education of our children.

"It is because the problem is both serious and urgent that we write to you at such length. We would ask you to think deeply about what we have said and above all to come to the meeting prepared to participate in the charity of Christ. Should you wish to speak, and we very much hope you will, you will be listened to

courteously, as will everyone else. The parish priest/minister will be in attendance at the meeting as will also the school's board of governors/school's management committee, the headmaster and the teaching staff. Refreshments will be served before the meeting begins and you will be able to talk to people informally. Before the meeting concludes a period of time for further informal discussions will be allowed for. Then the meeting will re-convene for the purpose taking note of whatever suggestions may have been made and to arrange a date for a next meeting at the school. This second meeting will consider how the parents' suggestions in Christian education at the first meeting have fared.. Please be sure to attend and be assured of your welcome. Yours in Jesus Christ, .....(Chairman, Board of Governors/School Management Committee), .....(Headmaster), .....(Head of Religious Education Department)."

We are now in the realm of a policy decision taken by the school with the support of the Board of Governors/Management Committee and the encouragement of the Church authorities with, in addition, some form of consultation with the Department of Education. Before proceeding further it might be observed that if the steps already mentioned were successfully got under way the prospects for Christian education would already have begun to be more heartening even at the modest local level of a few schools and their communities beginning to seek ways of reaching out to one another in growing Christian amity. Were this to be replicated across the Province the results could not but be significant.

## 7.8 Meeting possible objections

At the early stages presently under discussion, however, there is the certainty of objections being raised. The idea of a teacher-parent forum set up by the school to examine and evaluate within the remit of Christian education, problems of adult response and of pupils' needs in a divided society where Christian values are often ignored in violent ways, may strike some as an impractical venture bound to generate controversy rather than light, especially when the present polarization seems not in any realistic sense conducive of making successful efforts to span the inter-community divide. Other probable objections - which should also be put into the letter-booklet for the parents - might be raised as follows:

*'Your proposal is totally impracticable'*

Response:

"By no means. In logistical terms, the initiative could be successfully got under way. The letters could be typed and sent. The school assembly halls are there for the meetings. Inviting parents to the school is a common enough occurrence - year meetings, vocational prospects for pupils, prize day, etc."

*'Such a meeting could end in uproar'*

Response:

"Not if steered by a good chairman and a calm platform party, with the rules of debate enunciated at the beginning of the meeting and insisted upon throughout. Given the nature of the meeting, it should begin with a period of prayer and meditation."

*'There will be serious disagreements expressed'*

Response:

"There is nothing wrong with this so long as they are expressed in a civilized manner. Everyone has the right to be listened to with courtesy. It is to be hoped, however, that a consensus will emerge and that all would agree that:

1. From a Christian point of view the present conflict is a challenge to the Christian conscience that ought somehow to be met especially for the sake of the young people.
2. The young are aware of the scandal and paradox of the two Christian communities in a most un-Christian state of dissension and conflict, and that this is bound to lead to questioning the validity of Christian values in their minds and impede their proper formation in Christian education.
3. Since the Christian formation of their children is deemed to be of first importance ways should be considered by the parents of removing obstacles to that Christian formation, thus allowing their children to have the full benefit of a sound Christian education.

4. Serious disagreements may arise over the steps that ought to be taken to achieve this, but even here, there can be unanimous agreement on the first, and most important step, namely, praying together for the common intention.”

*‘Such an initiative could cause reactions from extreme elements in the local community and even pickets at some schools’*

Response:

“One should not allow the expression of such fears to deflect one from a right course. Often this is an alarmist procedure indulged in by those who do not wish to do *anything*. Secondly, pickets must conform to the law, keep to the side and not harass people. The courage of one’s convictions should neutralize picket problems especially as other people are going to the meeting. It is often the pickets themselves who are the more embarrassed. Most often, in any event, they do not materialize.”

*‘This is too complicated and serious an issue for an ordinary person like me’*

Response:

“On reflection, you will see that the issues are not all that complicated and that you do have opinions on them. This is an opportunity to have these examined and to consider other options which, at first sight might appear unthinkable, but which, upon Christian reflection, you might come to see both as necessary and inevitable. As a baptized follower of Jesus Christ you are not just an *ordinary person*. Perhaps this is the time to exert your Christian dignity”.

*‘Nobody will turn up’*

Response:

“In that case be sure you turn up yourself for the cause of your child’s Christian education and to support this Christian initiative. In actual fact, small meetings are the most probable response. But small meetings have the space and time to do a lot and with God’s grace can achieve much.”

*‘This initiative pre-supposes a great deal of prior organization’*

Response:

“The most important step is that we have the will to begin. As teachers we can draft schemes that will be educationally and socially sound. But your approval, your advice, and your co-operation will make all the difference for a really effective and hopefully successful venture in Christian education in your school reaching out for the love of Jesus Christ to other schools, be they Protestant or Catholic, and to co-operating educationally, or ecumenically, or socially, with members of other communities in our society. If you the parents associate with us in the venture then we might well hope that parents of other schools engaging in similar ventures will begin to associate with others and with us in a Christian *communio* of love and friendship. Then at least we can begin to talk to one another and listen to one another and begin to understand one another better. We will not agree with one another on everything but this does not really matter if we are determined to be and to remain friends for the love of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. We will then have walked a few steps together along the path that leads to Christian reconciliation. The Peace of Christ will beckon us further. Our society will become more Christian. The world will have become that much more Christian. Our children’s future will have become brighter.”

*‘How can we be practical about this important Christian initiative?’*

Response:

“The first practical step is to attend this meeting and to be prepared to contribute what you think as a Christian parent. There is, in fact, a number of suggestions for making progress which will be put to you for your consideration and hopefully your agreement. Indeed, it is very likely that mention will be made of them by people at the meeting in the course of their own remarks. You yourself, it may transpire, are already thinking along similar lines. It will be better to leave mention of possible proposals until the time of the meeting so that you may be able to give this whole matter your own consideration. The first item on the meeting’s agenda will be to consider the points raised in this letter and to listen to what you, as a Christian parent with one or more children at the school, have to say about them. After a discussion it is hoped that there will be, firstly, general agreement

on the issues raised in the letter, and, secondly, a desire and the will to proceed further.

“If both these aims are achieved then the way is open to plan together the steps we can take for our school to become a thriving centre for Christian education

- where high standards of achievement in the disciplines of secular knowledge are successfully pursued.
- where, at the same time, the religious and spiritual development of the children is accorded equal care and attention.
- and where the whole school community - that is, you, the parents, we, the teachers, and our children - combines together in the caring and distinctive Christian ethos of the school to reach out in Christian love to our sister schools and our wider community.

“After all, as a recent document from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools has emphasized, *school is life* and not merely a preparation for life. Later in the same document the Council speaks of the school in terms of ‘a powerful and benign corporate life in which values and attitudes concerning relationships between individuals and groups are lived out and not merely advocated.’(30)

“Given a general agreement by you, the parents, on the issues raised in the letter, and your desire and willingness to make whatever contribution you can, then everything is possible. Further meetings can be arranged, sub-committees will naturally arise to take in hand the furtherance of specific issues and the whole school community will find itself engaged in the Christian education enterprise, specifically with reference to the children’s education and development on the one hand, and to initiatives of Christian outreach to the wider community on the other.”

## **7.9 Christian educational outreach**

Since response/initiatives in Christian education are under consideration it is clear that so, too, is Christian education itself since the response/initiatives will

be informed by its assumptions and values. The self-evaluative analyses by educators and parents may well lead to an awareness of the need for a re-assessment of those aspects of Christian education being offered to the pupils which have to do with a more open and courageously Christian stance towards obvious problems and anomalous situations in Northern Ireland. Pupils are often only too aware of these and from quite an early age - for example they see two Christian communities at enmity, they may hear expressions of sectarian hatred - and a more open explanation in Christian terms is required. The question of what can only be called the quality of Christian education in the school comes into important focus, something about which Christian educators and parents are naturally concerned. What is being suggested is that for a school to engage fruitfully in response/initiatives of a *Christian* character towards sister schools and the wider community (these may be viewed both as educational resources as well as targets for socio-Christian outreach) it is essential that every effort be made to fulfil the remit of Christian education in the school itself as comprehensively and as generously as possible. Christian values must pervade the school to the extent that its ambience is recognizably and unmistakably Christian. The pupils will absorb its beneficent atmosphere reflected in the personal and distinctively Christian nurture tendered by a caring staff of teachers, the school chaplain, other adults including the ancillary staff and (increasingly) visiting parents. The morning assembly will be a joyful, prayerful, and informative occasion when the whole school community gathers together to praise God and sense the spirit of togetherness in the Christian experience of being educated. It is then that class and corporate initiatives towards other schools and the wider community can be announced and encouraged in the presence of the whole staff and the assembled school.

In the classroom itself, *whatever the subject*, there will always be a readiness to advert to the Christian point of view should the occasion arise. In the religious education class the life, salvific rôle and teaching of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, will be given extended and continuous attention since Christocentricity is the hallmark of Christian education. The unique and fundamental doctrines of Christianity will be explained at the level of the pupils' intellectual competence. That God is to be worshipped and that we must try to live according to His law and holy ordinances will be put before the pupils for their understanding, personal evaluation and, hopefully, for their acceptance. Social problems will be examined in the light of

the Christian's responsibility to love and assist his fellow man who, also, is a child of the same loving heavenly Father and with the same destiny to be happy with Him in the world to come. War, conflict, terrorism and other injustices will be viewed as the result of failure to love one another as the Lord Jesus has commanded us. The conflict in Northern Ireland will be understood in similar terms and our Christian responsibility will be seen as praying for an increase in Christian love in our Province, attempting to show more Christian love ourselves and as a result of this making whatever overtures we can towards pupils from the other community - in common with our teachers and parents. In the presence of the conflict our own failures in Christian love will have to be faced, at whatever level that might be. And not only must we learn to forgive - or our heavenly Father will not forgive us - but we must learn also that others may have things to forgive about us and about our own community's failures in Christian love. When we have offended someone we love, sometimes we try to do something special to please that person as a sign of our repentance and of our wish to be friends again. What steps might we take or what things might we do that would constitute a sign to the other community that we are both sorry for the sufferings they have endured and that we sincerely wish to offer our friendship; that we for our part forgive those who have hurt or offended us; and that we desire, as Christians, to live reconciled with one another, recognizing one another as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ? Our children need to be taught the Christian way of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. It is a lesson they will learn easily if they witness the concern and the example of their elders.

## **7.10 Reconciliation: a Christian imperative**

The cosmic prototype in reconciliation is the reconciling of fallen man with an offended God by the sacrifice of Jesus. There was a price to be paid. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our sins.' (Is. 53: 5) The price was the Cross. At our merely human level it might be well to consider that the process of reconciliation will not be without obstacles and difficulties and especially when both sides have blame to bear. But the aim is noble: 'To make friendly after estrangement: to heal or settle a quarrel: to show compatibility by argument or by practice.'(31) We must have the *desire* for reconciliation and a preparedness to undertake whatever is necessary to achieve it *because*, to be reconciled with our fellow man is an imperative for a follower of Jesus Christ.



So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.(Mt 5: 23, 24)

In our state of conflict in Northern Ireland the imperative becomes all the more pressing upon those who have the care of the young who will soon enough be entering the estranged communities in their capacity as young adults. Two of the primary personal elements in Christian education, therefore - parents and teachers - need surely both as Christians and as educators to be particularly aware and positively concerned about the necessity of leading the way towards reconciliation. Part of the problem is, however, that parents are a major source of the stereotypes which one community has of the other, while teachers have been found to be as prone to stereotypic thinking as others in the society.(32) It is apposite to refer again to O'Donnell (1977) who has argued that the continued communication of such attitudes both within each community and between the communities has resulted in a situation where people do not *want* change.

In psychological terms, the rewards and benefits that come from following one's parents are seen as more substantial than any others. There is nothing unique about Northern Ireland in this regard. It is unreasonable to expect any human being to renounce his heritage. The price is too high. (O'Donnell 1977 157)

In this context it will be realized that parents and teachers have been influenced by their own parents. O'Donnell continues - and his argument may be taken as supporting the necessity for the parent- teacher debate advocated earlier in the chapter:

Education, parental guidance, preaching, or any other form of communication is going to be useless until the educators, parents, clergy, etc., start reframing the whole problem. (*ibid.*,156)

One can only agree with O'Donnell when he states that what is being communicated across the community divide are pejorative attitudes based upon traditionally inherited stereotypes which are erroneous in important ways. It is an indication of the difficulty of the situation, however, that while stereotypes can and should be 'treated' by educational programmes O'Donnell admits that 'up to this time in Northern Ireland it (education, that is) has had little effect.'(33) Given

the extent to which both communities have inherited and been caught up in an unresolved conflict - the summer of 1991 has seen a further upsurge in retaliatory tit-for-tat killings - it is scarcely surprising that over the years hardened stereotypic attitudes prove less than amenable to change. Nevertheless churchmen and educators in particular must not give up hope. The author's call for a 'reframing of the problem' is a perceptive indication of the need to break out of the existing impasse in communications of worth between the two communities and to attempt to create friendlier perceptions as a basis for the beginnings of mutual trust.

It might be said that each side could begin the attempt to experience each other as fellow Christians. That is to say, while not unconcerned about their heritage and culture, people become *more* concerned about the Christian spirit of reconciliation and the Christian education of their children, which is also part of that heritage and culture. *In* that education the crucial importance of the adult component becomes increasingly clear since it is the adult educating community which plans and arranges the structures, curricular and otherwise, within which the children can begin to make their own special contributions in their education.

At this stage it will prove helpful to set down the extent of the sources and of the resources - the assets, that is - which are available for a fully articulate Christian education. These are bountiful indeed.

## **7.11 The sources and resources of Christian education**

Jesus Christ, himself, is, naturally, the supreme exemplar and source, teacher and rôle model, for Christian education. His incarnation, life, death and resurrection are the epochal high points in human history. His teaching is the master-plan for all human living and the sure path to eternal life. For education as for all life, he is 'the way, the truth and the life'. (Jn 14: 6) It is the historicity of his life and teachings which makes Christian education necessarily one of content, as much as of values and inspiration.

Having said this, the scope and extent of these sources and resources may be summarized briefly according to the following *schema*:

1. The person and mission of Jesus:

2. The Gospel message as understood and interpreted in the accumulating Christian tradition:
3. The Christian Scripture:
4. The Grace of God:
5. Prayer:
6. The Christian believing community:
7. The needs of children:
8. Christian educators:
  - Christian parents
  - Christian teachers
  - Christian boards of governors
  - Christian ministers of religion
  - Christian lecturers in education
9. The Christian school community:
10. Christian administrators:
  - Christian education and library boards
  - Christian educational providers
  - Christian ancillary staff
11. The philosophy of Christian education:
12. Whatever projects may have been already initiated by any concerned educators in the field, that could be utilized by a reconciliative Christian education.

Such are the sources and resources in Christian education. Christ is its foundation. Christian values are its life blood. Sound educational principles are its professional competence. The believing community involved in the enterprise

is its guarantee of effective realization. A programme in Christian education is *educational* because it applies an authentic scheme of values for human living - the distinctively Christian values - to the teaching and learning processes within the school in respect of the pupils' personal and social development. In the case of Northern Ireland it is consonant with the climate of that avowedly confessional society and therefore relevant for the task of making its own particular contribution towards the solution of at least some of the problems that beset that society.

## **7.12 Dialogue, compromise and the Peace of Christ**

The parameters of genuine dialogue are notoriously difficult to define in situations of conflict. Placed on their polar mountain tops of opposition the parties to conflict are satisfied not to hear each other. Dialogue then becomes something not required. Dialogue, however, is a prerequisite for peace. But dialogue, in the nature of the case, is extremely difficult since both sides often look upon it as a device to move them from positions they are determined not to vacate. If outright victory is what is being sought, dialogue is a dangerous obstacle. It might seem, therefore, that there is no way forward for the peacemaker. But it needs to be remembered that, for the Christian, 'peace' has an eschatological and messianic meaning virtually the same as 'salvation' and that this peace, the first effect of justification the Christian experiences (Rom 5:1) comes through Jesus Christ, himself, whom Ephesians 2:14 calls 'our peace'. 'It is this spiritual tranquility that Christ gives, which has no resemblance to what the world gives.'

Once justified, the Christian is reconciled to God and experiences a peace that distressing troubles cannot upset, a hope that knows no disappointment, and a confidence of salvation of which he can truly boast.(34)

This Peace of Christ, which is his gift to his faithful followers - 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you;' (Jn 13: 27) - is the only peace worth having. It is the hundred-fold reward promised by Him to His faithful followers. A moment's reflection reveals that the Peace of Christ is independent of human conditions of victory or defeat. It may be obtained and enjoyed in whatever condition one might find oneself even in conditions, humanly speaking, of dire defeat. It may completely elude those who grasp for victory if, in the process, they break Christ's commandment of love both of God and of one's neighbour as oneself - thus

rendering their 'victory' in human terms, an obvious defeat in Christ's terms. In the presence of conflict it is a theological basis for compromise especially where, as in Northern Ireland, the conflict is between two communities both of which claim to be Christian but for both of which the word 'compromise' is a 'hard saying'. For Loyalists, the slogan is 'not an inch'; for Republicans, the vision of an all-Ireland Irish Republic is 'holy grail'.

But in any society where Christians live, a charitable and harmonious manner of relating to their fellow-men should be the leaven for peace in that society. Where the society is avowedly Christian it should be the norm. Where there is discord and conflict the authentic Christian response must surely manifest itself in serious efforts directed towards effecting reconciliation in order that obstacles in the way of the Peace of Christ may come to be removed. Therefore, the way forward must be not to accept that genuinely fruitful dialogue cannot take place but rather to use all the insights a human knowledge of man provides - including Buber's I-Thou relationship - and critically to inform such knowledge, after the manner of Grace building upon nature<sup>(35)</sup>, with such distinctively Christian principles as an ever-readiness to forgive, a willingness to 'love your enemies', and a preparedness to consider the way of Christian compromise.

For Christians who are divided denominationally the way of dialogue logically relates to ecumenism, the recovery, that is, of Christian unity world wide. The divisions in Christendom clearly contradict Christ's prayer - *Ut unum sint* - for his Church: 'that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' (Jn 17: 21) The scandal of division between the Christian churches is as obvious in Northern Ireland as elsewhere in the world. In addition, the historical religio-political conflict and the strength of ideological influences have contributed to making the ecumenical way a particularly stony one in the Province. John Dunlop (1986) himself a Northern Irish Presbyterian minister, has opined that the Protestant Churches have 'allowed themselves to be used to bolster the loyalist ideology'. Such being the case then, as Dunlop further comments: 'If we provide an uncritical chaplaincy service for political ideologies we confer a quasi-religious character upon them. Necessary political compromise can then be portrayed as a betrayal of a religious trust.'<sup>(36)</sup> On the Catholic side, James McEvoy (1986) a

Catholic priest of the Diocese of Down and Connor, has pointed out that many Catholics 'regard the issue of justice as the first item on the agenda for any serious dialogue ...before ecumenical issues, properly speaking, are raised.'(37) The justice issue also figures prominently among Republican ideologues not, however, within the context of its peaceful pursuit according to the Christian ethic, but as a *casus belli*. McEvoy argues:

Ecumenical goodwill and even the powerful spiritual agencies for reconciliation to which it has given impetus are not able to resolve the whole entangled and historically acrimonious interrelationship of the two parts of the community in Northern Ireland. Despite the good relationship that generally prevails among the Christian leaders and the excellent example they mostly set to their Churches, the ecumenical movement cannot, in the continuing circumstances of communal tension and near war, deliver on the high level that some outside Northern Ireland have anticipated, by offering a solution to the divisions. (McEvoy 1986 22)

A recent report by Duncan Morrow (1991) confirms this. While most of Northern Ireland's church leaders have adopted positive ecumenical stances the hard reality is that ecumenism exhibits a low level of progress in the Province.(38) Yet, ought Christians to allow political or other differences to prevent them from speaking to one another, from communicating with one another in the charity of Christ as bearers of the 'good news' of the gospel, and as witnesses to the incoming of his kingdom? In so far as Christian education is concerned this obligation must surely be met by seeking to promote the healing values of Christian love and friendly outreach to sister schools and the wider community. If it be the case that certain Christians in certain schools - as has happened - refuse *in practice* to enter into effective communication with Christians in other schools, then questions must be raised as to whom or what they serve since, as Dunlop puts it, the values of the Kingdom must be pursued in the face of all others:

I believe that the primary theological challenge is to live by grace and to witness to the Kingdom and its values which are greater than either of our traditions....If we cannot witness to the Kingdom as servants of one another, maybe it is not the Kingdom of God which we serve. (Dunlop 1986 20)

Yet the way of of dialogue offers fruitful opportunities in Christian edu-

cation. Understood as 'discussion between representatives of two groups', there clearly are occasions and opportunities when dialogue can and ought to be entered into. Christian educators and parents surely must, both themselves and for the children they teach and have care of, not only take advantage of any occasions and opportunities which might present themselves but also seek to create others. The motivation for this is a realization that all of us are children of the same loving heavenly Father and that consequently, as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, we have the obligation to show love to one another. Christ's description of his followers is unique: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for another.' (Jn 13: 35) That Christian love has a relevant place in the way of dialogue is made clear from St Paul's admonition: 'If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.' (1 Cor 13: 1) Paul's description of the characteristics of love in subsequent verses 4-6 might well be applied to the qualities which one ought to bring to the dialogic endeavour:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. (1 Cor 13: 4-6)

This might be thought of as the first and motivating component in a three-fold aim for the way of dialogue in Christian education, that is, to show Christian love towards those with whom we are in dialogue and to contribute to its success by following the Pauline description. The other two components are specifically educational and societal. The educational aim is that the pupils understand the importance of reaching out and communicating with others who share the planet - and this particular part of it - with them, and that they learn acceptable means of doing this in mutually useful and friendly ways. The societal aim is that in doing this the society in which they live becomes that much more truly human and harmonious.

At the adult level of true dialogue there is a vulnerability which both participants must be prepared to experience by virtue of seeking to become truly open to and confirming *another* outside of themselves and their own preoccupations. Yet if dialogue can be successfully engaged in it will break the polarization and at

least result in what Martin Buber (1947) has termed 'a harsh and strengthening sense of reciprocity'. Where such a reciprocity exists parties in controversy have at least entered a band of shared communicative reality. They are not talking past each other, satisfied only with emphasizing their own points of view. This latter situation Buber consigns to 'an underworld of faceless spectres of dialogue' some of which he penetratingly describes in the following terms:

A *debate* in which the thoughts are not expressed in the way in which they existed in the mind but in the speaking are so pointed that they may strike home in the sharpest way, and moreover without the men that are spoken to being regarded as in any way present as persons; a *conversation* characterized by the need neither to communicate something, nor to learn something, nor to come into connexion with someone, but solely by the desire to have one's own self-reliance confirmed by marking the impression that is made, or if it has become unsteady to have it strengthened; a *friendly chat* in which each regards himself as absolute and legitimate and the other as relativised and questionable... (Buber 1947 37-8)

Buber's description is a cautionary one for those considering the way of dialogue. It is helpful and bears careful attention not least in respect of the Northern Ireland problem. Buber describes 'the basic movement of the life of dialogue' as a 'turning towards the other'. For the Christian entering dialogue, however, it can be said that the integrity and legitimacy of the other should be guaranteed by his equal acceptance of all as children of the same, loving, heavenly Father and as brothers and sisters in our common Saviour, Jesus Christ. Christ's command to 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mt 19: 19) clearly excludes any turning away from the other since one's neighbour, for the Christian comprises, 'all persons without exception'.

Buber's concept of 'inclusion' is an important recognition of the necessity to accept the other as part of 'the complete presence of the reality in which one participates.' It is different from empathy (which eschews inclusion) in that one 'lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other' and does so as an 'extension of one's own concreteness' experiencing the common event.(39) For Buber the concrete and mutual experience of inclusion (the experiencing and accepting of the other 'from over there' in the common event) is the basis of friendship - which he terms 'the third form of the dialogical relation.' It is Buber's



description of the first form however, which is particularly impressive especially within the context of considering the disputing parties to the Northern Ireland conflict.

The first rests on an abstract but mutual experience of inclusion. The clearest example of this is a disputation between two men, thoroughly different in nature and outlook and calling, where in an instant - as by the action of a messenger as anonymous as he is invisible - it happens that each is aware of the other's full legitimacy, wearing the insignia of necessity and of meaning. What an illumination! (*ibid.*,126)

Buber's concepts and elucidations are perceptive and helpful paradigms in the human actuality of the dialogic situation. It needs to be said however that awareness of, and even an acceptance of, the other's legitimacy does not imply that agreement is necessarily close. An important first step has been taken but in the nature of the case when opponents meet it would seem that if reconciliation is to be achieved steps in the direction of compromise need to be taken. The theological basis of compromise is the powerful Christian concept of forgiveness - powerful because advocated by Jesus Christ and liberating because it frees from the toils of hatred. The way of dialogue in Christian education should approach the gates of forgiveness and our children will be liberated to cast hatreds and prejudices aside; and that being the case, to feel the freedom of wanting to reach out in friendship towards their fellow pupils in sister schools.

Buber's philosophy of dialogue may be thought of as contributing to the specifically Christian approach to dialogue considered here which is equally concerned with the human experience while at the same time informed by the distinctive Christian assumptions and values. These are unalterably Christocentric for the divinity of Christ presents a figure who will continue to shape what Buber calls 'the present human material' when all other figures 'are shattered'. In his later chapter on education in which he refers to the question of purpose in education ('To where, to what, must we educate?') Buber asks: 'When there is no figure able any more to dominate and shape the present human material, what is there left to form?' To which he answers: 'Nothing but the image of God.' He presents this image of God as the 'indefinable, only factual, direction of the responsible modern educator' who (the educator, that is) is set in the *imitatio Dei absconditi sed non ignoti*.(40) But in the Christian revelation God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ

by an insertion into human history at a particular point in time that is, towards the end of the reign of Herod Antipas, King of Judea (37 B.C.- 4 A.D.) and during the reign of Tiberius as Roman Emperor (14 A.D.-37 A.D.) As in education so also in dialogue the revelation in Christ will continue indefinitely to proffer Christocentric solutions for the resolution of the contradictions and perplexities of the human condition.

It will be useful at this stage to set down briefly some of the parameters characterizing dialogue arrived at from the foregoing discussion. They will be useful for educators and parents when they come to discuss the necessity of making overtures to their neighbours and fellow Christians in the 'other' community and in seeking a rationale of approach in the face of difficulties and differences. These embrace:

- the desire, as part of our common heritage as children of God and brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, to reach out in Christian love and to communicate with our fellow man:

This reaching out is:

- to meet as representatives of two groups and to enter into communication with one another/ to discuss/ to listen:

*But what is genuine dialogue? It takes place when each of the partners, even when he stands in opposition to the other, heeds, affirms and confirms his opponent as an existing other.(41)*

- to heed/ affirm/ confirm/ the other:
- to explore differences:
- to celebrate common affirmations, seeking common ground, standing upon which, a resolution of *differences* (real and apparent) might begin:
- to present the fundamental prescriptions of Christian life and witness:

The sources and resources then, are bountiful. The enabling grace of God and the example and teachings of the Lord Jesus are paramount among these. The power of prayer is a compelling resource: 'If you ask anything in my name, I

will do it', says Jesus. (Jn 14: 14) With aids such as these the Christian can face any meritorious task, however difficult, with confidence. Christian educators and parents must therefore *pray*, humbly and sincerely, for the success of their efforts. Christian educators and parents are themselves uniquely valuable resources in the Christian education enterprise. Their talents, abilities and skills but above all they themselves as believing Christians and sympathetic human persons are incalculably of worth. It is both their privilege and responsibility to develop their talents and nurture their faith so as to be trustworthy guides for the children they teach/have care of, and mild interlocutors in dialogue with others.

It now remains to explore the mechanics of how Christian educators and parents might take further practical steps with a view to implementing a way of dialogue with a sister school of the 'other' community. The exposé which follows is based upon an experiential understanding of the interrelationships which subsist between the various elements in the school establishment and upon a consideration as to how these might in practice combine to get an inter-school dialogic process under way. The model of necessity includes a number of points and considerations that have already been discussed, but now sets these in motion, as it were, in the context of the kind of particularized response that is judged to be needed for any substantive progress to be made. The earlier material - then discussed and evaluated - can now be seen as operating parts of the proposed model which now follows.

### **7.13 A way of dialogue in Christian education**

The school's *board of governors or school management committee* could write to their opposite numbers in the sister school and invite them to an exploratory meeting. The *principals* of both schools should also be invited to this meeting not least for the reason that they can report on its progress to their staffs and parents. The *teachers' and parents' representatives on the governing/managing committees* would also be present at the meeting by virtue of their office, and would be able to provide valuable corroborative support to the principals when they are making their reports to the staffs. This meeting would be crucially important. From it, hopefully, would emanate agreement on the proposed initiative as a matter of school policy, from the two schools' governing /managing bodies. Since both

these bodies have the responsibility to keep in mind their parental constituencies, however, the vital question arises as to whether the meeting would, in fact take place. In the case of *the initiating school*, the board/committee would have responded to a decision from its own teachers and parents following the evaluative discussions in which the board/committee would, itself, have participated. In the case of *the approached school*, however, such internal discussions may not have taken place. *Its* board/committee would now have to initiate discussions with its own parents and teachers with a view to obtaining agreement to proceed. These discussions could replicate those which had taken already place in the initiating school and had led to the approach being made in the first instance. In the case of the approached school, the intra-school discussions might prove more difficult to get under way. On the other hand, the approach from the initiating school might well prove *the catalyst* which could spark them off. The process would inevitably take up an amount of time and agreement to co-operate could certainly not be taken for granted. There would not seem to be any compelling reason, however, why the board/committee of the approached school should not be able to have a preliminary meeting with their counterparts in the initiating school shortly after receiving the invitation. This would seem to be within the remit of their discretionary competence, both on grounds of courtesy - making at least an initial reply - and of obtaining further information. It could be at such a preliminary and exploratory meeting (attended also, as has been said, by the principals and the teacher and parent representatives) that the common Christian challenge could be expounded and the Christian rationale of the proposed initiative courteously and gently put before fellow Christians.

*The meeting could be the essence of a true dialogic encounter.* The initiating representatives would in the first instance affirm the approached representatives' integrity - personal, group, educational, political and religious - and confirm the actuality and reality of their stance in respect of controversial issues. The approached representatives would reciprocate as to the integrity and reality of the other's position - that of the initiating representatives. Thus existing differences would be affirmed and there should be no suspicion as to motives. In confirming the reality of each other's religious position and the integrity with which this is held, the meeting might also agree to confirm the reality that, despite denominational differences, the majority of those present lay claim to be Christians, and so, at least

share a degree of commitment to the fundamentals of Christianity, one of the most basic of which is to love one's neighbour as one's self. The initiating school could state that the proposed initiative is thought of as a sign of common commitment to that basic Christian command, the implementation of which it would like to share with fellow Christians in its sister school, for the glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and to promote Christian love and harmony between both schools and their communities. *This is the compelling motivation for the approach.* The initiating representatives would hope that the approached representatives would be able to affirm the integrity of the proposal, and also confirm the sincerity with which the initiating representatives put it forward. For their part, the initiating representatives should then listen to the approached representatives, and heed any difficulties or objections which it might occur to them to make. These objections and difficulties could then be placed before the bar of their common Christian commitment, in the light of which it surely ought to be possible, if not to remove them, then at least to accommodate them. It would become progressively clear what Christian educational steps might be taken which would enable both schools to co-operate together in effective and realistic ways.

As a result of this preliminary and exploratory meeting the approached board/committee would now be better apprised of the Christian and unthreatening nature of the proposed co-operative initiative. It - the approached board/committee, that is - would then be in a position the better to *consult its Christian conscience on the matter*, and, following this, to make its views known to its own parents and teachers in subsequent discussions. The approached principal and the teacher and parent representatives present at the preliminary meeting should, equally, consult their Christian consciences and consider how best, as Christian educators, they might use their professional expertise so as to *realize in practical terms* the Christian educational potential of the initiative. These are all influential persons in any school. It is devoutly to be hoped that they would think deeply, pray earnestly, and be inspired to evaluate their Christian responsibility and rôle in the proposed enterprise in Christian education.

*The teaching staffs in both schools would naturally be involved in the proposed initiative from the beginning.* In the approached school, the teachers would have been apprised of the invitation to inter-school co-operation by their own principal

and board of governors/school management committee, and their views sought. Hopefully, they would then begin to engage to a somewhat more detailed degree in self-evaluative/professional analysis as to the meaning of their rôle as Christian teachers, and come to appreciate more keenly their responsibility not to allow the great Christian imperatives and values to become nullified for the children they teach, by sectional pre-occupations in their communities which encourage hatred and the will to retaliation and revenge. They might also come consciously to accept that teachers are no more immune from stereotypic thinking than anyone else; that, no less than in the education field generally, secularizing and pluralistic influences may, indeed, have weakened their own conceptions of a strong and valid Christian education; and that the danger of political ideologies impairing the quality of the Christian aspect of their teaching is both real and more widespread than might commonly be supposed. If the approached school is a church-related school such a process, when got under way, might be presumed to begin soon to bear fruit. If it is a state school, it should be remembered that in Northern Ireland, state, or controlled, schools are in the event Protestant schools with Protestant Christian teachers staffing them.

*This is a further crucial point of departure.* Without the teachers' willing co-operation nothing of real significance will happen. A courteous reply would be made to the initiating school and perhaps even one or two minor projects undertaken but nothing of substance would occur. It is essential that the staffs enter the dialogic encounter as their principals and representatives on the governing board/school committee had already done at the first meeting. The teachers of both schools could meet either in small groups, or as departments, or even as larger groups, to affirm the validity of one another's stance as Catholic Christian or Protestant Christian teachers in a Catholic Christian or Protestant Christian school; to affirm the religious and cultural traditions of each of their schools; to acknowledge as teachers, each of the other, their integrity as Christian educators in schools of a confessional community; and to agree that sound educational and social principles subsisting in the initiative might well support an encouraging development in Christian education ultimately throughout the Province.

Where it happens that the teaching staffs in two or more schools come to agree to implement a proposed initiative in dialogue there would be no difficulty

in drawing up programmes of educational co-operation between them. The earlier proposals that have been suggested for the principal to make to his or her staff constitute the framework for one such programme. The professional expertise of the teachers themselves would assist them to construct other models - once they were convinced that such was the way to proceed. They could organize a *modus operandi* whereby, for example, departmental heads and teachers of various subjects in both schools could meet their RE heads and staffs for consultative discussions not only on the teacher as Christian educator, but also on the windows which can validly open to Christian reference in the economy of their subject specialities. Other suggestions could be harmonized at other meetings of departmental heads and principals, with representative of the parents being present and making positive contributions such as, for example, to the formation of the *inter-schools* parents' association mentioned earlier. Thus, as the pupils, teachers and parents come closer together the effect upon people in the surrounding denominational *communities* would be salutary. The people would gradually become accustomed to witnessing regular visits from pupils and teachers from the 'other' school, and to themselves being the object of various educational co-operative projects involving questionnaires, interviews, invitations to concerts, exhibitions and, on occasions, inter-school/community worship. It would be better if the sister school in the other community were quite near. In 'volatile' areas, however, this might not be possible in the first instance but it should not be concluded *a priori* that such is the case. The twinning of sister schools in the same area is clearly the more desirable because they are natural neighbours and closer practical co-operation could be achieved. If a sister school does not respond to the invitation, however, others should be approached until one is found that does.

Educational models will draw upon all that is best in recent and current educational thought and research, utilizing and making selections from, for example, the previously mentioned teaching models in the *Peace Education* programmes of the combined Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and the Irish Council of Churches; from Greer and McElhinney's *Irish Christianity*; and from the *Education for Mutual Understanding* and *Cultural Heritage* projects in the Ministry of Education's source material for the curriculum. The *Core Syllabus* on religious education currently (1992) being jointly finalized by educators from the different

denominations, and the educational suggestions contained in the earlier (1976) *Report* of the Joint Working Party set up in 1970 by the Catholic Hierarchy and the Irish Council of Churches, should deserve particular attention. The Suggestions are of such significance in respect of inter-school co-operation that they ought not to be neglected. They carry a strong potential for growth in both school and community interrelationships, and are such as would provide helpful guidelines for principals, teaching staffs and parents in planning a programme of Christian educational outreach. They follow below and state that the Churches - and, clearly, in the event, the schools in co-operation with them:

Should produce pilot schemes and research programmes to find effective ways of bringing together Protestant and Catholic young people at school level. Such schemes could include exchanges of teachers between Catholic and Protestant schools (particularly in sensitive areas of the curriculum such as history, civics, Irish language and culture, history of the Churches in Ireland and in the promotion of joint projects and field work in the relevant subjects). Shared Sixth Form Colleges have also been suggested. Common nursery schools in suitable areas could be developed. This would give mothers opportunities of meeting which it would be otherwise difficult to bring about. Debates, cultural and folk-cultural activities can often usefully be shared. Games and athletics are also areas for sharing and this can be further developed. The different traditions in regard to games which have tended to characterize the two communities will need diversification so as to increase sharing. The teaching of religion in schools of both traditions must have explicitly and deliberately an ecumenical dimension. The stereotypes which each community may have inherited regarding the religious beliefs and practices of the other must be finally rejected and replaced by exact and sympathetic understanding. It will often be desirable to invite representatives of the other tradition to come to the schools and talk about their own tradition. (Joint Churches Working Party 1976 86-7)

The educational suggestions in this Report comprize a blueprint for joint action embracing, it will be noted, the full scope of the educational enterprize from the teaching of religion to 'cultural and folk-cultural activities' and 'the promotion of joint projects and field work in the relevant subjects.'

An important component in the dialogic way in Christian education must be, surely, allowing our children to witness their parents from both communities meeting amicably together. The best place for this is at a morning assembly



when it had been earlier announced that there were going to be special prayers for peace in the community. Educators and parents could arrange that a number of Protestant or Catholic parents and teachers were present at the assembly - surely a most unthreatening occasion - to join in the school prayers, with one or two of them reading bidding prayers, and an extract from the Bible. At the end of the assembly the visiting parents and teachers could be seen engaging in friendly conversation with some of the host school's teachers and parents, before leaving to return to their own school. The exercise should then be replicated at the sister school and eventually become a normal practice. It would depend upon Christian educators and parents having the moral courage to do this in the face of the knowledge that others in the community will be in disagreement.

#### **7.14 A pedagogic approach in Christian education**

As has been argued in Chapter 5, the autonomy of the child is a good deal more secure than many are prepared to admit. Children 'read' their parents and teachers more acutely than might be supposed and it is plausible to argue that it is as much the perceived commitment and practice of their elders which influence them - as their verbal communications. Children can quickly learn to adopt a balanced attitude if they are given a lead by those who teach them. In Christian education that lead should be related to seeking the truth, as well as to trying to understand another's position, and, to a disposition to forgive, as well to seek forgiveness. In learning about each other's history, religion, *mores* and culture, it would be necessary to speak of 'our community' and 'the other community'. Objection might be taken to this as being divisive from the beginning but it has the merit of being objectively true. Pupils are capable of coming soon enough to realize the desirability of all eventually becoming one people, especially one people in Christ.

The pedagogy in the approach now suggested is one which envisages the teacher utilizing, over a period of time, a teaching outline such as the one which follows, but freely expanding and adapting it to meet the needs and requirements of his or her pupils in the classroom; and employing his or her teaching skills so as to assist the young people's learning and comprehension of the issues presented,

and their coming to terms with these at the level of their own understanding and, hopefully, personal acceptance.

1.

*This is the story of our community.*

*This is how the other community sees the story of our community.*

*This explains their hostility: that is what the other community thinks.*

*If you were part of that community that's what you also would most probably think.*

2.

*This is how the other community sees the story of their community.*

*This is how our community sees the story of the other community.*

*This explains our hostility: this is what our community thinks.*

*If they were part of our community that's what they also most probably would think.*

3.

*It could be that our community was not always faultless.*

*It could also be that the other community was not always to blame.*

*At least we know how both our communities have come to have their hostile views of each other.*

4.

*Where does religion come into all this?*

*If Catholics and Protestants have done bad things - and we now know that on occasions they have - have they done these things because they were Catholics or because they were Protestants? Perhaps if we could understand what it means to be a Catholic and what it means to be a Protestant, we might come to the conclusion that they did not do such bad things because they were Catholics or because they were Protestants.*

*While there are, indeed, differences between Protestant and Catholic beliefs, practices and traditions, yet the important thing to remember is that both Catholics and Protestants love and revere Jesus Christ, and rejoice in being his followers and in the name of Christian. Consider, for example, the answers to the two following questions.*

*What does it mean to be a Catholic?*

*To be a Catholic means to be a Christian and a sincere follower of Jesus Christ.*

*What does it mean to be a Protestant?*

*To be a Protestant means to be a Christian and a sincere follower of Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore we have much in common that should help us greatly, namely fellowship in Jesus Christ, and the guidance of his teaching and example. He taught us above all to love one another and to forgive one another. He showed us the way when, on the Cross, he asked the Father to forgive those who had crucified him.*

*Since, as Christians, we are followers of Christ, obviously it is important to know as much about Jesus as possible. Our Christian religious education should have as much content about him as we can absorb, because he is 'the way, the truth and the life.' The more we know about him the more we will be inspired to imitate his example and try to follow what he taught. The historical facts about Jesus when he was on the earth; the accounts of Jesus in the New Testament including his incarnation, birth, death and resurrection; Jesus as Saviour of mankind and his unique life and teaching; his divinity as Son of God; his teaching us to how pray in the 'Our Father'; his miracles and parables; his founding of his Church, of which, by our baptism, we are members; his going back to the Father to prepare a place in heaven for us; his call to all men to accept the 'good news' of their salvation and to repent of their sins; content such as this*

*will bring us a knowledge and love of Jesus upon which we can ground our efforts to imitate him in our daily lives and especially in our relations with others, whom, we must never forget, Jesus also loves.*

7.

*What, as Christians, can we do in a practical way? How can our understanding what Christian love is, help us to relate to pupils in other schools especially those of the 'other' community? What can we do to show Christian love towards our two divided communities? Are there projects we in our school might undertake which could promote co-operation with other schools? Have we suggestions which would involve adults in our projects - from both communities? In our own class, here and now, how might we begin?*

The professional teacher would know, presumably, how to formulate his or her educational aims and to present material in the classroom in such a way as to engage the pupils' interest and thus facilitate learning. The teacher's personal knowledge of the children should ensure that the level at which the teaching is pitched is within the range of the class's current intellectual capacity. The vocabulary employed and the teaching examples selected will be such as to make comprehension easy, stimulate questions for further discussion and aid the achievement of the lesson's aim or aims. Thus, the skilful teacher could help to clarify 'difficult' topics for his or her pupils' better understanding of them. But when it comes to exploring their spoken and unspoken questions about moral or religious issues, clear guidance is required. In Northern Ireland the questions of teachers as well as children call for practical answers. An attempted reconciliative beginning in Christian education in the school that is coupled with assisting the more senior children to learn to accept one another as avowed Christians, would prepare the ground and begin to lead the way in the direction of their coming to appreciate that there are genuine fears which one community harbours of the other. This could lead to their desiring to understand one another better, and to their subsequently realizing that the truth is there are people in both communities who have not been, and are not, acting according to Christian teaching. An attempt to overcome the young people's misconceptions and stereotyped images, and to give a truthful account of each community's vision of itself could result in their seeing

similarities as well as differences, and in their coming to feel that the differences might be of a rather less cataclysmic nature, perhaps, than earlier supposed. A calmer atmosphere could be generated in classroom discussions during which it would be possible to underline the fundamental importance of the Christian virtue of forgiveness. A Christian paradigm in reconciliation thus got under way, could, if sympathetically presented by the skilful classroom teacher, lead to truly fruitful results - inter-class, inter-school, and inter-community.

The pedagogical approach suggested attempts to relate elements of knowledge and understanding by the children of both their own and the 'other' community, to their coming to appreciate the logic and Christian necessity of reconciliation. It requires the teacher to adapt his or her teaching skills (including the material he/she chooses, the examples he/she cites) to the learning capacity of the children being taught and to explain, as objectively, but also, as sympathetically as possible, why it is that both communities have come to have hostile views of each other. In assisting them to appreciate at least some of the reasons for this, the teacher would have, *firstly*, given his pupils a more informed understanding of a situation which has bewildered and confused them; *secondly*, attempted to promote objectivity and truth-seeking; *thirdly*, sought to reduce stereotypic attitudes and to encourage appreciation of the 'other' community as being as 'normal' as their own; *fourthly*, brought his or her pupils to realize that the heinous deeds committed by persons from both 'sides' have been deeply un-Christian; *fifthly*, that since the majority of people in both communities are Christians, then as followers of Jesus Christ, his way and example of love and forgiveness should greatly assist us in not holding spite, and in making successful efforts to forgive others, become friends, and have a very much happier society; and *sixthly*, therefore, the teacher would have put before the children a detailed account of the life of Jesus - for their admiration, encouragement and imitation.

It will have been noticed that Step 7 in the pedagogical outline encourages action in the realm of school practice. 'How can our understanding of what Christian love is, help us to relate to pupils in other schools and especially those of the other community?' 'What can we do to show Christian love towards our divided communities?' 'Are there projects we in our school might undertake which would promote co-operation with pupils in other schools?' As mentioned and discussed

previously, there are a number of existing educational projects of which the teacher might make judicious use. More important, however, are the children's own suggestions flowing naturally from the classroom discussions. The skilful teacher, as has been said earlier, should treat all of these with the respect they deserve. He or she can make practical use of many of them as well as adapting others for further translation into class activities and wider school involvement. Praying together and singing hymns together will undoubtedly be suggested, and, also, marking the occurrences of the great Christian feasts together, in music, in drama, and in art. Opportunities could thus be provided for visiting one another's schools and churches both for special services in common praise of God, and other joyful occasions of social togetherness such as co-productions of suitable school musicals or choral presentations. Also arising out of the classroom discussions, it would be seen naturally to follow that the the command of Jesus to love one another should, in their circumstances, include opportunities being provided to enable them to learn together and to play together with the children from at least the 'sister' school - to their mutual benefit and enjoyment. Absorbing projects at inter-class and inter-school levels, carefully structured by the teachers to maximize educational content as well as socio-personal development, could evidence the salutary effects of an educational regime informed by the principles of Christian education. The professional expertise of principals and staffs could harmonize the various initiatives within the exigencies of the curricular timetable; and, in the process, could fashion for their schools, educational programmes fully meeting the needs of their pupils and informed by the healing assumptions and values of a distinctive, Christian, education.

## 7.15 Notes and references

1. Cardinal Cathal B. Daly, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland. Formerly Bishop of Down and Connor (which includes the city of Belfast) he was raised to the Archbishopric of Armagh in November 1990 following the death of Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, and was shortly afterwards made a cardinal.
2. See John Greer, 'The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland', in V. Alan McClelland (ed.), *Christian Education in a Pluralist Society*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) p. 144.
3. While there are teachers' unions in the Province, notably the English-based National Association of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers (NAS/WT), which

attracts both Catholic and Protestant teachers particularly from the secondary schools sector, the two predominant teachers' unions remain the (Protestant) Ulster Teachers Union (UTU) and the (Catholic) Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO).

4. See Andrew Boyd's reference to Professor Tajfel's work at London University in 'Is Integrated Education the Answer?' in *The Irish Weekly* of 4 September, 1976. Tajfel is reported as finding 'that children as young as six years of age had already adopted the attitudes of their own religious or racial group.'

5. A number of children have been killed or injured directly as a result of violence in the Province. In addition to nine year old Daniel Rooney and twelve year Carol Anne Kelly whose deaths have already been alluded to, there have been a distressing number of other cases especially during the riots and civil upheavals of the 1970s. As well as this every adult victim of the violence usually leaves bewildered and frightened children in the family circle. Add to this the children of those serving sentences in prison and it is clear that within the confines of Northern Ireland's closely knit society a significant number of children have been directly affected by the conflict.

6. See Malcolm Skilbeck, 'Education and Cultural Change', in *Compass*, vol. 5, no. 2.

7. John Paul II, *The Pope in Ireland: Addresses and Homilies* (Dublin, Veritas Publications, 1979) p. 19.

8. *ibid.*, p. 23.

9. See the document of the Irish Bishops' Conference, *The Work of Justice* (Dublin, Veritas Publications, 1977) p. 13.

10. John Paul II, *The Pope in Ireland*, p. 20.

11. See Bishop David Konstant's article, 'Roman Catholic Church', in John M. Sutcliffe (ed.) *A Dictionary of Religious Education* (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1984), pp.299-303. The Report referred to is entitled: *Signposts and Homecomings: The Educative Task of the Catholic Community: A Report to the Bishops of England and Wales*, (Middlegreen, Slough: St Paul Publications, 1981)

12. See Dorothy Sölle, *Choosing Life* (London, SCM Press, 1981), pp. 55-60.

13. Archbishop Daly was speaking at a prize-giving in St Patrick's High School, Downpatrick, on 23 September, 1988.

14. In addition to the *Peacemaker* module, a number of others are reported as being 'in preparation or planned' on the following topics: family relationships, rights and justice, action for peace, violence, community awareness and conflict, family growth and problems, non-violence, power and powerlessness, war and peace, poverty, people of peace. The *Joint Peace Education Programme* was developed

during the period 1978-86. Its most substantial material is *Free to Be*, for 8/9 year old children and *Looking at Churches and Worship in Ireland* for 10-12 year old children.

15. See the Department of Education of Northern Ireland's (DENI) Circular, *The improvement of community relations: The contribution of schools* of 1 June, 1982, 1982/21. The basis of criticism such as that articulated by Father Martin O'Callaghan of St Mary's Catholic College of Education, Belfast, is that EMU's rôle should be not only to teach people to be more tolerant but also 'ultimately to change the unjust structures of society which make them intolerant in the first place.' Father O'Callaghan's comments are positive and point to a reconstructionist rôle for the school in its practical implementation of the *Education for Mutual Understanding* theme. A recent (1992) study, however, issued by the University of Ulster's Centre for the Study of Conflict indicates that a survey of attitudes towards EMU reveals that teachers do not want ecumenism as a classroom topic because of the 'potentially contentious issues' involved. (See, for example, 'Mutual lessons plan not welcome' report in 'Autumn Education' section in *The Universe*, October 25, 1992, p. 23.) It would not appear that many of these teachers are Catholic, in the light of Archbishop Cathal Daly's statement (*supra*, page 295) at St Patrick's High School, Downpatrick, as recently as 23 September, 1988, that a Catholic school is not worthy of the name 'unless it is actively promoting reconciliation between denominational communities through ecumenical contact and all forms of ecumenical dialogue.' It may be thought disappointing that an apparently significant number of Northern Ireland's teachers display such attitudes towards ecumenism as a classroom topic. More instructive, however, is the reason advanced for this - 'because of the potentially contentious issues' involved. As the present thesis continues to stress, however, the 'potentially contentious', or 'delicate' issues ought to be faced up to courageously by a Christian education fully alive to its responsibilities, not unaware of its professional competence and utilizing all its resources including a humble reliance upon God's enabling grace. The fact that the educators *themselves* often find it difficult to come to terms with the 'delicate' issues is another postulate of the present study for which provision is made in the practical suggestions contained in this chapter.

16. See Malcolm Skilbeck, 'The School and Cultural Development', in *The Northern Teacher*, Winter Issue, 1973, pp. 14-15. Discussing this important paper by Skilbeck, John Greer, in his article 'The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland' states: 'Skilbeck argued that schools can adopt one of four hypothetical strategies in response to social change. *First*, schools may swim with the tide by identifying basic trends and going with rather than resisting them. *Second*, schools may identify particular elements in the past, and seek to preserve them. *Third*, Schools may carry on their work largely ignorant of or indifferent to what is happening in other key sections of the culture. *Fourth*, schools may look forward, trying to anticipate situations in the future, assessing them for their educational significance, and influencing them through the various limited means at



their disposal. Skilbeck argued that only the second strategy, conservationism, and the fourth, reconstructionism, withstood strict scrutiny, and while he recognized the attendant problems, he regarded reconstructionism as the most fruitful strategy to explore.' (Greer, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-7) Christian education embraces both these strategies. As *Christian education*, it is clearly conservationist. As *Christian education*, it will (or should) naturally incline to being reconstructionist.

17. See John Greer, 'The Churches and Educational Provision in Northern Ireland', pp. 150/1. A number of significant projects have emanated from Greer's own university, the University of Ulster, at Coleraine, including *The Schools Cultural Studies Project* (1974-1981), *The Religion in Ireland Project* (1974-7 and 1979-81), (Greer and Mc Elhinney's *Irish Christianity* (1984) is a follow-up to this), and a three year project called *School Links*, initiated by Seamus Dunn, aimed at encouraging cross-religious co-operation and contact between schools initially in the Western Education and Library Board Area.

18. See Cardinal Basil Hume, *The Future of the Catholic School*, (London, CTS, 1988)

19. See 'The Education Debate', in *The Irish News* (Belfast, The Irish News Limited, 1990), 5-10 February, 1990.

20. *ibid.*

21. *ibid.*

22. *ibid.*

23. *ibid.*

24. Not even at the primary level of schooling. Only recently, the writer was subjected to an inquiry on aspects of the Northern Ireland political situation by his niece, aged 9 years.

25. See Dominic Murray, *A Comparative Study of the Culture and Character of Protestant and Catholic Primary Schools in Northern Ireland*, D.Phil. Thesis, New University of Ulster, 1982, p. 255.

26. *ibid.*, p. 291.

27. See Malcolm Skilbeck's analysis of the relationship between curriculum and culture in Northern Ireland, 'Education and Cultural Change', in *Compass*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1976.

28. See article by Father Denis Faul, 'His Words of Forgiveness Went round the World', in *The Irish Catholic*, 5 May, 1988, p. 11.

29. Article 10, paragraph (1) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 states: *The scheme of management for every grant-aided school shall provide for it to be the duty of the Board of Governors - (a) to determine and keep under*

review, its policy for the school: and (b) to make, and keep up to date, a written statement of that policy. Article 14 envisages enabling development work or experiments to be carried out. If it were deemed necessary, a positive direction for curricular modifications could be obtained from the Department of Education for such a period as may be specified in the direction. 14 (1)(a). The way is clearly open at official level, then, for Boards of Governors and School Management Committees to pursue such new developmental structures as an active inter-schools project in Christian education might suggest.

30. *Towards a Whole School Curriculum Policy for Catholic Schools*, (Holywood, Co. Down: Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, 1991). The first in a series of papers 'to assist schools and Governors in responding to their responsibilities under the Education Reform Order.' A number of other important papers have followed, including *From Policy to Planning for Development*, *The Management and Organization of Religious Education in the Catholic School* and *Towards a School Discipline Policy*.

31. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 6th edition, p. 163.

32. See E.E.O'Donnell, *Northern Irish Stereotypes*, (Dublin, College of Industrial Relations, 1977), p. 163.

33. *ibid.*, p. 163.

34. See Joseph A.Fitzmyer, S.J., 'The Letter to the Romans', in Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., (eds.) *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1969): Volume II, *The New Testament and Topical Articles*, 53: 305.

35. *ibid.* 'When Christian theologians teach the necessity of divine assistance for perseverance in a good natural life they ...have in mind the individual and his condition as a result of the Fall. The basis of their teaching, however, is Pauline. Man cannot do without Christ. The insufficiency of human nature and its lack of equilibrium (Rom 7) are only too apparent without the influence of Christ. (p. 297)

36. See John Dunlop, 'The Self-Understanding of Protestants in Northern Ireland', in Enda McDonagh (ed.), *Irish Challenges to Theology: Papers of the Irish Theological Association Conference 1984* (Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1986), pp. 5-20 (p.19).

37. See James McEvoy, 'Viewpoint of a Northern Catholic', in Enda McDonagh (ed.), *Irish Challenges to Theology*, pp. 21-41 (p.24).

38. See Duncan Morrow, 'Not Pilgrims but Strangers', in *The Tablet*, vol.243, no.7761, 22 April, 1989, pp. 448-9.

39. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, (London and Glasgow: Collins Fontana Library, 1961) p.124. First published in 1947.

40. *ibid.*, See pages 130-1.

41. *ibid.*

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## Chapter VIII

### CONCLUSIONS

Christian education is justified in Northern Ireland today as education properly conceived in order to meet specific needs. Such education retains its validity and relevance in preparing young people, intellectually, vocationally, and spiritually, for life. In an increasingly secularized and agnostic world the distinctive assumptions of Christian education make it a unique vehicle for an education that is balanced and complete. These assumptions envisage a privileged status for mankind as children of God, with the dual destiny of playing a constructive rôle in human affairs in this world, and of being united with their loving heavenly Father in the next.

Claims such as those made by Paul Hirst and others that education is 'an autonomous discipline' grounded exclusively upon canons of rationality, cannot be sustained. In the case of liberal education (as has been considered in Chapter 5) its epistemology has been criticized as being self-referentially incoherent, while the overriding emphasis it places upon rationality and rational autonomy takes insufficient account of the complex totality of the human personality.

The concept of religion remains as relevant today as at the dawn of history when, as recent scholarship indicates, belief in a 'high God' was widespread among the early peoples. That is to say, both logically and in the light of human experience and practice, religion connotes the worship of God by a believing community possessing a system of beliefs and liturgy. Christian education accords with this in its promotion of the Christian religious conspectus and its adoption of a content for religious belief which is grounded upon acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour, and of the 'good news' of the historic Christian dispensation.

The concept of confessionalism has a much wider constituency than is commonly granted, especially by those who would confine it to commitment to traditional (Christian) religious beliefs. The commitment to any set of beliefs and values, however, not excluding those subscribed to by proponents of liberal education,

or by political ideologues, may be justifiably described as a form of confession-ism. The hostility to organized religion (more specifically the Christian religion) inherited from the Enlightenment and currently reflected in secular Humanism and other philosophies which deny anything in the nature of religious dogmatic content, can be seen as self-contradictory in the face of the dedication with which, generally, the proponents of such views seek to propagate their own beliefs and axiological systems. What has come to be called 'the faith of secular Humanism' supports this conclusion.

The Christian religion, as Christians continue to aver, is the high point of the religious experience of mankind, with the insertion by God into human history in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. His salvific life, death and resurrection, his teaching, and the teaching of the Church which he founded and commissioned two thousand years ago, remain intact and worthy of credence by mankind, today. Christian education is, therefore, inescapably *Christocentric*, that is to say, Jesus, *the Christ*, is its great model and exemplar both, as the incarnate God and as the perfect Man. His life, and his unique teaching on the love of God and of our neighbour, constitute the life-giving spirit informing the whole educational enterprise.

Demythologizing the New Testament finally has the effect of distancing the historical Jesus from the scene, since, for many, it is impossible to get behind the myth in primitive Christianity to the historical Jesus himself. The Bultmannian approach, for example, becomes an attempt to recover the *kerygma* which, it is held, however, merely 'sets before us a possibility of human existence for which we are summoned to decide.' This is a long way, indeed, from any possibility of arriving at historicity either as to facts or, even, to doctrine. In the event, the existentialist view of history is such as to make any notion of God making a positive insertion into human history - in the Incarnation - conceptually impossible. More objectively secure is the judgment of scholars such as Wolfhart Pannenberg for whom the resurrection is part of the history of Jesus and thus susceptible of historical investigation. In this context, the conclusion of the Jewish scholar, Pinchas Lapide, is relevant, namely that, as one steeped in the Jewish ethos and tradition, he found the gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection entirely credible.

The Christian deposit of faith, however, does not rely solely on New Testament writings and it is worth remembering that it was the early Church itself which decided and declared which texts, in fact, comprized the canonical books of sacred Scripture. Jesus' own admonition to his disciples was to *preach* the gospel to every creature and to *teach* them to observe whatsoever he had commanded them. As well as the critical importance of sacred Scripture the study of the early Christian communities themselves, is a fruitful and even exciting undertaking, as the work of Raymond E. Brown and other scholars have shown. Despite the controversies and heresies which arose - a human enough panoply of misunderstandings and even ill feelings - the Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus before his Ascension to the Father, guided the authentic nascent Christian Church. Further, while the deposit of faith was not finalized until towards the end of the second century, it is quite remarkable, as Brown points out, that, during the critical last one-third of the first century that followed the demise of all the Apostolic witnesses, there was no break in *koinōnia* between the various New Testament communities, even though there were quite different emphases in the New Testament writings addressed to them. The Christian Church, despite all the travails of a two thousand year history, still exists today. It is itself a salvific sign and witness to the historical Jesus, being his Mystical Body.

The assumptions and values which Christian education subsumes - among them being the belief in one ultimate principle or cause, namely, God; the objectivity of moral values; and the indestructible, unique individuality of every human creature - constitute a stabilizing bulwark against the relativizing and ultimately nihilistic tendencies of pluralism, whether manifested in philosophical relativism (cultural, epistemological, or teleological), or religious indifferentism. Not only is this salutarly the case, but the effective defence of these assumptions and values is an important corrective in counteracting pluralistic influences generally, and a support for the Christian philosophy of education in particular.

The paradox of those who propagate the doctrine of scepticism is that the very 'tolerance' they advocate can easily become exclusive, and the first article of a new creed, a new kind of confessionalism - that truth cannot be said to reside anywhere, and that 'tolerance' of all religious beliefs is the way to proceed. This 'tolerance', can at times be discerned and equated either with a hostility



to religion, an encouraged apathy, or a widely assumed indifference; while the attribution of relative truth to all religious claims destroys the very notion of truth itself. Nor can the idea that religion is a culture-bound phenomenon be sustained, if by this is meant that religion belongs wholly within a given culture and can never objectively relate to its proper outer referent, namely, God. Christianity is patently trans-cultural in both senses, and consequently, inter-faith dialogue may well be a distinctive obligation for Christians, in which case Christian education may have a unique rôle to play in the process.

It is also concluded that the case for theism retains its plausibility; a plausibility reinforced by recent discoveries and corroborative thinking in the field of science, particularly, but not exclusively, in physics. Perhaps more impressive, however, is the authentically human pre-occupation with the question of God's existence, characteristically deemed relevant and perennially debated in every age. Further, the arguments for theism can be brought to support a faith perspective established in other legitimate ways, so that God's existence can be presented with that degree of probability which many would relate to being certain. From the existence of God, the existence of absolute values necessarily follows. In the Christian dispensation, these are given historic and practical form in the unique teaching of Jesus.

Although rationalist empiricism and the positivist, logical positivist, and analytical, philosophies based upon that orientation have had a pervasive influence in a growingly secularistic world, the case they promote for agnostic materialism and religious scepticism is not only highly debatable but in important ways logically flawed. It is also at odds with, and pays insufficient attention to, the multifaceted complexity of the body/soul composite, man, who soars above the trammels either of a crude materialism or an exclusive and excluding rationality. The insufficiencies of these philosophies need to be stressed, and especially in the area of religious education, since it has been the values of analytical philosophy - notably apparent from the 1960s in the new discipline of Philosophy of Education - which have been influential in promoting that unjustified change in the nature of religious education, often characterized as 'the new R.E.' On the other hand, the grounds upon which Christian education stands are such as to encourage the promotion of a cli-

mate of confidence for Christian religious educators, and others as well, concerned to resist the drift towards uncertainty, relativism and irreligion.

Since a yearning for God seems to be innate in man and a coming-to-belief in God's existence seems to be part of his human inheritance, agnosticism should be understood as a reactive deviation from a natural human tendency. Man can 'descry' his (God's, that is,) 'invisibilities', and 'become certain that you (God) exist.' (St Augustine) Belief in God can be very sure, resting in the authoritative promptings of one's conscience and 'its testimony that there is a right and a wrong, and its sanction to that testimony conveyed in the feelings which attend right and wrong conduct.' (Cardinal Newman) At the same time, belief *that* God exists - a matter of intellectual commitment arrived at on grounds of a rational appraisal of the evidence such as the intelligibility of the universe - may be given the element of certainty, if the reasonableness of making an inference in the face of compelling evidence - 'one small leap'- is granted.

*Ersatz* religion - such as secular humanism and the various systems of psychological self-theory - destroys the authentic, human tendency towards the acknowledgement and worship of God, the Creator, by substituting an alienating worship of the Self that is often personally destructive in its effects. The agnostic basis of these secular systems leads to a relativization of values - exemplified in the words of a leading proponent as follows: 'If I've discarded God the Father, there has to be someone to invent values' (Jean Paul Sartre). The denial of absolute values earlier implicit in the Kantian disjunction between facts and values, is a postulate of a rationalist/empiricist philosophy which, despite Kant's admission that synthetic *a priori* statements are possible, also denies the validity of extrapolating from evidential knowledge to affirming the existence of God. A logical result of this relativization of values is the destruction of an objective morality and a depressing atheism which comes in the end to project the Self as the object of worship.

It is also concluded that a trusting belief in God seems, perhaps, the most fitting tribute to him, as witness Christ's own words: 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.' (Jn 20:29) While there will always be valid occasion for the perennial 'dialogue' between philosophy and theology (and it has been pointed out that up until the time of the Enlightenment it was philosophy which was 'the

handmaid' to theology) an over-reliance upon the former (philosophy) can vitiate both the rôle and proper effectiveness of the latter (theology) and - as was the case with the neo-Kantian philosophers and theologians - can result in what has been aptly described as a 'a bizarre mixture of scepticism and faith', with an over-emphasis upon religion as a system of practical ethics and little or no attention paid to doctrinal content. In respect of the fundamental importance of doctrine in Christianity, Brown's (1984) conclusion is both apposite and convincing when he states that 'we would make a bad mistake not to recognise that a strong insistence on sound doctrine is both a New Testament idea and a strength in the Christian picture, often best understood from within.' While the second century (but not the first) saw major breaks in *koinōnia* between some Christian communities and 'a struggle to determine which of the contradictory views best preserved the Apostolic understanding and which distorted it in a major way, it is a travesty to claim that orthodoxy did not exist until the late second century. The heritage that was finally acknowledged as orthodox existed from the time of Jesus, not in a static but in a developing way.' (Raymond E. Brown (1984) *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, pp. 148-9.)

Religious education, whether it be considered as a subject in state schools, or as part of Christian education itself, ought, not only logically, but also culturally and historically - certainly in Europe - to be Christian religious education. As well as being informed by Christian assumptions and values, it ought to be a religious education of Christian content. That is to say, the life and teaching of Jesus, the historical experience of the Church which he founded, and a sympathetic examination of social and personal issues conducted in the light of Christian principles and morality, should comprise a content which, perceptively presented at the cognitive level of the young persons being taught, is thoroughly relevant, and can be as intellectually stimulating, as personally fulfilling.

The change in the nature of religious education occasioned by the contemporary phenomenological preoccupation with religious and cultural pluralism notably consequent upon what has been termed the 'crisis in theology' of the 1960s, has, demonstrably, lacked justification. The phenomenological, experiential, and personal-quest forms that have increasingly been presented in many schools cannot

plausibly be held to constitute religious education properly conceived. Comparative and phenomenological approaches to the study of religions promote education *about* religions. Religious *education* on the other hand, means education *in* a religion, and is consequently held to be necessarily confessional, both in approach and as to content.

Christian education relates easily to a culturally diverse world. While upholding Christ as the way, the truth and the life (Jn 1: 6) in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5: 18-19) it at the same time teaches respect for other religions and, in the words of Vatican II's 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions' (*Nostra Aetate*, 28 October, 1965), 'rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions.'

Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture. (*ibid.*)

Any form of religious, cultural or social exclusivism is, therefore, foreign to the Christian education ideal. All are children of the same, loving, heavenly Father.

The Christian school, it can legitimately be concluded, reaches out for its part in a natural manner to other schools and the wider community. While its projects are primarily concerned with promoting its pupils' educational growth and socio-personal development, they also promote an inquiring outreach, friendly communication and co-operation with others. While its internal ethos is Christian and devoted to the individual care of its pupils, its external stance is open and welcoming. As an example of this openness may be cited Catholic Christian schools in England, accepting and making provision where they could, for the education of certain Muslim children whose parents, in the absence of their own schools, wished their children to be educated in an environment where objective religious values are held in respect. In conditions of religious, cultural and social diversity, Christian education can thus play a distinctive and positive rôle. In more divided societies that rôle can be a healing and reconstructionist one.

In Northern Ireland, the challenges of pluralism have been such as to *impair the development* of a fully authentic Christian education such as might be expected in a Christian confessional society. As vulnerable to the secularizing and

relativizing influences of pluralism as any other modern society, it has been the Province's own historic divisions - its polarized communities, its divided schools system, its conflicting ideologies, and the violent conflict of the past twenty three years - that have posed the more direct challenge. That the two communities - still bitterly estranged - are avowedly Christian, *must, inevitably*, raise questions as to the nature of the confessionalism to which they subscribe, given Christ's unequivocal command to love and forgive one another. The *exclusive particularism* of the denominations is clearly at odds with a unifying Christian confessionalism. Mutually hostile stereotypes and ideologies inherited during a centuries old politico-religious conflict militate against the integrity of an authentic Christian confessionalism that is not concerned with temporal power but which seeks, rather, the kingdom which is to come. Totally un-Christian and immensely destructive of all that makes for societal harmony, peace and stability as are the actions of those committing violence, it is true to say that the number of those actively engaging in heinous acts is, comparatively speaking, very small. Yet, it is also the case that in both communities the paramilitaries have constituencies of approval, ranging from the small number who would defend everything they do, to a larger number who support their electoral representatives at elections. As well as this, there are those who, while appalled by the paramilitaries' horrible acts nevertheless acquiesce in their existence as a bizarre necessity for what they claim is their community's 'defence'. Stances such as these can only be said to lie outside the realm of that Peace which belongs to an authentic Christian confessionalism. In addition, it must be concluded that the situation which exists in Northern Ireland is not only scandalizing the Christian world, but is demonstrably vitiating the credibility of Christian witness in the world at large. It has been a purpose of the present study not only to draw attention to the nature of this scandal, but to suggest some practical ways in which the scandal may be removed. In this context an authentic Christian education - the birthright, in any event, of the children of any Christ-confessing society - has a crucially important rôle to play. Not only will it mould the caring Christian citizens of to-morrow, but it can, and, hopefully, will, make its own effective contribution to societal harmony today. In the present study an attempt has been made to indicate how this might be undertaken.

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