The narrow understanding of the aim of religious education which confines it to that of nurturing faith is no longer viable. The exploration of the wider meaning of religious education can contribute to the establishment of right relations among people within nations and between the nations of the world themselves. There have been radical changes in the Irish cultural landscape over the last number of decades. The manner in which young people experience reality is culture bound and, therefore, it is critical to understand the culture of our time and place if we are to be effective religious educators.

This publication explores the meaning and identity of religious education within the cultural context of today. As a life-long process, religious education involves both the teaching of religion and the teaching of a religious way of life, thereby involving family, school and parish. An international perspective on some key issues currently confronting the teaching of religion in the classroom is also examined along with the future challenge for religious education of getting beyond (but not leaving behind) the schooling paradigm.

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47. Ibid, p. 156.
48. Ibid, p. 160.
49. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing the Light of Faith, National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* (Washington, DC: National States Catholic Conference, 1979, No. 213).
50. G. Moran, *Religious Education After Vatican II, Open Catholicism: The Tradition at its Best*, p. 162.
51. G. Moran, *Understanding Religion and Being Religious*, p. 252.

Chapter 3

The Schoolteacher's Dilemma: To Teach Religion or Not To Teach Religion?

KIERAN SCOTT

I offer these reflections as an outsider, but a sympathetic outsider, to the issues of religious education in Ireland. My aim here is to provide an international perspective on some key issues currently confronting Irish endeavours. This international perspective will attend to variations in religious education within the English speaking world.

No international consensus currently exists on a comprehensive meaning of religious education – its nature, scope and purpose.[1] However, if we follow the actual use of the term by people who are committed to doing various activities under its rubric, religious education takes two forms or directions.[2] The first direction is illustrated by the United States. In the US, religious education is identified with religious groups. Religious education here teaches students to be religious in a, for instance, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish way of life. This historical expression of religious education will be the focus of the next chapter.

In England and Wales, a different direction for religious education emerged in the 1940s. The 1944 Education Act defined religious education as comprised of two strands: worship and religious instruction. However, with the passage of time, dissatisfaction with collective worship in the school has

thrown the meaning of religious education on to the second element, namely religious instruction. John Hull, one of the leading proponents of this shift observes: 'Religious education is no longer to foster or nurture faith in any particular religion; it is to promote a sympathetic but critical understanding of religion.'[3] Religious education here is to teach religion. It is spoken of as the subject of classroom instruction in the state school. This clearly defined academic venture has acquired a status in the school curriculum alongside other disciplines. This modern expression of religious education is the focus of my attention in this chapter.

As an added preface here, the Irish may be in a unique position to integrate both directions in religious education. In this period of fundamental cultural transition, I believe, they have the opportunity to adopt the best elements of each meaning. Ireland is one of the few places where both English and US writings on religious education are seriously attended to. What is seen as valuable from both sources can be combined with a distinctive Irish outlook on spirituality, the arts and education. To assist in this understanding, I will begin by examining the direction taken in Britain, namely, defining religious education as the teaching of religion.

There is hesitation, confusion and perplexity across the world, and, I believe, in Ireland also, as to what to do with religion. Reactions vary; in some settings, there is fear of evangelising. While in others, it is explicitly assumed and advocated. In some circles, the meaning of 'to teach religion' is understood as a confessional (catechetical) or even indoctrinative act. In other circles, the meaning is nearly the reverse, or simply a blur. The situation is not unique to Ireland or the US.

Three Case Studies

Three brief examples or case studies will illustrate the muddled confusion. Like a good movie reviewer, I will hold

in abeyance the conclusion of each plot so as to lure you into my narrative.

1. In the Spring semester of 1994, I was assigned to teach a course entitled, *Toward a Theology of Christian Marriage*, on the undergraduate level. Some thirty-five students enrolled. My operating assumptions were: the setting is a classroom in a school; the content for engagement is marriage from a Christian perspective; the process is academic discussion and critique. Shortly before mid-term, I discovered not everyone shared my assumptions. We had just completed a unit on sexuality. The text is standard in the progressive and liberal theological tradition.[4] A student approached me a few days before mid-term examinations. He expressed his opposition to the text, its ideological framework and viewpoints. Confessionally, he was a devout, practising evangelical. The text was a source of temptation, he claimed. It was antagonistic to his fundamental hermeneutic. After consultation with his local minister, he requested exemption from the mid-term examination and exemption from studying the text.

This stimulated my thinking and became a catalyst for self-inquiry. What is at stake in teaching religion? What is involved in learning religion? From the teacher's perspective, is it work of advocacy? From the student's side, is it confessional confirmation? Or is it something else?

2. In August 2001, upon his appointment as the new Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, John J. Meyers, gave an interview to the local newspapers throughout the state of New Jersey. One reporter inquired of the incoming Archbishop, who has a reputation as a staunch conservative, whether the faithful of the Archdiocese could question some official (but hotly debated) Church teachings. 'Yes, of course', replied the Archbishop, 'as long as they know we have the

answers'. This unambiguous reply also stimulated my thinking and enquiring.

What do we mean when we say: 'The bishop is the chief teacher in the diocese'? Does he teach by being the primary guardian of doctrinal orthodoxy ('correct believing')? Are his teaching forms compatible or conflictual? Are they simply variations within a common and assumed confessional stance? Or are they not? Does the teaching act change according to settings? Does the teaching of religion depend on the mission of the school?

3. During my graduate studies, I enrolled in an intensive inter-session course. It was a deep and rapid immersion into the subject-at-hand. It was also a good way to quickly add three credits to one's transcript! The course topic was *Sexuality and the Social Order*. The course would change my life and world-view. First, I had the experience of being a minority. I was one of the four men in a class of thirty-one. Second, the course was my introduction to feminism and feminists. It was an experience in transformational learning.

One element in the course, however, unsettled me. As the classes progressed, assigned texts tended to be left aside. A personalistic group pedagogy took over. It represented a turn to the subject. The importance of personal experience as a source of knowledge was recognised. Permission and encouragement were given to self-expression, self-revealing, emotional unloading and confessional declarations. Psychic turmoil, sexual violence, emotional hurts, incest and sexual ambiguity were shared with all. In retrospect, it seemed like a forerunner to some current afternoon US talk shows. At one stage, the professor asked the four men to excuse themselves from the class because the women had 'female stuff to work on'. As the course turned more into a form of therapeutic encounter, I felt more ill-at-ease. The dynamics seemed more appropriate in a counselling setting or in a church confessional.[5]

This was also a catalyst for self-reflection. Is the classroom the place to work on psychic turmoil? Is it an arena for acts of confession? Can we replace the school desk with the psychologist's couch? Is classroom teaching a therapy session? What kind of space is the classroom? Is it a place where personal issues are traded for consolation? Or is it something else?

This chapter will attempt to unclutter, distinguish and clarify the issues at stake in the three examples noted. The focus of my attention is to uncover the meaning(s) of 'to teach religion'. The technology of teaching does not claim my primary interest here; nor does the disposition of the learner/student to learn; nor does the impact of social and cultural forces on the teaching-learning situation. These are, of course, vital components to consider in every educational context. But I wish to look at the issues from the other side, that is, from the perspective of the teacher, or to be more precise, from the side of the act of teaching. I will explore the meaning of the verb 'to teach' and its object 'religion' as they intermingle, interplay and intersect in contemporary schooling. But linking teaching and religion may not be as simple as it sounds. We can easily take a wrong turn and find ourselves in a mist of confusion. The complexity and ambiguity of the relationship between the two must be acknowledged. And the barriers on the road to their integration need naming and engaging.

Three Resistances to Connecting Religion and Education

The attempt to bring faith and learning (or religion and education) together in the modern classroom faces formidable obstacles. This attempt is comparatively new. It is a product of the twentieth century, and a child of the West. As one more preface to our discussion, the obstacles and resistance to this undertaking need to be faced. I will name three that have emerged, particularly in religious contexts and institutions, and in contemporary culture.[6]

The first problem originates in religion itself. Religion, understood as an internal conviction (faith), a piety, and a way of life makes its primary appeal not to the intellect (mind) by the affections (emotions). The vitality of religious faith is carried by individuals in passions, desires and powerful convictions. George W. Bush framed his politics after September 11 as a religious crusade for freedom. The Taliban did likewise with their holy war declarations. 'Islamic faith', the Taliban declared 'is a bright light: we seek to be so close to it that we catch fire'. Religiousness is full of zeal, if not at times fanaticism. It is 'hot stuff' – and any attempt to get a distance on it, to cool it down and engage in objective, dispassionate thinking, is viewed with suspicion in some churches, mosques and synagogues. Yet, that is precisely the task of the teacher of religion.

The second obstacle or resistance to connecting faith (religiousness) and learning has its roots in the (practice of the) religious or devotional life itself. The religious person yearns for the simple and the settled. The religious devotee seeks to be consoled, secured, rooted in ultimate meaning. Through proclamation, doctrines, sacred writings, moral dictates and rituals, this foundational footing is secured. This content is generally presented in modes of certainty and with cognitive security by church officials and their representatives. On the other hand, what does classroom teaching and learning offer? It too, offers resistance, but resistance to certitude, resistance to cognitive and imaginative closure. Through its process of inquiry, it opens up complexity and ambiguity. It reminds us that things may not be as simple as they appear. The classroom teacher offers an invitation: 'Let us go in search of deeper and richer understanding'. That invitation can create tension with institutionalised religion and its official representatives. But that is precisely the task of the teacher of religion.

The third obstacle or resistance to linking faith and learning (or religion and education) comes from the impact of post-modern culture on our schools. The following quote is from 1964, but I feel it is still relevant today:

> School teaching and learning in our advanced industrial society appears more and more as a matter of dispensing and acquiring of information rather than understanding. We have seen a shift in focus towards vocationally relevant skills and useful technical methods. We have come to value technique over tradition, skills over ultimate concerns, and information over understanding. Religion, on the other hand, involves tradition, symbols, written texts, mysterious practices and a variety of modes of understanding.[7]

It is not easy to get a hearing on that level or realm of meaning in our technical, driven climate. Religion in the school curriculum can seem a burden or an irritant, especially in the midst of an all-consuming Celtic Tiger. But once again, this is the vital and prophetic task of the teacher of religion.

These are formidable obstacles to the teaching of religion in our schools. Is the task, then, too much? Is the topic too hot? Is the process too tension-filled? Should we simply hand the work over to the churches and parishes? And if we did, would they be up to the task?[8]

I wish to make the case that the teaching of religion in our schools is one of the most universal, most urgent and most practical questions confronting our society today. The events of 11 September 2001 and its aftermath reveal that the main conflict in the world today is religious. Religion is not an innocent or a neutral force on the stage of history. The key question confronting us is: Will it be a life-giving force or will it turn deadly? A good starting point would be to seek to understand it. This is the unique contribution the teacher of religion can make

to the current and the next generation. But, a prior and primary question, and the focus of our attention here is: What does it mean to teach religion? I will begin to decode this term by unveiling the meaning of the verb 'to teach', in its various forms, and with a particular focus on classroom teaching(s) in schools.

The Moral Dilemma of Teaching[9]

Teaching is an important test case of whether or not we understand what education is.

I think at some level, we are uneasy with the very idea of teaching. At a philosophical level we sense a moral dilemma in the idea of teaching. We have a deep suspicion that it is an immoral activity. Philosophically speaking, teaching is equated with the exercise of power by an adult over a vulnerable child. It is identified with a powerful adult trying to control the thinking of a powerless neophyte. We identify with telling the young the truth. In educational literature, it is assumed that teaching is an explanation from the front of the classroom. It becomes confused with a certain arrangement of power – one of great inequity.

The initial turn toward solving the moral dilemma of teaching is the recognition of the variety of teaching acts. Parents teach. Preachers teach. Schoolteachers teach and chaplains teach. But not all in the same way. It may be helpful to focus on the act of teaching and to ask: What exactly does a teacher do when engaging in the act? What kind of teaching is (or should be) going on here? What pattern of speech is (or should be) employed in this setting? Does it fit?

So before a teacher begins to teach, he or she needs to ask 'Why are these people in front of me?' The question is critical for each teacher, parent, coach, preacher, counsellor, kindergarten teacher, teacher of religion, university professor. Under what assumptions are these people present? What kind of licence to speak have they given me? What is appropriate (moral)? What is inappropriate (immoral)? The basis on which

an individual or group appears before a teacher signifies a moral consent to a particular form of teaching and discourse. Much of the misunderstanding surrounding the term 'to teach religion', I believe, arises when people are confused about the nature of the institution they are in. Why are they assembled? What have the consented to? What language form is operating? Toward what is it directed? When the answer to these questions is unclear and distorted, the consent of the people gathered in front of the teacher is sometimes blurred and the teacher him- or herself may also be somewhat confused. The focus of our attention here, however, is the schoolteacher, specifically the teacher of religion, and the language appropriate to this task and setting.

School Teaching and Academic Speech

The classroom of the modern school is a unique invention. It structures a specific set of conditions that may be difficult to establish outside a school. It is designed for a particular pattern of language, namely, academic discourse. Academic speech is the use of speech for critical understanding. The schoolteacher employs academic discourse to turn speech back on itself and to investigate its assumptions, biases and meanings. Academic speech is disinterested speech. It is not partisan and preachy. To engage in it, we temporarily put on hold our involvement and convictions, as far as we are capable, to examine assumptions, contexts, blind spots. On the other hand, the schoolteacher is an advocate. He or she advocates how to speak so that greater understanding is possible. If the schoolteacher succeeds, students may reshape the pattern of their discourse, and, in effect, redesign their world and thus expand their awareness.

The schoolteacher, then, does not tell people what to think. And school teaching is not an exercise in truth telling. It is an invitation to examine the students' way of speaking and understanding. The words of the teacher and assigned texts are placed between the teacher and student. The ground

rules are civility and tolerance. Everything else is open to critique. No opinion or viewpoint is uncritically accepted as truth. The assumption is every statement of belief, every linguistic expression of truth and every viewpoint can be improved upon. This saves the process from being authoritarian or indoctrinate.

The classroom, then, is a place for a particular kind of discourse, nothing more and nothing less. Discussion often takes the form of debate. There is a sense of back and forth, a dialogue, with a reflective use of language. Particular attention, however, is directed to the meaning of the words in the dialogue. The dialogue, as an oral exchange, can only bear fruit if the participants are willing to listen to the words of the other, and the voice and otherness of the assigned text. Written texts (or teacher, or students) that tend to preach or to be dogmatic defeat the purpose of the classroom. Good texts (or teachers, or students) need to leave open the possibility of imagining different viewpoints and alternative worlds. Classroom discussion then is the (inter)play of ideas. This approach to teaching honours the post-modern sensibilities outlined in chapter one.

In this linguistic framework, classrooms are designed to teach people to be sceptical. They are places to cultivate an attitude of questioning everything. They are arenas of criticism. The established world or assumed truth can be called into question. The verbal dialogue is between the teacher and the students. Both are participants, and both dialogue with the written (oral or visual) text. Teachers and students are invited to place their (informal) words on the table. Their words become the focus of attention and criticism. The classroom search is to understand the words on the table between teachers and students. The task is to distinguish meanings in a way that opens up and leads to greater understanding. The teacher does not simply describe or prescribe. He or she does not try to change the student or

the student's thinking, only the student's words. The teacher is an advocate, but the advocate is for a better way of speaking. The schoolteacher's job is to propose a reshaping of the student's words. That is what is appropriate and academically permissible. This is what it means to teach morally in the classroom of the school.[10]

Academic speech, then, is concerned with meaning, with intellectual understanding. It questions the adequacy of every form of expression. Its form is interrogative. This critique, if it has communal support (within and outside the school), does not end in negativity. Rather, it can facilitate the emergence and flowering of new meaning and richer understanding. This is the purpose of classroom teaching. Consequently, when debate and criticism are absent, the classroom is simply not functioning as a genuine classroom.

When a student, then, enters a classroom in a school, he or she enters into a particular kind of discourse, namely academic speech. The schoolteacher is obliged to make it accessible. While academic discourse can emerge outside the school, the classroom in the school is particularly designed for it. Whether the school is a school of the Church (synagogue or mosque) or state school does not alter these assumptions. The school-teaching act is designed for discussion of ideas and their presuppositions. The teacher and students are partners (but not peers) in searching or researching the truth. If the right conditions prevail, the dialogue goes back and forth. The purpose is to move closer to the truth but without fixity, finality or absolutising. The teacher's first and last questions of concern are: What do the words mean? Who says so? Why? What are the assumptions? Is there a better way of saying that? The teacher, as advocate, shows and proposes a better way of how to do it. In the right place and time, this form of speech can be a powerful form of teaching, both morally appropriate and educationally counter-productive.

However, when these conditions are absent, academic discourse (schooltalk) can be educationally ineffective and morally offensive. A liturgical assembly is not the place for academic discussions. A therapist's office, for the most part, is not suitable for academic criticism. Academic discourse, like every other language, presumes a community. One cannot begin or end with criticism. But when teachers of religion ignore academic discourse, beliefs become dogmatic, interpretations closed and traditions idolatrous. When these conditions prevail, the classroom has ceased to function as a genuine classroom of the modern school and flies in the face of contemporary culture.

I will turn now to the task of connecting the verb 'to teach' with its object 'religion'.

Religion: An Academic Construct

In the title of this chapter, 'religion' is the direct object of the verb 'to teach'. In twentieth-century English, religion has two distinct and very different meanings: 1) It is a word for a set of practices that particular communities engage in. These (religious) communities, with their beliefs, rituals and moral practices, show a way of life. Religion here is what one lives and practices. 2) Religion is also a word to designate a field of academic inquiry.[11] It is an object of scholarly and academic investigation. It is the name of a curriculum subject. It represents stepping back to examine and understand these practices. Both meanings are well-established today. The second meaning is the focus of my attention here.

As a field of inquiry, religion is an idea and a concept that was invented in scholarly circles. It is an academic construct – like history, mathematics, social studies, health sciences. It was adopted as a neutral term by scholars who sought to study and compare particular religious communities. The focus and aim was to understand religion. But one can understand only if one compares. The concept implies understanding one (or one's

own) religious position in relation to other possibilities. This is quite a recent idea. The claim: religion can be a subject in the school curriculum. It can stand next to psychology, politics or pharmacology. As an idea (of comparison) and as a method (of inquiry), it represents a commitment to use the mind in search for truth. The construct invites us to activate the muscles of the mind to explore, compare, question and critique.

To Teach Religion in School

Where is the appropriate setting for this form of inquiry? The modern classroom in the school is surely one place where it belongs. It was practically invented for the classroom of the school. There is no place where religion more comfortably fits than in the academic curriculum. One preaches the Christian message, but one academically teaches religion. The schoolteacher steps back from the practice of the Christian (Jewish or Buddhist) ways of life so as to examine Christian (Jewish or Buddhist) beliefs, sacred writings and practices.

The aim is not change of behaviour, but change in understanding. This meaning of religious education flourishes in England and Wales and other parts of the world influenced by the UK. We have much to learn from this British model. Variations within this experience, from the phenomenological approach to the existential approach, to an integration of both, can be a rich source of educational wisdom for the rest of the world.[12] In terms of age, this process could begin with older children, increase during the teenage years, and reach its full fruition during the adult years. The teacher here is the schoolteacher. And the subject is religion. In (post)modern times, this form of religious education is indispensable to peace and harmony in the world.

School, then, is precisely where religion belongs. When it is taught, it fosters religious literacy, cultivates religious understanding and lessens religious prejudice. While schools carry all the burden for the formation and the development of

a religious way of life, nevertheless, its limited contribution is vital to intelligent religiousness today.

Are our Christian Churches committed to the teaching of religion in their schools? Are they hospitable to the idea and method? Or are they suspicious and defensive? Catholic and Protestant communities give a prominent place to teaching. What is to be taught, and how it is taught, however, is usually very restricted. One is expected to teach the Word of God (Bible), Christian Doctrine, the catechism and the (moral) way. Traditionally, however, the method of teaching is by proclamation (preaching) and (catechetical) instruction. The Christian Churches have largely inherited this educational model. Education is viewed here as initiation, incorporation, induction into the faith. It is a process of religious socialisation, enculturation and maturation in the faith. On this, Catholic and Protestant communities generally have a consensus; Church education is teaching with an end in view. Their end is to produce practising Church members. However, schools and teaching religion in school have a different purpose.

Classroom instructors in religion have to examine what motivates their teaching. What have students consented to? What languages are appropriate? What assumptions are operating? What processes prevail? Teachers of religion in a school have to maintain the integrity of their own work. If religion is a part of the school curriculum, there is an academic standard to be met. Academic instruction should not be burdened with the role of catechising. The child who walks into the classroom of a school has the right to expect not catechising, but intellectually demanding accounts of religion – one's own and the religious way of the other. School teachers work in the context of the classrooms and an academic curriculum. Catechists work in their context of sacramental life. School teachers teach religion; catechists teach Gospel and Christian doctrine. Schools, whether government sponsored or religiously affiliated, attend to symbols, practices and documents. The catechetical venture is firmly

within the framework of forming people to lead a Christian life. The teacher of religion is not a catechist. He or she is an academic teacher. Professionally, this is his or her identity. In religious terminology, this is his or her vocation.

Church officials, however, usually get uneasy and show some concern here. Will the teacher of religion 'present clearly what the Church teaches', or 'what the magesterium teaches'? Clearly that is what the catechist (or preacher) is commissioned to do. But it is the schoolteacher's task to 'present clearly what the school teaches'? The answer, in brief, is yes, if the material is relevant to the class topic of the day. But, in the teaching of religion, this is a preliminary step in school teaching. The next move or step is for the schoolteacher to ask: What does teaching mean? Where did it come from? What are its limitations? How is it changing? And dozens of similar questions. A schoolteacher's vocation is not to tell people what the truth is or tell them what to believe; a schoolteacher's modest task is to explore the meaning of what is written from the past and to help students articulate their own convictions. The truth or falsity of the Church's teaching is not a direct concern of the schoolteacher or student. This perspective tends to upset Roman Catholic officials. Their concerns are 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy'. These concerns, however, are on a different wavelength. Both words are irrelevant in the classroom. The teacher of religion teaches the subject matter. He or she teaches the student to think. He or she aids in the understanding of texts. What the student does with this understanding (affirm or dissent) is up to the individual student. The personal faith of the student or teacher is not an assumed part of the academic process nor its intended goal.

Three Teaching Tasks

Within this framework and set of assumptions, the first aim, in teaching religion is to make the material intelligible – or at least, to show how it is not unintelligible. The object to be

understood is religion, including one's own religion. Some degree of otherness, some basis of comparison is necessary to understand. The other reveals to us ourselves.[13]

The second task in teaching religion is to make the religious text accessible to students with 'disciplined intersubjectivity'.[14] The text is a mediator between the community of the past and a community of the present. The schoolteacher's job is to see that the text has a chance to fulfil that role. The discipline of the teacher here is the key. It must be done with fairness and fullness.

Thirdly, the teacher of religion must attend to classroom religion. The ecology and shape of the setting teaches. While the attitudes and personal interests of today's students cannot be the curriculum content, neither can these sensibilities and dispositions be ignored.[15] As soon as students step into the classroom space, they enter a zone of freedom. The space ought to be conducive to debate and critique. This teaching-learning design is indispensable if students are to discover the link between understanding (religion) and external (religious) practices. They must be free to choose.

Finally, I return to my initial three case studies and reveal the conclusion of each narrative. I did not exempt my Evangelical student from reading the assigned religion text or from sitting his examination. My aim, as a teacher of religion, in light of my foregoing argument, was not conversion, incorporation or indoctrination into a belief system, but rather an exploration and critical engagement of it. His responsibility, as a student, was to study and understand as best he could, but not necessarily believe. Whether the text was in accord with his conviction was irrelevant from an educational perspective.

Classroom instruction and Episcopal teaching are two different teaching forms, with two different purposes. They can be complimentary (not conflictual) when they respect each others territory and integrity. Bishops are called to teach

by example. They are also guardians of orthodoxy. School teachers are also called to teach by example. However, their responsibility is neither to orthodoxy nor heresy. Their commitment is to the cultivation of understanding. What the student does with this understanding beyond the classroom wall is outside the realm of the teacher of religion. These two teachers and teaching forms ought to be in a healthy tension and conversation with each other. They should never be collapsed into one and the same. Finally, school-teaching is not therapy (although it may have therapeutic effects). Personal issues ought not be centre stage in the classroom. It is one thing to seek to make the material existentially relevant. It is quite another when the core material becomes an unloading of student's private wounds. Prudence, discernment and clarity of purpose ought never be lost sigh of in the classroom.

Ultimately, the teacher of religion is not a catechist or evangeliser for the Church. He or she is an advocate for intelligent understanding of one's own religious tradition in relation to other people. What's at stake is understanding ourselves better through appreciating other religious ways as best we can. The choice is between ignorance and empathy. The schoolteacher of religion chooses life, chooses enlightenment, chooses revelatory understanding. This is our sacred vocation.

Notes

1. See my *Three Traditions of Religious Education*, Religious Education 79, 3, 1984, p.323-339.
2. G. Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language* (Birmingham, AL, Religious Education Press, 1989) p.226-242.
3. J. Hull, *New Directions in Religious Education* (London: Falmer Press, 1982), p.xiv.
4. J. B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN, Augsburg, 1978).

5. On the risks of personalistic teaching technique methodologies, see K. Homan, 'Hazards of the Therapeutic: On the Use of Personalistic and Feminist Methodologies', *Horizons*, 24, 1997, p.248-264.
6. See E. Farley, 'Local Learning: A Congregational Inquiry', in M. Warren (ed.) *Changing Churches: The Local Church and the Structure of Change* (Portland, Oregon: Pastoral Press, 2000) p.138-161.
7. P. Phenix, *Realms of Meaning* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964)
8. See G. Moran, Does 'Religion Belong in a Parish?' in *Religious Education as a Second Language* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1989) p.138-164.
9. I note my indebtedness in this section to the recent work of Gabriel Moran. See, in particular, his *Showing How: The Act of Teaching* (Valley Forge PA: Trinity Press International, 1997)
10. Ibid., 124-125.
11. Moran, *Religious Education as a Second Language*, p.123-124.
12. On these various approaches see J. Hull, *Studies in Religion and Education* (Lewes, Sussex: The Falwer Press, 1984); M. Grimmitt, *Religious Education and Human Development* (Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmons, 1987); E. Cox, *Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1983); A. Wright, *Religious Eduction in the Secondary School: Prospects for Religious Literacy* (London: David Fulton, 1993)
13. See T. Veiling, *Emmanuel Levinas and the Revelation of the Other*, Eremos 61, 1997, p.23-25.
14. P. Phenix, 'Religion in Public Education: Principals and Issues' in D. Engel (ed.), *Religion in Public Education* (New York: Paulist, 1974), p.67.
15. See H. Lombaerts, *Religion, Society and the Teaching of Religion in Schools* in Michael Warren (ed.), Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics, Vol. 2 (Winona, MN: St Mary's Press, 1997) p.306-329 for some characteristics of the teaching of religion in the school environment in light of changes in the European continent.

Chapter 4

Continuity and Change in Religious Education: Building on the Past, Re-Imagining the Future

KIERAN SCOTT

At the beginning of the previous chapter, I noted two distinct parts or directions religious education takes in the English-speaking world. These two faces of religious education[1] were captured for me in a cartoon I saw recently. Two psychics are seated with their crystal ball at their respective tables each side of a street corner. On the left side, one psychic advertises her wares, psychic reading $10: all of life's questions answered. On the right side, the other psychic advertises, psychic reading $10: all of life's answers questioned. In some caricatured way, these two pictures represent the two major sets of activities operating under the canopy of religious education on both sides of the Atlantic today. The former is the US practice. The latter is the UK one. I will seek in this chapter to show that they are not mutually exclusive. However, the former, for the most part, will be the focus of my attention.

In spite of the case I attempted to make in the previous chapter for the teaching of religion, schools alone cannot carry the entire burden and challenge of religious education. To concentrate exclusively on the religious instruction of children and adolescents within school settings is equivalent to a bird attempting to fly on one wing. It simply won't work. It is inadequate for a full, intelligent religious life. Although