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Using the resources of the Catholic theological tradition to develop a new approach to Catholic religious education

John Edmund Stoer BA, PGCE

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Critical Studies, College of Arts

University of Glasgow

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Abstract

This thesis makes the case for a different approach to classroom religious education in Catholic schools to that currently in use in England and Wales, and Scotland. It builds its case through an examination of the guidance of the universal Church on religious education, an analysis of current social and ecclesial conditions, and an evaluation of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (2012), for use in England and Wales, and *This is Our Faith* (2011 & 2015), the programme for Scotland. It argues that both sets of local guidance when evaluated in the light of the guidance of the universal Church and current social and ecclesial conditions are inappropriate and that a new approach is needed.

The new approach that is developed in this thesis is rooted in the educational guidance of the universal Church and the Catholic theological tradition. The guidance is used to argue that Catholic religious education is an academic subject suitable for all young people, regardless of religious affiliation and, at the same time, it is open to faith development and the search for meaning. Its content is the Christian message which must be related to the life experience of young people in the classroom and the "lived reality" of Christian life. Catholic religious education must therefore take account of current social and ecclesial conditions which includes diversity and plurality both within the Catholic community and in wider society. The Catholic theological tradition, in particular Church teaching on other religions, its guidance on inter-religious dialogue and the work of the Catholic theologian David Tracy, is used to help shape and form the new approach to Catholic religious education.

The principal aim of the approach is to help young people in Catholic schools to know and understand the Christian message and, in doing so, engage with and interpret or draw meaning from it. A subsidiary aim encourages engagement with and interpretation of other religions and non-religious ways of thinking. In furthering these aims, general or cohering themes are proposed that should be present in schemes of work and lessons, as well as key skills, experiences and attitudes; and the essential content of the Christian message. Given the levels of diversity outside of and within the Catholic community, advice is provided on how disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom could be addressed, and how Judaism, other religions and non-religious viewpoints could be taught.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

Preface

The idea of attempting to write a thesis about Catholic religious education came to me in my final year in the teaching profession, just before my retirement. Having started teaching religious education in Catholic schools in the late 1970s I had seen many changes in the subject, in young people, in the Church and in wider society. Two particular issues, however, stimulated a desire to think about religious education: my frustration with the draft senior phase of the religious education programme for Scotland, *This is Our Faith*, and a question that I was asked in an RE lesson. The draft senior phase programme seemed to me to be written without any thought about the fifteen to eighteen-year-old young people it was seeking to engage and what might interest and concern them. The question that I was asked by a sixteen-year-old girl was: "I am a Catholic because I was born a Catholic. If I was born a Hindu I would be a Hindu. How can I say my religion is true"? I answered the question very badly and was talking about it later in the day with a very experienced physics teacher, Kirsty Devlin. She considered the question in a different way and asked what a young person would have needed to know to be able to answer the question for him or herself? This thesis is the fruit of my frustration with current programmes of Catholic religious education in Scotland, and England and Wales, and both the pupil's and Kirsty's question.

Acknowledgement

This thesis has been six years in the writing. Having not engaged with academic work since the 1970s it has been a challenge to re-engage with theology and educational studies after so long. In this task I have been greatly helped by my supervisors, Julie Clague in Theology and Religious Studies, and Stephen McKinney in Education. They have both shown great patience and I am very grateful for their help. Julie, who has supervised my work from the start, has read and commented on thousands of words as I struggled to clarify what I wanted to say and how to say it. Stephen has helped me to sharpen my argument and made me aware of a wider educational discussion. I thank them both.

During those six years the person who has been most aware of how much this thesis has dominated what I have been doing is my wife, Janet. She has shown immense patience and put up with a great deal. My finishing will be a joint celebration. Over the last few months of writing this thesis a number of people have helped with proof-reading: my wife, my cousin's husband, Frank McGavigan, and two former colleagues, Dan Divers and Ronnie Renton. I am very grateful for their help and comments.

Finally, for five of the six years my fees have been paid by a Trinity award from the Theology and Religious Studies Department of the University of Glasgow. I am very grateful for their assistance which made this thesis possible.

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Abbreviations

Vatican II documents

SC Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (1963).

LG Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (1964).

UR Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964).

OT Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam totius* (1965).

NA Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra aetate* (1965).

GE Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis* (1965).

DV Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum* (1965).

DH Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis humanae* (1965).

AG Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad gentes* (1965).

GS Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (1965).

Papal magisterium

Pope St Paul VI.

ES Encyclical letter on the Church, *Ecclesiam suam*, (1964).

EN Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975).

Pope St John Paul II

RH Encyclical letter, *Redemptor hominis* (1979).

CT Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi tradendae* (1979).

DViv Encyclical letter, *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986).

RM Encyclical letter, *Redemptoris missio* (1990).

Pope Francis

EG Apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium* (2013).

LS Encyclical letter, *Laudato si'* (2015).

Other documents of the universal Church

CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994).

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

DI Declaration on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, *Dominus Iesus* (2000).

(Sacred) Congregation for the Clergy

GCD *General Catechetical Directory* (1971).

GDC *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997).

(Sacred) Congregation for Catholic Education

CS *The Catholic School* (1977).

LC *Lay Catholics: Witnesses to Faith* (1982).

RDE *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: guidelines for reflection and renewal* (1988).

ETCS *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (2007).

CL *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education* (2009).

EIDC *Educating to intercultural dialogue in Catholic schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilisation of Love* (2013).

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

DM *Dialogue and Mission: the attitude of the Church towards the followers of other religions* (1984).

DP *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of the Jesus Christ* (1991).

DTC *Dialogue in Truth and Charity: Pastoral Orientations for Interreligious Dialogue* (2014).

Catholic religious education documents from Britain

TIOF *This is Our Faith* (2011), Scotland

RECD *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*, England and Wales (2012).

1. Chapter One: Introduction

The subject of this thesis is Roman Catholic religious education, and specifically classroom religious education. Across the world, according to the Central Statistical Office of the Catholic Church, as at 31 December 2017, there were over sixty two million children and young people in over two hundred and twenty thousand Catholic schools (kindergarten, primary and secondary).[1] Many of those young people are not Catholics; the educational systems and the resources available for running the schools vary considerably; and the prevailing social and ecclesial conditions differ greatly.[2] Given this diversity, it is unsurprising that the Church provides general guidance on how Catholic schools should operate and asks local Bishops to consider the guidance and implement it in the specific context of their diocese or Bishops' Conference.

In this thesis, an analysis is carried of the application of this principle to classroom religious education in Catholic schools in England and Wales, and Scotland.[3] Following this analysis, and the issues that it identifies, a different approach to Catholic religious education, henceforth called RCRE, is proposed.[4] The approach argued for in this thesis is in part a response to dissatisfaction with the existing guidance for England and Wales, and Scotland. In developing this different or new approach the resources of the Catholic theological tradition are used. In introducing the thesis, this chapter is divided into three sections. Section one explains the thesis question(s), and related assumptions; section two, the method and structure of the thesis; and section three, the hoped-for contribution of the thesis to discussion about RCRE.

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[1] Central Statistical Office of the Church, *Annuario Pontificio 2019* (Città del Vaticano: Liberia Editrice, 2019), 290. The precise figures are: 62,182,958 pupils, and 221,382 schools. The terms children, young people, and pupils are interchangeable in this thesis.

[2] Social and ecclesial conditions is a broad term which is not defined in Church guidance. As used in this thesis it refers to features of contemporary life in society and in the Church, and their implications for the mission of the Church. See glossary.

[3] In England and Wales, and Scotland, there are two distinct Bishops' Conferences and two different legal systems for operating state funded Catholic schools. When the term Britain is used it refers to England, Wales, and Scotland, but not Northern Ireland.

[4] When the term religious education is used, or the acronym RE, this refers to religious education in community or non-denominational schools that have no religious affiliation.

1.1. Thesis Question(s) and related assumptions

This thesis is divided into three parts. Each part addresses a specific question.

Part One: What are the strengths and weaknesses of current Church guidance on RCRE? The term guidance refers to both universal guidance and local guidance for use in England and Wales, and Scotland.

Part Two: What Catholic theological resources can help to address the weaknesses in the current guidance and develop a new approach to Catholic religious education?

Part Three: What does the new approach to classroom RCRE for use in Britain look like?

Thomas Groome, used to give a long winded response to the question, what is good religious education? More recently he suggests that if "we have good education and good religion and put the two together", we are likely to have good religious education.[5] This thesis should be understood as a development of that idea in the context of Catholic schools in England and Wales, and Scotland. In doing so it addresses this overarching question:

What does good classroom RCRE look like given the current situation of the Church in Britain, and the Catholic and wider community which its schools seek to serve?

Given the nature of the thesis question(s) at least four assumptions are implicit. First, that Catholic religious education should be faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church. What that means will be considered further in the course of the thesis. Second, any programme of RCRE must be rooted in the guidance of the universal Church on education and religious education. The term rooted is used deliberately because the guidance itself understands that there cannot be one programme of RCRE for the whole Church. Local adaptations are not just important, they are essential. Third, given that the vast majority of Catholic schools in Britain are state funded, RCRE should be supportive of national guidelines for education in all schools. Finally, implicit in the thesis question(s) is an assumption that the existing programmes need to be revised and that a different approach to RCRE is needed. By the end of the thesis the reader will have to decide whether that assumption is justified and whether the approach that is argued for is beneficial.

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[5] Thomas H Groome, *Will there be faith?* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 101-102.

1.2. What method is used to answer the questions and how does this relate to the structure of the thesis?

This thesis begins by evaluating the guidance of the universal Church and highlighting the key principles of the Church's understanding of RCRE. In doing so, it clarifies the guidance and identifies ideas and unresolved issues that require clarification and development. In applying the key principles and addressing the ideas that require clarification, the resources of the Catholic theological tradition are utilised, in particular Church teaching on other religions and its guidance on inter-religious dialogue, together with the work of various Catholic theologians, especially David Tracy. Teaching on other religions (the theology of religions), and inter-religious dialogue are used to provide insight into RCRE because of the plurality and diversity of modern Britain. David Tracy is used because, as a Catholic theologian, he takes plurality and diversity seriously. Church guidance on RCRE and theology are then brought together in a new approach to RCRE. This synthesis of Church guidance on religious education and Catholic theology is fundamental to the methodology of the thesis. Educational theory and theorists are used but only to help translate theology into the language of teaching and learning. The structure of the thesis is directly related to this method and the thesis question(s).

Part one of the thesis, which evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of existing Church guidance on RCRE, consists of three chapters. Following this introduction, chapter two examines the guidance of the universal Church and identifies its key principles and the ideas and unresolved issues that require clarification and development. These include how, as an academic subject, RCRE can:
1) be educationally appropriate for all young people regardless of religious affiliation and, at the same time, be open to the development of faith and the search for meaning;
2) relate doctrine and human experience, as that relationship is central to understanding Christian faith.

Explicit in the universal guidance of the Church is the need to carry out an analysis of social and ecclesial conditions before a local programme of RCRE is produced. In chapter three, the results of such an analysis for England and Wales, and Scotland are presented. The evidence for the arguments in this chapter is gathered from secondary sources, both quantitative and qualitative, and no field work was conducted. It is from these sources that the case is made that Britain, as a whole, has become plural and diverse, that diversity can

also be found with the Catholic community, and that young people value personal agency and personal autonomy. This analysis, together with the guidance of the universal Church, is then used to draw up criteria to evaluate, in chapter four, the schemes and programmes of RCRE in England and Wales, and Scotland. Through identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the local schemes, the argument is made that a different approach to RCRE is needed that implements the principles of Church guidance and is, at the same time, appropriate for current social and ecclesial conditions. Before this approach can be developed, however, additional resources are necessary to address the unresolved issues in the universal guidance and respond to local conditions.

Part two, which consists of two chapters, uses existing theological and educational resources to address the unresolved issues and respond to local conditions. In chapter five, David Tracy's understanding of the "classic" and its interpretation provides a theological basis for holding together the academic study of religion, that is appropriate for all, and an openness to faith development and the search for meaning. For Tracy, a "classic" can be "[t]exts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons";[6] and interpretation brings together your experience and your reading of the "classic" which, in turn, discloses to you something meaningful about your life. Tracy captures something of the essence of interpretation in this simple phrase: "[t]he classic … interprets me as I struggle to interpret it".[7] In terms of the Christian message, Christ is *The* Christian "classic", and related to him are a range of other Christian classics which help to disclose something of his meaning and significance.

In the same chapter, a way of translating Tracy's idea of interpretation (holding together your experience and your reading of a "classic") into educational language is proposed. Michael Young's concept of "powerful knowledge" is used for its emphasis on the importance of knowledge as distinct from experience and, at the same, the importance of experience for appreciating certain types of knowledge. The distinction and relationship between cognitive and affective learning outcomes is another way of expressing in educational language how experience and reading a "classic" can be held together. The underlying argument is that knowledge about religion requires both cognitive and affective

[6] David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 55.
[7] Ibid., 119.

learning outcomes; or to put it another way, "all theological statements involve an existential dimension".[8]

Chapters six develops the theological resources further through examining Church teaching on other religions and its guidance on inter-religious dialogue. This helps to clarify what a young person needs to know to be able to negotiate and engage with a plural and diverse world, which includes humanism and no religion, and the model of Church that is appropriate given current conditions. The practice of dialogue provides insight into the nature of religion and what it is to be religious, the attitudes that are necessary to engage with plurality, and the skills and experiences that help to provide insight into one's own beliefs and those of others.

Part three, which consists of two chapters, draws on the findings of parts one and two to develop a new approach to classroom RCRE for use in Britain. Both chapters articulate a vision of RCRE that addresses the experience of young people and the plurality and diversity of Britain today, and is at the same time faithful to Church teaching and its guidance on RCRE. Chapter seven reprises why a different approach is needed and sets out the foundations of the approach. It explains the approach in terms of aims; general or cohering themes; skills, experiences and attitudes; and methods of teaching and learning. The chapter includes an explanation of the core content that the approach proposes. Chapter eight, applies the approach to addressing plurality and diversity, within the Catholic community and within Britain. It provides guidance to teachers on how to use disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom to further learning, and sets out how Judaism, other religions, and non-religious viewpoints should be taught. The final chapter concludes with a reflection on what would need to happen if the approach (or elements of it) was to be implemented.

1.3. What is the hoped-for contribution of this thesis to current discussions of Catholic religious education?

1.3.1. The discussion in England and Wales, and Scotland

As will become evident, this thesis presents a different vision for RCRE to that found in the guidance for England and Wales, the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*

[8] David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 47.

(RECD), and for Scotland, *This is Our Faith*, TIOF.[9] That said, whilst the RECD and TIOF have common features their understanding of the subject is different and the documents are themselves very different in nature and purpose. This will be explained further in chapter four but to appreciate the hoped-for contribution of this thesis to current discussion it is necessary to understand the principal features of what they have in common and how they differ.

First, in terms of subject content, both TIOF and the RECD focus on Catholic Christianity as it is understood by the Church. In TIOF, teachers are advised that they "must propose Roman Catholic beliefs and values as objectively true";[10] and in the RECD, the first aim of religious education is "knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith".[11] In both sets of guidance, the content is dominated by Church teaching which is presented in a homogenous and idealised way, unrelated to the diverse ways in which Catholics might actually live out their religion. The approach argued for in this thesis shifts the focus of the content away from the Church and its teaching towards the Christian message. Clearly, there is huge overlap between "knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith" and the Christian message but as the distinction (not separation) is developed, the importance of the shift in focus will become clear.

Second, the approach developed in this thesis identifies the relationship between teachings and life experience as crucial for the study of the Christian message and the message of any religion. It goes further and argues that the relationship between teachings and experience is integral to the academic study of religion. This emphasis highlights a difference between TIOF and the RECD.

TIOF tries to hold together education and catechesis. It seeks to encourage faith development through classroom learning and tries to relate Church teaching to experience. The problem is that it prescribes to young people what their experience should be. This leaves it open to the challenge that it restricts rational autonomy and is not educationally

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[9] Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic School and Colleges in England and Wales* (2012), https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/images/RECD_2012.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth the RECD.
Scottish Catholic Education Service on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, *This is Our Faith* (2011) and the *Senior Phase* (2015). Henceforth, TIOF or when appropriate, Senior Phase.
[10] TIOF 16.
[11] RECD 6.

valid for all pupils.[12] In contrast, the RECD adopts a religious literacy approach to RCRE that is related to the educational approach developed in Australia.[13] It articulates the purpose of the subject in the following way:

> The outcome of excellent Religious Education is religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills … to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.[14]

The RECD is in the process of being revised, not replaced, and its implementation of a religious literacy or educational approach is clearly expressed by the current RCRE adviser to the English and Welsh Bishops. He explains that "[t]he core purpose of RE in Catholic schools is to ensure that all pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the Catholic theological tradition".[15] He uses the terms "theological literacy", which he argues is the core purpose of RCRE, with a deepening of faith a spin-off and "incidental to its core purpose". Robert Jackson, in his evaluation of the religious literacy approach, notes that it downplays the importance of experience; [16] does not account for the range of views that might be found in a religious tradition;[17] and removes the existential search for meaning from the study of religion.[18] As chapter four will show, these issues are evident in the RECD. Like the educational approach from Australia, it focuses on cognitive understanding and makes a clear distinction between the cognitive, which is the work of the classroom, and the affective which encourages faith development which might arise from cognitive learning but is the responsibility of the Catholic school as a whole. This is explained by Kathleen Engebretson who, in making the distinction between classroom RCRE and faith formation in the wider school, argues that "[t]he exemplary Catholic High

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[12] For an early argument for the need for a distinction between catechesis and RCRE see Graham Rossiter, 'The Need for a "Creative Divorce" between Catechesis and Religious Education in Catholic Schools', *Religious Education* 77:1, (1982), 21-40, https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408820770103 accessed on 02 September 2019.

[13] For an evaluation of the religious literacy approach see Robert Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2004), 75-86. For more on the educational approach see Michael T Buchanan, 'Approaches to Catholic Religious Education in Australia: a brief history' in *Cornerstones of Catholic Secondary Education: Principles and Practice of the New Evangelization*, eds. Kathleen Engebretson, Marian de Souza, Richard Rymarz, Michael Buchanan (Terrigal, NSW, Australia: David Barlow Publishing, 2008), 1-18; and Michael T Buchanan & Kathleen Engebretson, 'Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Religious Education', in *Cornerstones,* 79-92.

[14] RECD 6. Taken from the RECD of 1996.

[15] Philip Robinson, 'Finding purpose in religious education', *The Tablet*, 6 May 2017, S3, https://www.thetablet.co.uk/supplements/13/9892/finding-purpose-in-religious-education accessed on 02 September 2019. For the revision of the RECD see http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/component/k2/item/1003664-re accessed on 02 September 2019.

[16] Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education*, 75-76.

[17] Ibid., 81.

[18] Ibid., 85.

schools that [she] studied all had a cognitively rich, intellectually challenging RE curriculum which was supported by … faith formation activities" outside of the classroom.[19]

The new approach, developed in this thesis, focuses not on the "Catholic theological tradition" or "Roman Catholic beliefs and values" but the Christian message. The strength of this term is that it helps to maintain a focus on Christ and it suggests that, as a message, a response is invited. At the same time, this message must not be separated from the Church and its beliefs and values, or the Catholic theological tradition, for it is through the Church that we receive the Christian message. Complementary to this different focus is the necessity to relate the message to experience. When this link is made, encouragement of the search for meaning and an openness to faith development are not "incidental" but central to the purpose of the subject. The argument is that understanding the relationship between content (the Christian message) or the cognitive, and experience or the affective, supports the academic nature of the subject because it is an essential element of understanding religion.[20] In relating the Christian message to experience, the new approach does not prescribe in advance what the experience ought to be in an idealised way but tries to relate the message to what is called "lived reality". It is important, however, to emphasise that in making a distinction between the Christian message and the "Catholic theological tradition" or "Roman Catholic beliefs and values" it is not a separation. The Christian message must be understood through the Catholic tradition and though Catholic beliefs.

1.3.2. The wider context of RCRE and RE

The approach argued for in this thesis may be different to the RECD and TIOF but that does not make it new. Thomas Groome, from the USA, uses David Tracy to develop ways of approaching RCRE. His shared praxis approach is rooted in experience;[21] and his aim is

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[19] Kathleen Engebretson, *Catholic Schools and the Future of the Church* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 67.

[20] It shares this emphasis with the phenomenological approach to religious education. John Marvell sums up the aim of this approach: "the central aim of religious education should be to enable the learner to understand, not only cognitively but also affectively, that which is central to religion: the essence of the experience of revelation and response, as known by a religious person". John Marvell, 'Phenomenology and the Future of Religious Education', in *New Directions in Religious Education*, ed. John Hull (Lewes, Sussex: Falmer Press, 1982), 69-76. For an example of integrating the cognitive and the affective in Jewish religious education see Laurence Scheindlin, 'Integrating Cognition and Emotion: Yirat Shamayim and the Taxonomies', *Journal of Jewish Education*, 74:3 (2008), 343-363, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15244110802418344 accessed on 02 September 2019.

[21] Thomas H Groome, *Sharing Faith: a comprehensive approach to religious education and pastoral ministry, way of shared praxis* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 215-248.

to bring "life to faith and faith to life".[22] Marian de Souza, in reviewing Groome's shared praxis approach, acknowledges its strengths but makes the important point that it is best suited to voluntary committed groups and is not good for a large, compulsory, mixed classroom where the audience is often "captive and reluctant".[23] The approach developed in this thesis has much in common with Groome's method and purpose but tries to take into account the reality of the classroom and the significance of current social and ecclesial conditions.

A more recent contribution to RCRE is the work of Lieven Boeve in Flanders. He argues for the "Catholic dialogue school" and RCRE as bringing "young people to a reflexive identity formation, taking into account religious plurality and in engaging in dialogue with the Christian tradition".[24] Reflexive in this context describes both the recognition of difference and plurality, and the change that comes through this recognition.[25] Graham Rossiter from Australia also writes about RCRE helping "young people's identity formation".[26] This approach takes seriously both the Christian tradition and the experience of the young person. In doing so, its emphasis on plurality and diversity is realistic but its focus on identity formation is problematic. This is a complex area and a helpful note of caution about any attempt to influence identity formation in young people is sounded by the psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson:

> The evidence in young lives of the search for something and somebody to be true to can we seen in a variety of pursuits … It is often in a bewildering combination of shifting devotion and sudden perversity …This search is easily misunderstood, and is often dimly perceived by the individual himself, because youth, always set to grasp both diversity in principle and principle in diversity, must often test extremes before settling on a considered course.[27]

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[22] Groome, *Will there be faith?*, 111-112.
[23] Marian De Souza, 'Shared Christian Praxis' in Engebretson et al, *Cornerstones*, 109.
[24] Lieven Boeve, *Theology at the Crossroads of University, Church and Society: Dialogue, Difference & Catholic Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 203. See also, Lieven Boeve, 'New Thinking on Catholic education fifty years after Vatican II', in *Vatican II and New Thinking About Catholic Education: The impact and legacy of Gravissimum Educationis*, ed. Sean Whittle (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 55-71; Lieven Boeve, 'Faith in dialogue: the Christian voice in the Catholic dialogue school', *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 11:1 (2019), 37-50, https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2018.1561132 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[25] Boeve, *Theology at the Crossroads*,187.
[26] Graham Rossiter, 'What sort of school religious education is needed? And why is it so important today?', in *Does Religious Education Matter?*, ed. Mary Shanahan (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 29. See also, Edward Wright, 'Nurturing identity formation in adolescence through narrative learning: a dialogue between the pedagogies of media literacy and religious education', *British Journal of Religious Education*, (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2018.1484696 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[27] Erik H Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 235-236.

The approach in this thesis makes no reference to forming identities and understands this task as outside the remit of a classroom teacher. What young people learn inside and outside of school may well help to form their identity and teachers will want to influence the behaviour and attitude of pupils. Their primary concern is, however, the learning that takes place in the classroom and through the curriculum.

Other commentators on RCRE refer to the importance of inter-religious dialogue. For instance, Dermot Lane argues that "[i]n the light of the teaching of *Nostra Aetate* and the post-conciliar period, … inter-religious dialogue is not some kind of optional extra … [but] is an essential element within Catholic religious education today".[28] Groome also acknowledges the reality of diversity and the need for education in one's own faith tradition and for "interreligious understanding and respect".[29] Kathleen Engebretson, from Australia, makes a good case for interfaith education (her term) which includes knowledge of one's own tradition and that of others.[30] She provides helpful suggestions on how to teach other religions and some of the skills that are needed to do so.[31] More recently others have used dialogue as a model for classroom practice in RE.[32] In a Catholic context in Ireland, Niall Coll stresses the "importance of dialogue and collaboration and proposes that religious education in Catholic schools … needs to engage more with this theological resource in order to promote mutual understanding and collaboration".[33]

The approach argued for in this thesis is an addition to this growing body of literature. It contributes to the discussion of the implications of dialogue for classroom practice, and for the need to promote mutual understanding and collaboration between religions. The approach goes, however, in a different direction and shows how the theology of religions, inter-religious dialogue and other resources of the Catholic theological tradition could and

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[28] Dermot A Lane, 'Nostra Aetate and Religious Education' in *Exploring Catholic Religious Education in an Intercultural Europe*, eds. Patricia Kieran & Anne Hession (Dublin: Veritas, 2008), 93.
[29] Groome, *Will there be faith?*, 11.
[30] Kathleen Engebretson, 'Interfaith Education in the Christian School', in *Teaching Religion, Teaching Truth*, 86. See also Kathleen Engebretson, *In Your Shoes: Inter-Faith education for Australian Schools and Universities* (Ballan, Australia: Connor Court Publications, 2009).
[31] Engebretson, 'Interfaith Education', 87-88.
[32] Mike Castelli, 'Dialogic skills for religious education', in *Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education,* 10:1 (2015), special issue Religion, Conflict and Education, eds. Stephen McKinney and Federico Zannoni, 151-167, doi:https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/4693 accessed on 02 September 2019. Antony Luby, 'Dialogic skills in RE: recontextualising the dialogue school', in *Journal of Religious Education* (2019), https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-019-00079-1 accessed on 02 September 2019. Linda Vikdahl & Geir Skeie, 'Possibilities and limitations of religion-related dialog in schools: Conclusion and discussion of findings from the ReDi project', in *Religion and Education*, 46: 1 (2019), 115-129, https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2019.1577712 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[33] Niall Coll, 'Interreligious education and the contemporary school: contexts, challenges and theologies: an Irish perspective", in *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 111: 2 (2019), 247, https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2019.1641055 accessed on 02 September 2019.

should be used to shape and structure how the Christian message is taught. The approach uses these resources to help young people know and understand the Christian message in the context of diversity and plurality, and encourages them to draw meaning from the message. It does so in a way that is educationally appropriate for all, regardless of religious affiliation. The chapters that follow will make the case for the validity and value of this approach.

PART ONE:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of current Church guidance on Catholic religious education?

The guidance of the universal Church on Catholic religious education (RCRE) sets out general principles which Bishops are asked to implement in the context of their local Church. The guidance is explicit that RCRE cannot be taught in "the same way everywhere" because of the extremely diverse situation of Catholic schools across the world.[1] In part one of this thesis, the universal guidance and the local guidance for England and Wales, and Scotland, are evaluated. The analysis begins with the guidance of the universal Church and identifies, in chapter two, its key principles and its weaknesses or issues that require clarification. Explicit in the guidance is the need to carry out an analysis of social and ecclesial conditions before a local programme of RCRE is produced. In chapter three, such an analysis for England and Wales, and Scotland is carried out. This analysis, together with the guidance of the universal Church, is used to draw up criteria to evaluate, in chapter four, the RCRE guidance for England and Wales, and Scotland. From this evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the local guidance, the argument is made that a new approach to RCRE is needed that implements the principles of Church guidance and is, at the same time, appropriate for current conditions.

[1] Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (2014), Part III, 1h, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20140407_educare-oggi-e-domani_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth ETT.

2. Chapter Two: An analysis of the guidance of the universal Church on Catholic religious education

2.1. Introduction

The focus of this chapter is not Catholic education or the Catholic school or the religious life of the Catholic school but classroom religious education. This distinction is important but it is not a separation, for classroom religious education is supported by the vision of Catholic education and how that vision is lived out in the school. In broad terms, this chapter addresses the following question: what are the key principles of RCRE? The purpose of the question is to draw out the ideas that should guide how the subject is realised in Catholic schools.[1] To answer this, four further questions are raised:

1) Is RCRE an academic subject, similar to other subjects in the school curriculum?
2) What is the subject content of RCRE?
3) What is the source of the subject content of RCRE?
4) Given the diverse circumstances of the Church across the world, what are the implications of this diversity for RCRE?

2.2. The documents of the universal Church that will be used to analyse Church guidance on Catholic religious education

The starting point for this analysis is *Gravissimum educationis* (1965), the Vatican II Declaration on Christian Education.[2] It is a good starting point for two reasons. First, emanating as it does from an ecumenical council of the Church it is, in ecclesial terms, the most authoritative statement on Catholic education. Second, it forms a helpful bridge between subsequent documents and *Divini illius magistri* (1929), an encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI on Christian education.[3] Subsequent to Vatican II, further documents, relevant to RCRE, have been issued by the Church. Four of these documents,

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[1] For a review of Church guidance on RCRE see Mario D'Souza, 'The Progression of Religious Education Since the Second Vatican Council as Seen Through Some Church Documents', in *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education*, eds. Michael T Buchanan & Adrian-Mario Gellel (Springer: Dordrecht, 2015), 9-21; and for a broader perspective see David Hall, William Sultmann, Geraldine Townend, 'Constants in context: an exploration of conciliar and post-conciliar documents on the Catholic school' in *Journal of Religious Education* 67:1 (2019), 17-39, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-019-00074-6 accessed on 02 September 2019.

[2] Vatican II, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis* (1965), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth GE.

[3] Pope Pius XI, encyclical letter, *Divini illius magistri* (1929), 58, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

supplemented by an *Address* from Pope Benedict XVI, are the main sources for this chapter and each will be introduced prior to further analysis. These sources are:

Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: guidelines for reflection and renewal* (1988);[4]
Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997); [5]
Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to Catholic religion teachers,* 25 April 2009;[6]
Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education* (2009);[7]
Congregation for Catholic Education*, Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (2014).

In addition, the following six documents will be used to clarify and support the arguments presented in this chapter:

Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971);[8]
Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic Sch*ool (1977);[9]
Pope John Paul II, apostolic exhortation, *Catechesi tradendae* (1979);[10]
Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics: Witnesses to Faith* (1982);[11]

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[4] Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: guidelines for reflection and renewal* (1988), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19880407_catholic-school_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth RDE.
[5] Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth GDC.
[6] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to Catholic religion teachers,* 25 April 2009, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090425_insegnanti-religione.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[7] Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education* (2009), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20090505_circ-insegn-relig_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth CL.
[8] Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_11041971_gcat_en.html 02 September 2019. Henceforth GCD.
[9] Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic Sch*ool (1977), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth CS
[10] Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi tradendae* (1979), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth CT.
[11] Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html 02 September 2019. Henceforth LC.

Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools. A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (2007);[12]
Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilisation of Love* (2013).[13]

2.2.1. Gravissimum educationis (1965)

Despite its ecclesial authority, *Gravissimum educationis* has had a mixed reception. It has been argued that it says little that is new and has an unduly optimistic anthropology.[14] The Declaration does, however, articulate two important ideas relevant to this thesis. First, that all education should aim to form people for their own good, their ultimate end, and for the good of society of which they are members.[15] Related to this, Catholic education seeks to help Catholic young people to develop a living faith, and to promote for them and all others in the school "the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human".[16] In carrying out this function it serves the mission of the Church.[17] Second, dialogue is an important element of education. This idea is explained by Johannes Pohlscheider in his commentary on the Declaration, written shortly after its promulgation.[18] According to Pohlscheider, article eight of the Declaration is underpinned by the understanding of how the Holy Spirit reveals himself in dialogue with men and women. This provides a model for a dialogue within school between teachers and between teachers and pupils.[19] He continues: "In this dialogue the pupil, as a partner in the conversation, must be taken seriously according to his phase of

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[12] Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (2007), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth ETCS.
[13] Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (2013) http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20131028_dialogo-interculturale_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth EIDC.
[14] Gerald Grace's summary of the weaknesses of *Gravissimum educationis* includes Joseph Ratzinger's comment about the declaration being "a rather weak document". Gerald Grace, 'Vatican II and new thinking about Catholic education: Aggiornamento thinking and principles into practice', in *Vatican II and New Thinking About Catholic Education: The impact and legacy of Gravissimum Educationis,* ed. Sean Whittle (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017) 13. See also, Don J Briel, 'The Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis*', in *Renewal within Tradition*, eds. Matthew L Lamb & Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 383.
[15] GE 1. For a similar focus on humanity, see Pope Pius XI, encyclical letter, *Divini illius magistri* (1929), 58.
[16] GE 3. See also CS 9, ETT Intro. 1.1 (a & b).
[17] GE 2, 3, 4, 7, 8.
[18] Johannes Pohlscheider, 'Declaration on Christian Education', in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Vol. IV*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 1-48. Bishop Pohlscheider was a member of the Declaration's drafting committee.
[19] Ibid., 33.

development".[20] This pedagogic dialogue must not be a "leading by the nose" but a "*participatio actuosa*".[21] In carrying out this dialogue, Pohlscheider notes the importance of recognising the influence of life outside of school on young people.[22] This idea, that young people do not come to school as a *tabula rasa*, and how this relates to dialogue will be developed further. For whilst the Declaration's understanding of dialogue is limited, it is wholly consistent with Vatican II's desire to engage with the world.[23]

2.2.2. The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1988)

Gravissimum educationis does not go into any detail about RCRE and it is not until the publication of *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: guidelines for reflection and renewal* (1988), from the Congregation for Catholic Education, that there is any analysis of the subject. *The Religious Dimension of Education* articulates the idea that the relationship between catechesis and RCRE is one of both distinction and complementarity.[24] Whilst the relationship between the two will be discussed later, the document explains that the aim of religious education is knowledge and that "while it uses the same elements of the Gospel message [as catechesis], it tries to convey a sense of the nature of Christianity, and of how Christians are trying to live their lives".[25] It is a "scholastic discipline" which should have the same rigour and demands as other disciplines.[26] When considering the nature of the knowledge in RCRE, it states that whilst "young people bring with them into the classroom what they see and hear in the world around them … [t]he school curriculum as such does not take these attitudes into account".[27] It then immediately goes on to state that the teacher must "accept the students as they are" and invite them to "seek and discover together the message of the Gospel".[28] It concludes its guidance on RCRE by noting "that it is not easy to develop a course … which will present the Christian faith systematically and in a way suited to the young people of today".[29]

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[20] Ibid., 33.
[21] Ibid., 33-34.
[22] Ibid., 25. See footnote 17.
[23] John W O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 270.
[24] RDE 68. See also LC 56; GDC 73; CL 17; EICD 74.
[25] RDE 69.
[26] RDE 69-70. See also GDC 73; CL 18.
[27] RDE 71.
[28] RDE 71.
[29] RDE 73. Anyone who has tried to develop a course of RCRE would agree.

The guidance sets out, in two sections, a way of understanding and presenting the nature of Christianity, and Christian life. The former begins with Christ and emphasises the place of scripture, the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the human person, the history of salvation which includes the Church, the sacraments, the sacramental journey, the last things and the creed.[30] The focus of its account of Christian life is ethics, prayer, free assent, the dignity of the human person including sexuality, Christian love, war and hatred, the family and ethics founded on faith. It concludes by noting the need to balance optimism with the reality of sin.[31]

2.2.3. General Directory for Catechesis (1997)

The Religious Dimension of Education (1988) was published before the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (first published in 1992), (henceforth the *Catechism*).[32] Another document, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), from the Congregation for the Clergy, also comments on RCRE, both how it should be taught and its content, but does so in light of the *Catechism*. Given the importance of the latter, and its subsequent impact on programmes of RCRE, this makes the *General Directory for Catechesis* (henceforth the *Directory*) particularly interesting.

The main focus of the *Directory* is catechesis and not RCRE, and it emanates from the Congregation for the Clergy and not the Congregation for Catholic Education. That said, it considers RCRE and contrasts and compares it with catechesis.[33] The *Directory* re-states the earlier guidance that RCRE should be a "scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines".[34] It notes "the diverse scholastic contexts" in which Catholic schools operate and, as a result of these differences, "it is not possible to reduce the various forms" of RCRE to a single model.[35] In the same section it states that students "have the right to learn with truth and certainty the religion to which they belong. This right to know Christ, and the salvific message proclaimed by Him".[36] A recurring theme in the *Directory* is the importance of the lived nature of faith and the need to relate it to experience: "[e]very dimension of the faith, like the faith itself …, must be

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[30] RDE 74-81.
[31] RDE 82-95.
[32] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994). First published in English in 1994. Henceforth CCC.
[33] GDC 73. Referenced to RDE 68.
[34] GDC 73.
[35] GDC 74. See also ETT III (1h).
[36] GDC 74. Taken directly from an allocution by Pope John Paul II, 15 April 1991.

rooted in human experience and not remain a mere adjunct to the human person".[37] The document makes a distinction between *fides qua* and *fides quae* and a short explanation of these terms will draw attention to an important argument both in the *Directory* and in this thesis. The two terms are used to describe the relationship between a Christian's personal faith (experience) and the content of faith (knowledge). *Fides qua* refers to personal faith, the faith by which one believes, and *fides quae* to the content of faith, the faith which one believes. The origin of the terms is in St Augustine: "But those things that are believed are one thing, and the faith by which they are believed is another".[38] Later, Augustine makes the point that it is not enough to commit to memory "the words of this faith" or even to understand them. What is needed is that we love them.[39] The International Theological Commission's statement, *Sensus Fidei* (2014), makes a similar point:

> Faith is both an act of belief or trust and also that which is believed or confessed, *fides qua* and *fides quae*, respectively. Both aspects work together inseparably, since trust is adhesion to a message with intelligible content, and confession cannot be reduced to mere lip service, it must come from the heart.[40]

The *Directory* notes that "[b]oth aspects, by their very nature, cannot be separated … [but] [f]or methodological purposes … they can be regarded separately".[41] It then outlines, in part two, the Gospel message (*fides quae*) and how it should be presented.[42]

In explaining how the Gospel message should be presented, the *Directory* states that "the fundamental task … is to present Christ and everything in relation to him".[43] It unites Christology and anthropology by stressing that the two must be held together, that any announcement of the Gospel must be meaningful for the human person.[44] It concludes the chapter with an interesting reflection on the order for presentation of the message:

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[37] GDC 87.
[38] Augustine, *On the Trinity Books 8-15*, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy*, ed. Gareth B. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Book 13, Ch2, 5.
[39] Ibid., Book 13, Ch 20.
[40] International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei* (2014), 10. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[41] GDC 92. Referenced to the GCD 36a. Lieven Boeve makes the case for holding them together from a theological point of view though he acknowledges that the distinction is possible before proceeding to show how together they can inform the identity of what he calls the Catholic dialogue school. Boeve, 'Faith in dialogue', 42. This is easier said than done.
[42] GDC 119-136.
[43] GDC 98.
[44] GDC 116-117.

> It is possible to begin with God so as to arrive at Christ, and vice versa. Equally, it is possible to start with man and come to God, and conversely. The selection of a particular order for presenting the message is conditioned by circumstances … Hence derives the need *to investigate correctly* in order to find those means which best respond to different situations.[45]

The next chapter in the *Directory* (Part two, Chapter two) is entitled: "*This is our faith, this is the faith of the Church*". Here it stresses the importance of the *Catechism* as a reference for "preparing local catechisms".[46] It explains that the "axis" of the *Catechism* is "Jesus Christ [and,] [c]entred on him, it is oriented in two directions: towards God and towards the human person".[47]

When comparing the *Directory* with *The Religious Dimension of Education*, it is evident that they have a shared vision for RCRE. It is a scholastic discipline; its purpose is to teach about the Christian message and Christian life. Both documents stress Christ as the centre of the message, around which everything else should be organised.[48] What is present in the first document but emphasised much more in the second is the importance of the relationship between doctrine and human experience. This is very apparent in its emphasis on the need to adapt how the Christian message is presented in the light of local circumstances. The statement in *The Religious Dimension of Education* that knowledge does not change or does not need to be adapted is not repeated in any subsequent guidance. In fact, it is the *Catechism* which encourages the *Directory* to stress the need for adaptation: "By design, this Catechism does not set out to provide the adaptation of doctrinal presentation and catechetical methods required by differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition".[49] This statement in the *Catechism* and its re-emphasis in the *Directory* is one of the key principles behind the new approach to RCRE developed in this thesis. Chapter three, that follows, investigates current social and ecclesial conditions in order to better relate doctrine and human experience. Sadly, the *Directory* appears to be much neglected as a source of guidance for RCRE, possibly

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[45] GDC 118. See also CT 22. My italics. Cardinal Ratzinger explains that the authors of the *Catechism* discussed at length whether it should begin inductively or deductively. After much reflection, it was decided that the situation of men and women across the world varied far too much and that they should therefore begin with the faith itself. But, as he notes, whilst it is set out deductively, it starts inductively, with human experience. Joseph Ratzinger, 'Literary Genus, Intended Readership & the Method of the Catechism', in *Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, eds. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger & Christoph Schönborn (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 20-21.
[46] GDC 121.
[47] GDC 123.
[48] The same focus is identified in GCD 16.
[49] CCC 24.

because its main focus is catechesis and it originates from the Congregation for the Clergy. In this chapter, the case is made for importance and value when planning programmes of RCRE.

More recent statements that will be used in this analysis of Church guidance include Pope Benedict XVI's *Address to Catholic Religion Teachers* (2009); the *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education* (2009), from the Congregation for Catholic Education; and from the same Congregation, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (2014).

2.2.4. Pope Benedict XVI's Address to Catholic Religion Teachers (2009) and the Circular Letter on Religious Education (2009)

In stressing the importance of the subject, as an academic subject, Pope Benedict in his *Address* explains how "the religious dimension … is an integral part of the person" and that RCRE puts humanity, created in the image of God, at the centre of its work.[50] The content of the subject is "knowledge about Christianity's identity and Christian life";[51] and it should help young people discover goodness, grow in responsibility, seek comparisons and refine their critical sense. These ideas are repeated in the *Circular Letter* which is in effect a re-statement of past guidance supplemented by these ideas from Pope Benedict. What is interesting is that two statements of the Pope, both of which will feature again in this thesis, are not repeated in the *Circular Letter*:

1) that "knowledge of the Bible is an essential element of the curriculum for teaching the Catholic religion";
2) that "[t]here is a connection between the scholastic teaching of religion and the existential deepening of faith".[52]

The *Circular Letter* is concerned about a perceived danger of a state takeover of RE and a diminution of the "educational aims that parents and the Church intend for the formation of young people".[53] At the same time, it acknowledges that in "Catholic schools, as everywhere else, the religious freedom of non-Catholic pupils must be respected".[54] Other than repeating what already appears in Pope Benedict's *Address*, it reprises previous guidance on how RCRE fits into the "evangelising mission of the Church", and that it is

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[50] Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009). The *Address* has eight unnumbered paragraphs.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] CL introduction.
[54] CL 16.

"different from, and complementary to … catechesis".[55] It concludes its short section on RCRE by restating the importance of the academic status of the subject.[56] In other words, the importance of the *Circular Letter* lies not in the new ideas it brings but in its affirmation of previous guidance.

2.2.5. Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (2014)

Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (2014), from the Congregation for Catholic Education, considers Catholic education, as a whole, in the context of its time and in doing so reflects on the role of RCRE.[57] It tries to take account of the more recent idea that how a student learns is as important as what they learn.[58] At the same time, it re-affirms the significance of the transmission of knowledge but continues by making another statement, "[e]ducation is not just knowledge, but also experience".[59] None of these ideas are developed in a coherent way but the document does have three interesting things to say about RCRE. First, that "[r]eligion courses require an in-depth knowledge of young people's real needs";[60] second, that "the difference between "knowing" and "believing" must be respected";[61] and third, that when considering and questioning their identity, Catholic schools should not support "indifference, nor … adopt a kind of Christian fundamentalism, nor … define Catholic schools as schools that support 'generic' values".[62]

2.2.6. The nature and authority of the documents on education and RCRE

Having introduced the documents that will be used to analyse Church guidance, and before moving on to the analysis itself, the nature and authority of the documents on education and RCRE need to be considered. The documents set out broad principles and make clear that these principles should be applied by the local Church in the very varied social, ecclesial, economic and legal conditions in which it operates.[63] This is appropriate not just in terms of the organisation of education but also how the Church understands the authority of Bishops.

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[55] CL 17.
[56] CL 18.
[57] ETT, Introduction 1.1. Part III 1(h) considers the challenge of religious formation for young people.
[58] Ibid., Part II 3.
[59] Ibid., Part III.
[60] Ibid., Part III, 1(h).
[61] Ibid., Part III, 1(h).
[62] Ibid., Part III, 1(i) on Specific Challenges for Multireligious and Multicultural Societies.
[63] GE 9. This is referenced by the more recent statement: ETT, Introduction 1.1. See also ETT Part III 1(g).

In some recent studies of RCRE it has become common for Church documents on education to be described as magisterial.[64] For example, Leonard Franchi uses the term when referring to *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) even though the document describes itself as *guidelines* for reflection and renewal.[65] Ros Stuart-Buttle refers to the *Circular Letter* as a magisterial document and in the same paragraph of "the responsibility for religious education [being] grounded in authoritative Church documents and shaped by local episcopal conferences".[66] Magisterial authority is a complex matter but, in general, it is exercised by the Bishop of Rome and the College of Bishops, either individually or in groups.[67] A document issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education is not an exercise of magisterial authority though Bishops should attend to its guidance. With regard to RCRE, *The Code of Canon Law* states that it is "for the Episcopal Conference to issue general norms … and for diocesan Bishops to regulate and watch over it".[68] In issuing these general norms, Bishops will want to ensure that teaching is "based on the principles of [C]atholic doctrine".[69] This distinction between Catholic doctrine, which is universal, and how RCRE is taught, which should be decided locally, is also found in the *Directory.*[70] As a result, in this thesis, use of the term Church teaching refers to Catholic doctrine only and Church guidance is used for RCRE and, later in the thesis, in relation to inter-religious dialogue.

2.3. What are the key principles of Catholic religious education?

In answering this question, this section addresses in sequential order the four questions outlined at the start of the chapter:

Is RCRE an academic subject, similar to other subjects in the school curriculum?

What is the subject content of RCRE?

What are the sources of the subject content of RCRE?

Given the diverse circumstances of the Church across the world, what are the implications of this diversity for RCRE?

After each question, the key principles that have emerged and any issues or questions that require clarification are identified. The principles will form the basis of the new approach

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[64] The authority of Church teaching is a complex matter outside of the scope of this thesis. For further discussion see Richard G Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium of the Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 101-102.

[65] Leonard Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition* (London: Scepter, 2016), 116. My italics.

[66] Ros Stuart-Buttle, 'Does Religious Education Matter? What do teachers say?', in *Does Religious Education Matter?*, 52.

[67] *Code of Canon Law*, in English (London: Collins, 1983), Can. 756.

[68] Ibid., Can. 804 § 1.

[69] Ibid., Can. 803 § 2.

[70] GDC 10. Referenced to GCD, Introduction.

to RCRE developed in chapters seven and eight (part three), and the issues that require clarification will be addressed in chapters three, five and six.

2.3.1. Is RCRE an academic subject, similar to other subjects in the school curriculum?

The simple answer to the question is yes! A more developed answer is helpful, however, because it establishes a basis for understanding the nature of RCRE as an academic subject. A good starting point is to appreciate what the Church means by education. *Gravissimum educationis* makes clear that "true education aims at the formation of the human person".[71] A subsequent document, *The Catholic Sch*ool (1977), from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, develops this further and introduces the term integral formation.[72] This idea becomes a *leitmotif* for understanding the purpose of the Catholic school in *Lay Catholics: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), also from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education.[73] In *Lay Catholics*, religious education in all schools, not just Catholic schools, is appropriate "for the purpose of the school is human formation in all of its fundamental dimensions, and the religious dimension is an integral part of this formation".[74] Later documents explain that RCRE is an academic subject which should have the same rigour and demands as other disciplines; an idea which is repeated in all recent statements on RCRE.[75] None of the documents indicate, however, what academic rigour looks like when it is applied to RCRE. *The Catholic School* makes a general statement that all schools must stimulate pupils to exercise their intelligence and consider the meaning of their experiences, and not offer "pre-cast conclusions".[76] Other documents make passing comments on the need for "a calm and peaceful critical spirit";[77] refining a "critical sense";[78] and the importance of "critical thinking".[79] In no Church document will you find any elaboration of the skills inherent in RCRE as an academic subject. Chapters

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[71] GE 1
[72] CS 26.
[73] LC 17. See also LC 3, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 28, 81. In light of more recent teaching, integral human formation could be understood within the broader context of integral human development. This term seeks to hold together ecology, culture, technology and the economic and social realities of daily life. A human being is considered to be "ordered to his or her integral development". Pope Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato sí'* (2015), 157, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth LS. See LS 138-162.
[74] LC 56. See also, Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009).
[75] RDE 69-70, GDC 73, CL 18.
[76] CS 27. See 26-32.
[77] LC 30.
[78] Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009), repeated in the CL 17.
[79] ETT Part III 1(e).

five and six will consider what academic rigour looks like including the issue that, at an appropriate age, young people will need to engage critically with the content of RCRE.[80]

Church guidance is also explicit that RCRE must be appropriate for all young people who attend Catholic schools, regardless of their religious affiliation or lack of affiliation. This is wholly consistent with it being an academic subject and the need to respect the difference between "knowing" and "believing".[81] Whilst the intention of this statement is clear, what it means to "know" is never considered. If RCRE is about "knowing" rather than "believing", is it possible, as an academic subject, for it to be open to faith development and the search for meaning? The possibility is not mentioned in the *Circular Letter* though it is found in Pope Benedict's *Address*.[82] The earlier *Religious Dimension of Education* states that RCRE "cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student".[83] How it might do so is addressed briefly in the *Directory* which outlines ways in which Catholics and non-Catholics might respond to RCRE.[84] In doing so, it proposes a connection between academic learning, and a deepening of faith and a search for meaning. The paragraph distinguishes between believers, those who are searching, and non-believers. For "students who are believers", RCRE can help them relate the Christian message "to the great existential concerns common to all religions and to every human being"; for those who are "searching" or have religious doubts" it should help them to discover what faith in Christ is, what response the Church offers to their questions, and give them the "opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply"; for those who are non-believers "it assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel".[85] This is an interesting series of statements which requires further analysis.

First, its assumptions about young people can be challenged as it divides them into three discrete categories when a young person's identity is often fluid and could include faith, doubt and lack of faith.[86] Second, there is no reason why the "great existential concerns" common to all, examining one's own choices more deeply, discovering what faith in Christ means, and what the Church teaches could not apply to all three groups of young people.

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[80] Stephen McKinney argues that Catholic schools "should allow young people to critically engage with their faith at an appropriate age". Stephen McKinney, 'Catholic Education', in *Education in a Catholic Perspective*, eds. Stephen McKinney & John Sullivan (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 19.
[81] ETT Part III 1(h).
[82] Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009): "There is a connection between the scholastic teaching of religion and the existential deepening of faith".
[83] RDE 69.
[84] GDC 75.
[85] GDC 75.
[86] Erikson's reflection on identity and young people in chapter one supports this challenge. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 235-236.

Third, what "a missionary proclamation of the Gospel" means needs to be considered. As an academic subject it cannot mean that RCRE is proclamation or catechesis. It could mean that it is open to the possibility of, or is oriented to, encouraging a young person on a journey or towards a journey of Christian faith. This list suggests possibilities, not drawn out in the *Directory* or any other guidance, as to how RCRE, as an academic subject, could also deepen faith and encourage a search for meaning.[87]

Key principle:

1) RCRE contributes to the integral formation of young people. As an academic subject, which should be distinguished from catechesis, it must be educationally appropriate for all young people regardless of their religious affiliation. At the same time, it can be open to faith development and the search for meaning.

Questions for clarification:

1) What does academic rigour look like in RCRE?
2) How can RCRE, as an academic subject that is educationally appropriate for all young people regardless of religious affiliation, be open to faith development and a search for meaning?

2.3.2. What is the subject content of RCRE?

What is the focus and best descriptor of the content of the academic subject, RCRE? It is a simple question but Church guidance does not have one normative answer. For instance, here are three alternative summary statements of the content of RCRE:

"a sense of the nature of Christianity, and of how Christians are trying to live their lives";[88]
"the fundamental task … is to present Christ and everything in relation to him";[89]
"knowledge about Christianity's identity and Christian life".[90]

Whilst there is strong resemblance between these statements, especially the first and the third, the absence of an agreed focus is compounded when local guidance is examined. In chapter four, two programmes of RCRE, *This is Our Faith* (2011) (TIOF) for Scotland, and the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (2012) (RECD) for England and Wales, are scrutinised in some detail. For the moment, this is how they summarise the content of RCRE:

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[87] For further comment on this matter in Church guidance see LC 32-33; EIDC 47; ETT Part III.
[88] RDE 69.
[89] GDC 98.
[90] Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009). Repeated in CL 17.

"the main teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith";[91]
"revelation, the Church, celebration, and life in Christ".[92]

As will be demonstrated later, and as would be expected from the above descriptors of content in the two local programmes, the content is dominated by the Church and its vision of the ideal Christian life. In contrast, the *Directory* sets out an alternative understanding for the content of RCRE in proposing Christ as the focus. In making its case, it uses the previously mentioned statement by Pope John Paul II: students "have the right to learn with truth and certainty the religion to which they belong. This right to know Christ, and the salvific message proclaimed by Him".[93] The strength of this statement is its focus on Christ. To learn about Catholic Christianity is to learn about Christ. The difficulty is its use of the term "salvific message" which appears to be catechetical and not educational. In advocating a focus on Christ, this statement and the *Directory* appear to take membership of the Church for granted. At this point, some clarification of the relationship between catechesis and RCRE is helpful.

Catechesis is a form of the proclamation of Christ that takes place *within* the Christian community. It can be distinguished from evangelisation as you can evangelise a non-believer but, as Kevin Nichols explains, "[y]ou cannot catechise a non-believer".[94] Jacques Audinet points out that the word of God determines not only the content of catechesis but also its form. In terms of content, "the mystery of Jesus Christ must be central".[95] In terms of form, it is "good news" and "must preserve the dynamic and joyful character which was intrinsic to the original message of salvation".[96] This "good news" should penetrate the heart and mind of the believer and is a lifelong journey, not limited to a particular period in the life of a Christian.

In contrast, RCRE takes place during a particular period of life, school years;[97] in a particular place, school as opposed to the wider Christian community; [98] and, as understood

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[91] TIOF 22.
[92] RECD 10.
[93] GDC 74.
[94] Kevin Nichols, *Guidelines for Religious Education: Cornerstones* (Slough: St Paul's Publications, 1978), 15.
[95] Jacques Audinet, 'Catechesis' in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (London: Burns & Oates, 1977), 175.
[96] Ibid., 176.
[97] RDE 68.
[98] ETCS 12.

in this thesis, even more specifically the classroom. In addition, RCRE makes no assumption about the faith and beliefs of a young person.[99] Whilst Church documents point out that RCRE must be distinguished from catechesis, they note that the two can complement each other as the content is shared and both can encourage growth in knowledge and understanding which, in turn, can encourage faith development.[100] As mentioned earlier, a clear statement of this openness to faith development does not appear in the *Circular Letter* but is found in Pope Benedict's *Address*.

This relationship of both complementarity and distinction has been criticised for lacking clarity. For instance, Ros Stuart-Buttle argues that the articulation of the relationship of catechesis and RCRE "has remained tenuous".[101] She provides an interesting example of this through reference to a teacher's question as to whether RCRE should be "teaching children about the good news about meeting Jesus Christ or enabling them to be religiously educated".[102] The assumption appears to be that one approach is catechetical and the other is educational. That the two might be compatible and that there need not be a contradiction between teaching young people about the good news of meeting Jesus Christ and being religiously educated does not appear to be considered.

Church guidance is clear. RCRE and catechesis are different and must be distinguished. At the same time, they share the same content. The content of catechesis is not based on the Church or Christianity but faith in Christ, though clearly this is related to the Church and Christianity. The developed explanation in the *Directory* (produced by the Congregation for the Clergy) of this shared content and its sharp focus on Christ are ignored in recent documents of the Congregation for Education, such as the *Circular Letter*, and local programmes such as TIOF and the RECD. The *Directory* uses the *Catechism* in making its case for a Christo-centric approach. In a chapter titled, "*This is our faith, this is the faith of the Church*", it describes the "axis" of the *Catechism* as "Jesus Christ [and,] [c]entred on him, … oriented in two directions: towards God and towards the human person".[103]

When this focus on Christ is articulated in RCRE guidance it must ensure that the Jesus of the Gospels is not portrayed as a simply an important person in history and an example of a good person. Whilst both descriptors are true, they do not convey the richness of Christian

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[99] GDC 75.
[100] RDE 68-69; GDC 73-75.
[101] Stuart-Buttle, 'Does Religious Education Matter?', 59.
[102] Ibid., 59.
[103] GDC 123.

faith in Christ. RCRE must present a living faith, that is both rooted in an historical event, and alive and relevant for today. It must be cautious about too much focus on Jesus, the man, and emphasise the Christian understanding of the Triune God;[104] that a Christo-centric focus is also Trinitarian.[105] RCRE must present Christ as relevant for today, as living faith; [106] and it must be both Christo-centric and Trinitarian.

To preserve both a focus on Christ and this sense of living faith, the term Christian message is proposed as the best descriptor of the content of RCRE. This term is used in the *Directory* to describe the content of RCRE instead of the term Gospel message, which it reserves for catechesis.[107] The word Christian keeps the focus on Christ and not the Church, and also suggests a living Christian faith. The term Christian message is open to the understanding of God as Trinity; and the word message suggests an invitation, for a message can invite a response.

Key principle:

2) The primary focus of the content of RCRE is not the Church but Christian faith in Christ. The term Christian message is the best descriptor of this content.

2.3.3. What is the source of the content of RCRE?

The source of the Christian message is the word of God; it is a living source transmitted through both Tradition and Sacred Scripture.[108] Sacred Scripture is "the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit".[109] Through Tradition, the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, keeps alive in its doctrine, life and worship what has been passed on from the Apostles.[110] Whereas with Scripture there is a written text, no text can encapsulate the whole doctrine, life and worship of the Church. In relation to Tradition, the *Catechism* should be understood as "a significant contemporary expression of the living Tradition of the Church and a sure form for teaching the faith".[111] There is a major difference, however, between the status of Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism*. Sacred

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[104] "The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life". CCC 234.
[105] The *Directory* uses the term "trinitarian christocentricity". GDC 99.
[106] The "deposit of faith", which is safeguarded by the Church, is "the living word of God". GDC 125.
[107] For use of the Christian message see GDC 73 & 75. For the Gospel message and catechesis, see GDC 8, 10, 80, 87. Another drawback with the term Gospel message is that it could be understood as referring to the four Gospels only, though the *Directory* clearly does not use it in this way.
[108] CCC 78, 80; CT 27; GDC 94.
[109] GDC 128. Referenced to Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum* (1965), 9, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth DV. See also CCC 81.
[110] CCC 77-78.
[111] GDC 128.

Scripture is "the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit"; the *Catechism* is "an official text of the Church's Magisterium";[112] and as an act of the Magisterium it is at the service of the word of God.[113] The Vatican II Declaration, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (1963), explains that Christ is specially, though not exclusively, present in the Church in the liturgy, in particular in the celebration of Mass, and the eucharist itself. The Declaration continues by explaining that Christ is also present in the priest, in the people and in his word.[114] With regard to the latter, "He is present in His word, since He Himself speaks when the holy scriptures are read in Church".[115] This understanding makes the case that Sacred Scripture should have an important role in the teaching of RCRE. Christoph Schönborn makes a similar point when explaining the underlying themes of the *Catechism*. He notes that "Scripture should not only be at the heart of theology … but also catechesis".[116] He argues that the use of Scripture can help to make Christ alive today. The same argument is applied in this thesis to understanding the Christian message in RCRE.

The *Directory* identifies other 'sources' for the Christian message which derive from the word of God which include "liturgical texts, patristic writings, formulations of the Magisterium, creeds, testimonies of the saints and theological reflections".[117] All these other sources can and should be used in RCRE but what is more important for the subject is getting the balance right between using Scripture and using the *Catechism.* Pope Benedict XVI, in his *Address*, is clear that "knowledge of the Bible is an essential element of the curriculum for teaching the Catholic religion".[118] In the *Directory* use is made of *Dei verbum* to emphasise the fundamental importance of Scripture in the life of the Church and that "the Church desires that … Sacred Scripture should have a pre-eminent position".[119] That means that, in explaining the Christian message in RCRE, Scripture has a very special place.

Key principle:

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[112] GDC 124.
[113] GDC 125.
[114] Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (1963), 7, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth SC.
[115] SC 7.
[116] Christoph Schönborn, 'The Unity of the Church's Tradition in Time and Space, in *Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 50.
[117] GDC 96.
[118] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address,* 2009. See also RDE 74; LC 26; GDC 41, 96, 125-128, 132 for the importance of scripture.
[119] GDC 127. The passage refers to DV 21. See also CCC 101-104.

3) The source of the content of the Christian message is the word of God, expressed in both Sacred Scripture and Tradition. When presenting this content, Scripture should have a pre-eminent position.

2.3.4. Given the diverse circumstances of the Church across the world, what are the implications of this diversity for RCRE?

Any presentation of the Christian message must be faithful to the message as received and handed on by the Church. The term that is frequently used in the *Directory* to describe this need to be faithful is "authentic".[120] Related to this is the implication that the message must not be reduced for fear of rejection or corrupted by imposing burdens it does not demand.[121] To assist in being faithful to the message, the *Catechism* is proposed as a "sure and authentic reference text".[122] At the same time, the *Catechism* uses an important phrase when it refers to the "necessary adaptation" that must be made to take account of "the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition[s] among all those to whom it is addressed".[123] *Gaudium et spes* calls this "accommodated preaching" and emphasises the necessity to "adapt the Gospel to the grasp of all".[124] In order to do this, each diocese or region must "discern the diverse circumstances" in which it works;[125] and prepare an "*analysis of the situation*" before it plans a scheme or programme.[126] For the Christian message must be presented in a "meaningful way" and refer to "the fundamental experiences" of people's lives.[127] Recent Church guidance repeats this guidance and states that "[r]eligion courses require an in-depth knowledge of young people's real needs".[128] In other words, to be faithful and authentic is not simply a matter of ensuring that the theology is orthodox but must include relating the message to human experience. This means that when teaching and learning the Christian message in RCRE, the content of the subject, as an academic subject, must be related to the experience of people and, in particular, young people. If this does not happen then something important is missing. Pope John Paul II in *Catechesi tradendae* explains that understanding Christ and Christianity cannot be isolated from life. Whilst it is wrong to abandon the "serious and orderly study of the message of Christ in the name of a method concentrating on life experience … [t]his revelation is not … isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed

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[120] See GDC 44, 79, 96.
[121] GDC 112.
[122] GDC 121.
[123] CCC 24. Referenced by GDC 133.
[124] GS 44.
[125] GDC 76. See also GDC 31, 76, 110, 124, 133, 135,169, 170, 185, 208, 210.
[126] GDC 279. Italics in text. See also GDC 133.
[127] GDC 133. Referenced to CT 36-45. See also GDC 87.
[128] ETT Part III 1(h)

to it".[129] In *Dives in misericordia* he articulates the fundamental importance of the link between theocentrism and anthropocentrism:

> While the various currents of human thought both in the past and at the present have tended and still tend to separate theocentrism and anthropocentrism, and even to set them in opposition to each other, the Church, following Christ, seeks to link them up in human history, in a deep and organic way. And this is also one of the basic principles, perhaps the most important one, of the teaching of the last Council.[130]

This necessity to hold together the transcendence of God and the intimate relationship between God and humanity is recognised by Joseph Ratzinger in his commentary on *Dei verbum*. He explains the hugely significant shift that took place in the understanding of revelation from Vatican I to Vatican II. He describes the change as moving from the abstract and impersonal to the personal, from the legal to the sacramental, with "revelation necessarily reach[ing] … into the personal centre of man".[131]

Teaching and learning the Christian message in RCRE must be faithful to the message, and it must be related to the experience of young people. If the latter does not happen then no sense of a living message is conveyed. It may be articulated in the most elegant manner but if young people cannot understand it and relate it to their experience then it will remain meaningless. Sadly, the guidance of the universal Church on RCRE does not help teachers of RCRE to do this. The *Directory* acknowledges the difficulty indirectly when it states that *fides qua* and *fides quae* "by their very nature, cannot be separated" but then proceeds to do so for "methodological purposes".[132] Nowhere in any guidance, universal or local, is there a developed analysis of experience.[133] For instance, no distinction is made between what might be called common human experience and the experience of being a young person at a particular time and in a particular place. Given the diverse circumstances in which the Church works it is understandable that universal guidance on RCRE does not reflect on particular experience though, as will be explained, it does exhort local Churches to do so. What is disappointing is that the implications of the prescient and uplifting

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[129] CT 22.
[130] Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980), 1, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[131] Joseph Ratzinger, 'Dei Verbum' in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Vol. III,* ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 171.
[132] GDC 92.
[133] The RECD does make reference to experience and does make an attempt to analyse the situation but does not relate experience/the situation to the content. TIOF makes frequent reference to experience in its learning outcomes but always prescribes what the experience should be. See chapter four for further explanation.

reflection on the condition of men and women, as individuals and as members of society, that is found in *Gaudium et spes* has not, in Church guidance, been translated to RCRE.[134]

From its opening line, "[t]he joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age", *Gaudium et spes* relates the Christian message and the work of the Church to the experience of men and women.[135] This experience includes "the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other";[136] that "persons and societies thirst for a full and free life worthy of man" and yet "the modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, capable of the noblest deeds or the foulest";[137] acknowledgement of the power of the intellect;[138] the importance of conscience;[139] and that "in the face of death … the riddle of human existence grows most acute".[140] This extended reflection on the human experience and the human condition culminates in a beautiful reflection on the mystery of Christ and the mystery of humanity which begins: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light".[141] This passage from *Gaudium at spes* (GS 22) provides a powerful doctrinal basis on which to link the Christian message and life experience. It is central to the approach to RCRE which will be developed in this thesis.

The chapter that follows is "an analysis of the situation" as it pertains to England and Wales, and Scotland. Its intention is to guide the necessary adaptations in light of current social and ecclesial conditions. How the Christian message can be further adapted is considered again in chapter six which examines a Catholic theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue. Adaptations for age and maturity are left to the experience of teachers and their knowledge of the young people that they teach.

Key principles:

4) Any presentation of the Christian message must be faithful to the message as received and handed on by the Church.

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[134] Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes* (1965), 4-32, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth GS.
[135] GS 1.
[136] GS 4.
[137] GS 9.
[138] GS 15.
[139] GS 16.
[140] GS 18.
[141] GS 22.

5) RCRE must capture the living nature of Christian faith which requires that the message is related to human experience. For RCRE this means that it must be related to the experience of young people.
6) To be related to the experience young people, the message and how it is taught must be adapted for differences of age, maturity and social and ecclesial conditions.

Questions for clarification:

3) What is meant by experience?
4) How can the content of RCRE and human experience be related?
5) What are the significant features of current social and ecclesial conditions that should be considered when adapting the Christian message?

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter sets the agenda for the remainder of this thesis. In its analysis of the guidance of the universal Church it has focused on classroom RCRE and identified that its academic nature is central to the Church's understanding of the subject. Religious education (RE) should be part of the "integral formation" of all young people because the religious dimension is integral to the human person. In a Catholic school, RCRE should be distinguished from catechesis and must be appropriate for all young people who attend, regardless of their religious affiliation or lack of one. The academic nature of the subject is clearly articulated in the guidance but what it means to be an academic subject is not. Further work is needed to clarify this, together with how RCRE can be appropriate for all young people who attend Catholic schools and, as an academic subject, be open to encouraging faith development and a search for meaning.

Surprisingly, Church guidance does not have a normative statement of what the focus for the content of RCRE should be. The two principal alternatives are: the Church and its vision of Christian life; or Christ and his message. Whilst acknowledging the relationship between the alternatives, the case was made in this chapter that the focus should be on Christ, and that the most appropriate summary of the content of RCRE is the Christian message. The strength of this term is that it supports both a Christo-centric and Trinitarian focus, and suggests that, as a message, a response is invited.

If the Christian message is the focus for the content of RCRE, what is the source of the message? Church teaching explains that it is the living word of God found in both Sacred

Scripture and Tradition. Different 'sources' can express the Tradition of the Church, which continues to grow and develop, and the *Catechism* is an important contemporary source. At the same time, the teaching is clear that in presenting the Christian message, Sacred Scripture should be pre-eminent.

If the focus for the content of RCRE is the Christian message then unless the message is related to life experience any understanding of it will be deficient. Exploring this relationship does not make it catechesis but good RCRE. The academic nature of the subject requires it because if this does not happen the living nature of the Christian message and its relevance to experience is lost. Church guidance does not, however, explain or provide exemplars as to how to relate the Christian message and experience. In order to relate the Christian message to life experience it is necessary for the message to be adapted for age and maturity, and also for current social and ecclesial conditions. An analysis of these conditions will be carried out in chapter three, and the implications of adaptation will be developed further in subsequent chapters.

This chapter makes the case, indirectly, for the *Directory* to be considered as an important guide not just to catechesis but to RCRE. In its reflections on the Christian message as living faith, and its understanding of the realities of presenting the message, it sets out a vision that has been neglected. This thesis could be considered as a contemporary application of the principles articulated in the *Directory*.[142]

2.5. Summary

Given the importance of this chapter for the argument made in this thesis, the key principles and questions that require clarification, which were identified at the end of each section, are repeated in this summary. The principles are the foundation of the new approach which will be developed in chapter seven. They are the assumptions on which the approach is built. The questions which require further clarification set the agenda for chapters three, five and six. By the end of chapter six, through using the resources of the Catholic theological tradition, the questions will have been addressed. Once this has been completed, the new approach to RCRE will be set out in chapter seven.

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[142] In arguing for the importance of the *Directory* it offers support for the case made by Thomas Groome and what he calls "[t]he life to faith and faith to life approach" which he argues is "effective for both religious education and for catechesis". Groome, *Will there be faith?*, 274.

2.5.1. Key principles

1) RCRE contributes to the integral formation of young people. As an academic subject, which should be distinguished from catechesis, it must be educationally appropriate for all young people regardless of their religious affiliation. At the same time, it can be open to faith development and the search for meaning.
2) The primary focus of the content of RCRE is not the Church but Christian faith in Christ. The term Christian message is the best descriptor of this content.
3) The source of the content of the Christian message is the word of God, expressed in both Sacred Scripture and Tradition. When presenting this content, Scripture should have a pre-eminent position.
4) Any presentation of the Christian message must be faithful to the message as received and handed on by the Church.
5) RCRE must capture the living nature of Christian faith which requires that the message is related to human experience. For RCRE this means that it must be related to the experience of young people.
6) To be related to the experience of young people, the message and how it is taught must be adapted for differences of age, maturity and social and ecclesial conditions.

2.5.2. Questions for clarification:

1) What does academic rigour look like in RCRE?
2) How can RCRE, as an academic subject that is educationally appropriate for all young people regardless of religious affiliation, be open to faith development and a search for meaning?
3) What is meant by experience?
4) How can the content of RCRE and human experience be related?
5) What are the significant features of current social and ecclesial conditions that should be considered when adapting the Christian message?

3. Chapter Three: An analysis of current social and ecclesial conditions in England and Wales, and Scotland

3.1. Introduction

An authentic presentation of the Christian message must hold together both faithfulness to the content of the message and its relationship to the experience of men and women. As this experience will vary, Catholic religious education RCRE cannot be taught in "the same way everywhere".[1] The *Catechism* acknowledges this when it states that local catechisms must be adapted to take account of "the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition".[2] This chapter identifies the main features of current social and ecclesial conditions for England and Wales, and Scotland. To use the terminology of the *Directory*, it makes an "*analysis of the situation*" which is a necessary precursor to any presentation of the Christian message.[3] The analysis seeks to answer the following question: what factors should be taken into account to help adapt RCRE in light of the experience of young people who attend Catholic schools and their attitudes towards their school, the Church and RCRE? That said, young people's views on religion are part of a broader context of how religion and Catholicism in particular are perceived. This is a huge area of study and it is necessary to limit the objectives of this chapter. For instance, wider questions such as the impact of child abuse scandals or the way religious, moral and social issues are discussed in the media, music, literature, cinema and the arts in general, whilst important for both reflecting and influencing attitudes, are outside of its scope. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, will be analysed and presented in three related sections: the religious landscape of Britain as a whole (3.2), the Catholic community (3.3), the attitudes of young Catholics to Catholic schools, the Church, and RCRE (3.4). Once this analysis has been completed it will be used to evaluate current schemes of RCRE in Britain (chapter four) and to develop a new approach to the subject (chapters seven and eight).[4]

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[1] ETT Part III 1h.
[2] CCC 24. Referenced by GDC 133.
[3] GDC 279. Italics in text.
[4] This type of analysis is not new and was pioneered by the Church in France in the twentieth century. Fernand Boulard used data to demonstrate that mission must take account of the lives, attitudes and values of people. Fernand Boulard, *An Introduction to Religious Sociology: Pioneer work in France*, trans. MJ Jackson (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960), 19. For a more recent example, from Flanders, see Boeve, *Theology at the Crossroads*, Chapter two, Horizon: The Challenge of Plurality and Difference, 33-53.

3.2. The Religious Landscape of England and Wales, and Scotland.

3.2.1. Sources and use of data

Young people are part of wider society and this section sets the scene by describing, in broad terms, the religious landscape of Britain and, where possible, England and Scotland as separate entities. It relies on data from the British Census of 2001 and 2011, and the British Social Attitudes survey (henceforth BSA) which, together with the Scottish Social Attitudes survey (henceforth SSA), is carried out each year. This data is supplemented by other studies in particular a report by Stephen Bullivant on contemporary Catholicism;[5] his study of Catholic disaffiliation;[6] and a series of large scale surveys about religion in Britain devised by Linda Woodhead and conducted in 2013 as part of a research project, Religion and Society, http://religionandsociety.org.uk.[7] A certain caution must be exercised, however, in the use of statistical data. For example, there is a noticeable difference between the Census (2011) and the BSA (2013) regarding religious affiliation. This is ascribed to a difference in the way the question was asked in the Census which, it has been argued, led to an overstatement of religious affiliation.[8] In addition, Bullivant makes the point that "the dynamic realities and complexities of religious beliefs, practice, and identity go much deeper than surveys are able to explore". At the same, he notes that "they are indispensable in giving a genuine sense of the 'big picture'".[9]

3.2.2. Plural Britain

In terms of religious affiliation, over the last three decades there has been a decline in Christian affiliation in Britain and a growth in other religions and in those who have no religion.[10] Within this context, the data presented below will show that Britain has become a plural and diverse society. In this thesis, the terms plural and pluralist refer to this

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[5] Stephen Bullivant, *Contemporary Catholicism in England and Wales*: *A statistical report based on recent British Social Attitudes survey data* (St Mary's University, Twickenham, 2016), https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2016-may-contemporary-catholicism-report.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.

[6] Stephen Bullivant, *Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain & America since Vatican II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[7] 'January 2013 Survey', YouGov/University of Lancaster, http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/mm7go89rhi/YouGov-University%20of%20Lancaster-Survey-Results-Faith-Matters-130130.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
'June 2013 Survey', YouGov/University of Lancaster, http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/4vs1srt1h1/YG-Archive-University-of-Lancaster-Faith-Matters-Debate-full-results-180613-website.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019..

[8] David Voas & Steve Bruce, 'The 2001 census and Christian identification in Britain', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 19 (1): 23-28, https://doi.org/10.1080/1353790032000165087 accessed on 02 September 2019.

[9] Bullivant, *Contemporary Catholicism,* 6.

[10] No religion is used in this thesis rather than the term 'nones'. For further information see Stephen Bullivant, *The 'no religion' population' of Britain*, https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2017-may-no-religion-report.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.

diversity. The term pluralism can refer to this diversity but it can be used also to describe a theological position within the theology of religions. Context will, however, always make the usage clear. What is important is that it is within this pluralistic milieu that young people are taught RCRE.

A comparison of the 2001 and 2011 Census shows a decrease over ten years of those who describe themselves as Christian in England from 71.74 per cent in 2001 to 59.38 per cent in 2011, and in Scotland from 65.2 per cent to 53.82 per cent (table one).[11] The BSA surveys (2013 & 2019) shows an even greater decrease in Christian affiliation for Britain as whole, from 67 per cent in 1983, to 54 per cent in 2002, to 46 per cent in 2012, to 38 per cent in 2018. (table two).[12] Both surveys show an increase in those who state that they have no religion. The Census shows an increase in England from 14.6 per cent to 24.74 per cent between 2001 and the 2011, and the BSA surveys (2013 & 2019), from 31 per cent in 1983, to 41 per cent in 2002, to 48 per cent in 2012, to 52 per cent in 2018. The surveys also show an increase in non-Christian religious affiliation from 2 per cent in 1983 to 9 per cent in 2018 (table two). The Census (2011) puts the figure for non-Christian religious affiliation at 8.7 per cent for England and 2.57 per cent for Scotland.

Table two indicates that the increase in no religion is mainly due to a decline in affiliation to the Anglican Church from 40 per cent of the population in 1983 to 12 per cent in 2018.[13] Within this picture of overall decline in Christian affiliation, Roman Catholic affiliation has declined but not as steeply, from 10 per cent in 1983 to 7 per cent in 2018. Affiliation to Christian churches outside of the Anglican and Catholic church has increased from 17 per cent in 1983 to 19 per cent in 2018.

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[11] 2001 & 2011 Census. Extracted from UK Church Statistics 2010-2020, ed. Peter Brierley (Tonbridge: ADBC Publishers, 2014), section 14.0.
[12] *British Social Attitudes 30*, eds. Alison Park, Caroline Bryson, Elizabeth Clery, John Curtice & Miranda Phillips (London: NatCen Social Research, 2013). Henceforth BSA 30 (2013). *British Social Attitudes 36*, eds. John Curtice, Elizabeth Clery, Jane Perry, Miranda Phillips & Nilufer Rahim (London: NatCen Social Research, 2019). Henceforth BSA 36 (2019).
[13] See Alison Park & Rebecca Rhead, 'Personal Relationships' in BSA 30 (2013), 4.

Table 2: England, Wales & Scotland, religious affiliation as given in the Census, 2001 & 2011(expressed as a percentage of the population).[14]

	2001			2011		
Religion	**England**	**Wales**	**Scotland**	**England**	**Wales**	**Scotland**
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Christian	71.74	71.9	65.2	59.38	57.56	53.82
Non-Christian	5.97	2.41	1.5	8.7	2.72	2.57
No religion	14.6	18.53	27.8	24.74	32.09	36.66
Not stated	7.69	8.06	5.5	7.18	7.63	6.95

Table 2: Trends in religious affiliation in Great Britain, 1983-2018, from the British Social Attitudes survey, 2013 & 2019 (expressed as a percentage of the population).[15]

Religion	**1983**	**1987**	**1993**	**1997**	**2002**	**2007**	**2012**	**2018**
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
CoE, Anglican	40	37	32	27	31	21	20	12
RC	10	10	11	11	9	9	9	7
Other Christian	17	16	16	14	14	18	17	19
Total Christian	**67**	**63**	**59**	**52**	**54**	**48**	**46**	**38**
Non-Christian	2	3	3	4	4	6	6	9
No religion	31	34	37	43	41	46	48	52

In Scotland, it is difficult to reach a firm conclusion about religious affiliation given the variations in the data. For instance, the Census (2011) data shows affiliation to the Church of Scotland as 32.4 per cent of the population, Roman Catholic affiliation as 15.9 per cent, and no religion at 36.7 per cent.[16] In comparison, the SSA (2015) puts Church of Scotland affiliation as 24.1 per cent of the population, Roman Catholic at 11.7 per cent, and no religion at 49.2 per cent.[17] This should be compared with data published in 2016 which

[14] 2001 & 2011 Census. (Extracted from UK Church Statistics 2010-2020, ed. Peter Brierley (Tonbridge: ADBC Publishers, 2014), section 14.0.
[15] BSA 30 (2013), 5, Table 11; BSA 36 (2019), 21, Table 1.
[16] *UK Church Statistics 2010-2020*, section 14.28.
[17] *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey* (2015), http://nesstar.ukdataservice.ac.uk/webview/index.jsp?v=2&mode=documentation&submode=abstract&study=http://nesstar.ukdataservice.ac.uk:80/obj/fStudy/8188&top=yes accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth SSA (2015). For further data on religious affiliation in Scotland, see *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey* (2014), Annex A, http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/02/5330/5 accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth SSA (2014).

alters the data for the SSA (2015) and shows Church of Scotland affiliation at 20 per cent of the population, Roman Catholic affiliation at 15 per cent, and no religion at 52 per cent.[18] The same data set indicates that Catholic affiliation for 2016 is 10 per cent, with Church of Scotland affiliation at 18 per cent, and no religion at 58 per cent. Despite these differences, an analysis of which is outwith the scope of this thesis, and the "historically rooted variations" between England and Scotland, it can be argued that the broad picture in Scotland is similar to England.[19]

Though the extent of the decline in Christian affiliation varies between surveys the overall trend is clear. In addition, and especially relevant to this thesis, the increase in no religion is made more significant by its growth amongst younger generations. Of those born in the 1920s, 25 per cent self-describe as no religion, compared to 38 per cent of those born in the 1950s and 60 per cent of those born in the 1980s. The younger you are the more likely you are to describe yourself as having no religion, and for cohorts born in the 1960s onwards, no religion is in the majority.[20] Data released by ScotCen in July 2017 indicate that 74 per cent of all 18-34 year olds in Scotland say they have no religion.[21] David Voas and Steve Bruce, in their commentary on the data in the BSA 36 (2019) argue that the decline in Christian affiliation is not because adults are losing their religion but as older generations die they are replaced by younger generations who have no religion.[22]

Without making a causal connection, the increase in no religion is paralleled with a general mistrust of religion, especially in Britain. According to a 2017 global survey, 62 per cent in Britain think that religion does more harm than good (49 per cent globally).[23] The more recent BSA 36 (2019) refers to 63 per cent who agree that "[l]ooking around the world, religions bring more conflict than peace", though in 1998, 75 per cent agreed with the

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[18] http://www.scotcen.org.uk/media/1452846/55A_R3l1g10n_T4ble5_2016.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[19] Ben Clements, 'Religious change and secularisation in Scotland: an analysis of affiliation and attendance', Scottish Affairs 26:2 (2017), 145, https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/scot.2017.0175?journalCode=scot accessed on 02 September 2019. It should be noted that Clements uses the SSA (2014) data. The reliability of this data has been questioned because it was in the context of questions about sectarianism. However, the SSA (2015) has even higher Catholic affiliation at 15 per cent.
[20] BSA 30 (2013), 27, Table A.1.
[21] 'Scots with no religion at record level', ScotCen, http://scotcen.org.uk/news-media/press-releases/2017/july/scots-with-no-religion-at-record-level/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[22] David Voas & Steve Bruce, 'Religion: Identity, behaviour & belief over two decades', in BSA 36 (2019), 21.
[23] 'Global Views on Religion', Ipsos Global @dvisor, 2017, https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/global-study-shows-six-ten-britons-above-global-average-believe-religion-does-more-harm-good accessed on 02 September 2019.

statement.[24] In addition, 45 per cent of those surveyed said that they had little or no confidence in churches and religious organisations.[25]

The increase in affiliation to other religions is marked but in raw numbers much smaller in scale than the increase in no religion. The Census (2011) indicates the following numbers for religious/no religion affiliation in Britain (in millions, to two decimal points): Christian, 36.09; no religion 16.04; Muslim, 2.78; Hindu, 0.83; Sikh, 0.43; Jew, 0.27; Buddhist, 0.26; other religion, 0.26; not stated, 4.41.[26] Regional and age variations must, however, be noted. For instance, non-Christians are about 1 in 5 of the population of inner/outer London and 1 in 100 in the south west of England;[27] the Muslim population of England is about 1 in 20, but in Scotland is about 1 in 68; [28] in England, the average age of the population is 40.2 years, for a Christian 44.6, a Muslim 27.4, and no religion 32.3;[29] in Scotland, the average of the population is 40.9 years, for the Church of Scotland 49.6, Catholic 40.3, Muslim 28.1, no religion 33.3.[30]

3.2.3. Why has Britain become so plural?

Leaving aside, the impact of immigration on the rise of non-Christian religious adherence and its impact on Christianity, the key to answering this question is to explain the rise of no religion and the decline of Christian affiliation.[31] Two contrasting narratives attempt to explain what has happened in Britain.[32] The first focuses on the decline in Christian affiliation and looks for historical and social reasons to explain the decline. The second accepts the decline in affiliation to the Christian churches but does not accept that this equates with a decline in religion.

The first narrative foresees the continuing decline of religious practice and affiliation. Callum Brown argues that "the culture of Christianity has gone in the Britain of the new millennium" and though belief in God may remain as a "root belief" in people, Britain is

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[24] BSA 36 (2019), 32.
[25] BSA 36 (2019), 32-33. Compared to 14 per cent for school and education, and 50 per cent for Parliament.
[26] Census 2011, *UK Church Statistics 2010-2020*, section 14.27.
[27] Bullivant, *Contemporary Catholicism*, 7.
[28] Calculations based on Census 2011, *UK Church Statistics 2010-2020*, section 14.27.
[29] Ibid., table 14.27
[30] Ibid., table 14.28.
[31] For a brief discussion of immigration and in particular its impact on Christian affiliation see *UK Church Statistics 2010-2020,* section 0.2.
[32] A third narrative is not considered in this chapter. Conway and Spruyt use data from fifty-two countries to argue that the erosion of Catholic affiliation and attendance is caused by modern society in that the state has replaced the Church as the source of "existential security". Brian Conway & Bram Spruyt, 'Catholic Commitment Around the Globe: A 52- Country Analysis', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57:2 (2018), 296, https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12512 accessed on 02 September 2019.

showing the world how religion "as we have known it can die".[33] He links secularisation with demographic changes that began in the 1960s in particular changes to the family structure due to "plunging fertility and marriage rates", a revolution in women's identities and the related challenge to the social construction of gender.[34] He also links the rise of no religion to other issues such as "feminism, toleration for sexualities, anti-racism, euthanasia and assisted suicide".[35] Steve Bruce is a proponent of the secularisation thesis understood "as the decline in the social significance of religion".[36] He argues that there is a long-term connection between the rise of modernity, especially individualism and rationality, and the demise of traditional forms of religious life.[37] Individualism attacks the communal base of religion and rationality makes its belief implausible.[38] This narrative underpins the commentary on religion in the BSA 36 (2019).[39]

The second narrative, put forward by Grace Davie and Linda Woodhead, whilst not ignoring the empirical evidence for a decline in Christian affiliation and church attendance, understands religion in a much broader way. Their argument against those who support the secularization thesis is summed up by Woodhead as follows:

> In trying to demonstrate that religion was declining by citing only data related to declining churchgoing and church influence … they confused a very particular historical manifestation of religion … with a universal process to do with 'religion' in 'secular modernity'.[40]

Central to their argument is that Church attendance and affiliation do not define religion or the religious. Woodhead advocates an approach which takes account of the "shifting constructs of the sacred and the profane" and looks for "new forms of reverence,

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[33] Callum G Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), 198.
[34] Callum G Brown, *Religion and the Demographic Revolution: Women & Secularisation in Canada, Ireland, UK & USA since the 1960s* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2012), 1.
[35] Ibid., 267.
[36] Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015), 2, http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199654123.001.0001/acprof-9780199654123 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[37] Throughout this chapter, the key features of modernity are understood to mean less reliance on "culture and tradition" and the rise of an individualism that emphasises "human rights, human agency, equality and respect". Nicola Madge, Peter J Hemming & Kevin Stenson et al, *Youth on Religion: The development, negotiation and impact of faith and non-faith identity* (London: Routledge, 2014), 8.
[38] Steve Bruce, *Religion in the modern world: from cathedrals to cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 230.
[39] Voas & Bruce, 'Religion: Identity, behaviour & belief over two decades', BSA 36 (2019), 19-40.
[40] Linda Woodhead, 'Introduction', in *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*, eds. Linda Woodhead & Rebecca Catto (London: Routledge, 2012), 24.

ritualization and excoriation".[41] Whilst institutional Christianity has declined 'religion' as, she understands the term, has never really gone away.[42] For Woodhead, the key period for understanding the decline in institutional Christianity was the 1970s/1980s with the assertion of the market as the dominant force in UK society. This encouraged free choice rather than a sense of habit or obligation.[43] This change can be related to what she describes as 'old style' and 'new style' religion which she argues accounts for the growth of "new Churches" which are not bound by traditional structures.[44] In general terms, Grace Davie's understanding of the religious landscape of Britain is similar to Woodhead's. For Davie, "Western Europeans remain, by and large, unchurched populations rather than simply secular".[45] She uses three phrases to describe this understanding of religion: the well-known phrase, "believing not belonging" which she now links to "vicarious religion", and a shift in social attitudes from a "culture of obligation to a culture of consumption".[46] She identifies the latter with an attitudinal shift that extends beyond religion and which can be linked to Woodhead's emphasis on the importance of the market.[47] She argues that whilst there is a small core of atheists, the majority of the population continue to have some belief in God, what she calls a "spiritual sensibility".[48] At the heart of Davie's and Woodhead's argument is that religion is more than affiliation to and attendance at a place of worship but is part of life and its experiences. Without saying it, the implication is that human beings are essentially religious, or at least spiritual.[49]

Both narratives (Brown/Bruce and Woodhead/Davie) provide insight into current social and ecclesial conditions. Bruce's emphasis on the rise of individualism and rationality together with Brown's argument concerning gender, social and moral norms certainly captures a sense of current times. But then so do Woodhead and Davie. Their argument that religion has not gone away but that how it is expressed has changed is helpful. Both narratives appear, however, to ignore, or take-for-granted, two important aspects of

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[41] Ibid., 24.
[42] Ibid., 27.
[43] Ibid., 17-20. 4
[44] Linda Woodhead, *Religion's Changing Form and Relation to the State since 1989* (2015), http://www.e-ir.info/2015/10/05/religions-changing-form-and-relation-to-the-state-since-1989/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[45] Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case. Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010), 5.
[46] Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion: A Critical Agenda* (London: Sage, 2013), 140. See chapter seven, 'Mainstream Religion in the Western World', 135-160.
[47] Ibid., 149. See 146-149.
[48] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*, 2nd Edition (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 79.
[49] Any attempt at a precise delineation of the terms religious and spiritual is avoided in this thesis. The term spiritual is a contested though frequently used term. Catholic teaching supports the idea of human beings as essentially religious, see CCC 28.

religion. First, the call to transform how we live and act towards others and the world around that is found in the religions of the world.[50] Second, that religions explore and provide answers for "the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other".[51] The challenge for RCRE is to find a way of articulating the Christian message that is both faithful to the message and its challenge to how we live, and relevant to the experience of people, especially young people, who are more likely to live in a social context where no religion is the assumption.

3.3. The Catholic community in England and Wales, and Scotland.

This section examines more closely the Catholic community with regard to affiliation and attendance (3.3.1), and attitudes to the Church, Church teaching and prayer (3.3.2).

3.3.1. Roman Catholic affiliation and attendance in Britain

In comparison to the Church of England, Roman Catholic affiliation has not declined as steeply. Table two shows British Catholic affiliation in 1983 as 10 per cent of the population, and in 2018 as 7 per cent. As mentioned earlier, data for Scotland shows considerable variation, with SSA surveys showing a decline in the Catholic population of Scotland from 14 per cent in 1999 to 10 per cent in 2016, though the SSA (2014 and 2015) surveys show 14/15 per cent of the population as Roman Catholic.[52] The Census of 2011 puts the Catholic population of Scotland at 15.9 per cent.[53]

In England and Wales, young Catholics, aged 18-24, are, however, under-represented at 8.3 per cent of the Catholic population, in comparison to 12.0 per cent of the population as a whole.[54] The data presented earlier, that in Scotland the average age of Catholics is 40.3, and the population as whole 40.9, would suggest a more even distribution across age ranges. With regard to retention, understood as remaining within the religion of one's birth, about 62 per cent of those born into Catholic families in Britain appear to remain

[50] For instance, using examples from different religions, Donald Nicholl shows the challenge required in any search for holiness: Donald Nicholl, *Holiness* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981).
[51] GS 4.
[52] http://www.scotcen.org.uk/media/1452846/55A_R3l1g10n_T4ble5_2016.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[53] Calculated from the Census 2011, *UK Church Statistics 2010-2020*, section 14.28.
[54] Bullivant, *Contemporary Catholicism*, 9, Fig. 2.2.

Catholic.[55] Bullivant suggests a slightly lower figure of 56 per cent;[56] and the BSA survey (2019) puts the figure at 55 per cent.[57]

In terms of religious practice, Bullivant's report on England and Wales provides a breakdown by age and gender of Catholics who attend Church once a week or more.[58] His data indicates that almost half of attenders are 55 or over, and around 20 per cent are aged 18-34.[59] As part of the Religion and Society research programme led by Linda Woodhead, a survey was conducted into the Roman Catholic community in Britain (June 2013).[60] This presents the data in a different way. Of those in the 18-24 age range, 35 per cent say that they attend church with others. Of that 35 per cent, 38 per cent say that they attend on an at least weekly basis, about 12 per cent of Catholic affiliates in that age range. In comparison, in the 60+ age group, 43 per cent say that they attend church. Of that 43 per cent, 72 per cent say that they attend on an at least weekly basis, which would represent about 31 per cent of Catholic affiliates in that age range.[61] The two sets of data show that older Catholics, aged 55/60 and over, are much more likely to attend on a weekly basis than younger Catholics, those under 34.[62]

Whilst the data on Catholic mass attendance may vary, the overall picture is clear, and Bullivant is surely right to argue that cultural and community structures that bound the Catholic community together no longer hold. He uses the ideas of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann to propose that the social base on which the Catholic community was built has disappeared and once the social base went so did its plausibility and "plausibility structure".[63] He argues that the 1970s were a "pivotal period" and that changes both social (such as the demise of traditional industry, changes in neighbourhoods) and ecclesial (mainly liturgical and devotional) led to the breakdown of the traditional Catholic

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[55] Calculated from the *British Social Attitudes Survey 28* (2011-12), 176, Table 12.2.
[56] Bullivant, *Contemporary Catholicism*, 11, fig. 3.1.
[57] BSA 36 (2019), 22.
[58] Ibid., 15. The sample size at 188 is very small and must cast doubt on the validity of the data.
[59] Ibid., fig. 4.6, 15.
[60] YouGov/University of Lancaster, 'Survey of Catholics June 2013', http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/k0rbt8onjb/YG-Archive-050613-FaithMatters-UniversityofLancaster.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019. The sample size is 1062.
[61] 'Survey of Catholics June 2013', 11. Linda Woodhead, 'Endangered Species', *The Tablet*, 16 November 2013, 7, gives the figure for the older age group as about 40%. I cannot work out how she arrives at that figure from the raw data.
[62] The differences in attendance rates between Woodhead and Bullivant indicate the difficulty in gathering accurate evidence.
[63] Bullivant *Mass Exodus*, 96.

culture.[64] This leads him to conclude that "[c]ultural Catholicism as a retention strategy is dead".[65]

3.3.2. Attitudes to the Church, Church teaching and prayer

One of the focus areas of Woodhead's survey is how Catholics perceive the Church and its teaching. Her basic argument is that "Catholics … have come adrift from Roman Catholicism".[66] She supports this with data on the views of Catholics on moral questions such as abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriage. Her study provides evidence for the judgement, made by Bullivant, that Catholics do not live in a social vacuum but are affected by changing social attitudes;[67] and that "large numbers of even practising Catholics disagree with key areas of Church teaching, not least on a cluster of marriage, sex and family issues".[68] Backing for her view is found in the BSA 34 (2017) survey which shows how Catholic attitudes to sex before marriage;[69] same-sex relationships;[70] and abortion, have changed over recent years.[71] In 2016, 76 per cent of Catholics said that sex before marriage "was not wrong at all", compared to Anglicans 73 per cent, other Christians 62 per cent, adherents of other religions 33 per cent, no religion 87 per cent. For same-sex relationships, 62 per cent of Catholics thought that the practice "was not wrong at all", compared to Anglicans 55 per cent, other Christians 53 per cent, adherents of other religions 30 per cent, no religion 76 per cent. The percentages saying that abortion should be allowed "if a woman does not wish to have the child" were as follows: Catholic 61 per cent, Anglicans 67 per cent, other Christians 57 per cent, data for the adherents of other religions not given, no religion 78 per cent. Other Christians and the adherents of other religions were, in the survey, more likely to support Catholic Church teaching than Catholics.

Woodhead's survey provides more detailed information on some of these issues by providing data by age group and attendance at church. For instance, with same-sex marriage there is a marked difference between generations with 16 per cent of the 60+ age group thinking same-sex marriage is right compared to 51 per cent of 18-24 year olds, and

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[64] Ibid., 190-192.
[65] Ibid., 241.
[66] Woodhead, 'Endangered Species', 7.
[67] Bullivant, *Contemporary Catholicism*, 7.
[68] Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, 209.
[69] *British Social Attitudes 34,* eds Elizabeth Clery, John Curtice & Roger Harding (London: NatCen Social Research, 2017), Table 1, 92. There is a note in the report that the sample size for this group is small and is therefore less reliable.
[70] Ibid., Table 2, 94.
[71] Ibid., 106.

55 per cent of 25-39 year olds.[72] There is also a difference between the views of Catholics who attend at least weekly and those who do not. With regard to abortion, 19 per cent of all Catholics thought that it should be banned, compared to 42 per cent who attend weekly; for euthanasia, 29 per cent of all Catholics would keep the law as it is, compared to 63 per cent of weekly attenders.[73] This data shows not just disagreement with Church teaching but diversity within the Catholic community with differences between the old and the young, and those who attend Mass on a regular basis (who are generally older) and those who do not. Bullivant argues that public disagreement with Church teaching, amongst Catholics, began with the publication of *Humanae vitae* in 1968 and the ensuing controversy over birth control. This, he believes, caused a weakening in the authority of the Church and the beginning of dissent.[74] He suggests that Catholics now felt free to pick and choose what teaching they might accept.[75]

Woodhead's survey of Catholic opinion also investigates what is valued as a source of authority or guidance for life and decision making. The list of sources includes one's own reason and judgement, intuition/ feeling, family, teaching or tradition of my religion, scriptures, and religious leaders.[76] For all age groups and for weekly attenders, one's own reason and judgement was the highest scoring source. Religious leaders did not feature at all, even with weekly attenders. Possibly related to this is the level of mistrust or ambiguity about the Church which can be found amongst Catholics. Woodhead's survey shows that 36 per cent of Catholics think that the Church is a positive force in society, 9 per cent think it is a negative force, and 48 per cent neither positive or negative.[77] Of those who think it is a positive force, the main reason is that it is an ethical voice in society. Being too prejudiced and the child abuse scandals are the main reasons for the Church being a negative force, with the latter being given as a reason even by weekly attenders.[78] Unfortunately, Woodhead's survey does not investigate further the views of those Catholics (48 per cent) who are neither positive nor negative about the Church.

Another source of evidence for changing Catholic attitudes is the decline in the number of Catholic marriages. Whilst the Catholic population has remained steady, the number of

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[72] Woodhead, 'Catholic Survey', 31.
[73] Ibid., 31-32, 41-42.
[74] Bullivant, Mass Exodus, 180
[75] Ibid., 183.
[76] Woodhead, 'Catholic Survey', 31/32. It is worth noting that in arriving at a moral judgement Catholics should use reason, conscience and Church teaching.
[77] 'Catholic Survey', 141-142.
[78] Bullivant argues that there is no evidence to suggest that the scandals have increased disaffiliation, at least not yet. *Mass Exodus*, 229.

Catholic Church marriages in England and Wales has plummeted from 31,534 in 1977 to 9,775 in 2014.[79] In Scotland, the pattern is similar. In 1977 there were 6,569 marriages and by 2016 the number had dropped to 1,674.[80]

A noticeable difference between Catholics and the population as a whole are the proportions who say that they engaged in prayer in the last month. For all Catholics, 42 per cent said they had prayed in the last month compared to 20 per cent of the population. Catholics were also twice as likely to have gone to a place that feels sacred or holy in the last month.[81] In this context, Alana Harris in her study of the "lived experience" of faith in Catholic families in Manchester, provides helpful insight into the changing nature of prayer and devotion. Her study, which covers from 1945 to Pope John Paul II's visit in 1982, highlights how religious experience has changed. She avoids a post- and pre-Vatican II contrast but provides evidence for changes in focus and meaning. For Catholics, both before and after Vatican II, the Mass is the pre-eminent place where Christ is encountered. But, over the decades, the focus of this encounter has changed from the Christ-child, his Sacred Heart, and his sacrifice as suffering saviour, to his humanity which he shares with all men and women.[82] She notes how Marian devotions and devotion to St Joseph have declined (devotion to St Joseph has generally disappeared) with both a change in theological emphasis following Vatican II, and changing models of marriage and gender.[83] The enduring popularity and devotion to St Theresa of Lisieux and St Bernadette are noted as are the changes in devotion from their sentimental and 'perfect' portrayals to women who are complex and flawed, like all humanity, but who nevertheless sought sanctity.[84] Bullivant has a different perception of the change in devotional practice and laments the sweeping aside of what he describes as "the rich devotional life of mainstream Catholicism" of the 1960s. He argues that the liturgical reforms introduced following Vatican II have failed to engage congregations and, without any reliable data to support his case, he "is sure that significant numbers of those still participating [in the Mass] now do so less fully aware, less actively engaged and less enriched".[85] As it is impossible to 'turn the clock back', the question must be, what is helpful for planning how to improve

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[79] *Catholic Directory for England and Wales*, 1977 and 2014.
[80] *Catholic Directory for Scotland*, 1977 and 2016.
[81] 'Catholic Survey', 1. 'January Survey', 2. 'June Survey', 4.
[82] Alana Harris, *Faith in the family: a lived religious history of English Catholicism, 1945-1982* (Manchester: Manchester University 2013), 118.
[83] Ibid., 188.
[84] Ibid., 224-233.
[85] Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, 257.

engagement in a parish or school? Both Bullivant and Harris share a similar idea that could be of assistance.

Harris raises questions about the model of Christ and the saints that might be helpful in current times for sustaining worship and prayer. Bullivant makes use of the term "credibility enhancing displays" or CREDS, which includes the lives of saints and devotional practice.[86] If RCRE is to interest and engage young people then Harris' questions and Bullivant's CREDS need to be considered.

3.4. Catholic schools and the young people who attend them

This section continues the "analysis of the situation" by looking in more detail at the young people who attend Catholic schools in Britain. The argument from the previous section that Catholics do not live in a social vacuum is re-emphasised in this section. The section begins by examining some of the external and internal challenges that Catholic schools in Britain face (3.4.1). The next two sections focus on the young people attending Catholic schools, their attitudes to their school, and RCRE (3.4.2); and their attitude to the Church (3.4.3).

The analysis that follows is dependent on three relatively recent studies which focus on England. The first is a large-scale study, *Youth on Religion*, which investigated the meaning of religion for young people in three multi-faith locations in England. It uses survey data from around 10,500 young people aged 13-18, plus in-depth interviews and discussions involving 157 young people aged 17-18.[87] Though no date is provided, the data is likely to have been collected around 2012. One problem with the study is that it does not identify those pupils who attend Catholic or Church of England schools. The second study, conducted by Ann Casson, provides an in-depth ethnographic investigation of three Catholic secondary schools in the Midlands conducted between 2006 and 2009.[88] In this study, the data was gathered through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, including eighty-two pupils in small groups, and an analysis of relevant documentation.[89] The third is a survey conducted in preparation for the worldwide Bishops' Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment in 2018. In this survey, 3,286 young people in England and Wales, within the age range 16-29, took part in an online survey

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[86] Ibid., 102. He contrasts CREDS with CRUDS which undermine rather than enhance. *Mass Exodus*, 227.
[87] Madge et al, *Youth on Religion*, 22.
[88] Ann Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity and Social Cohesion: Faith Schools in a Plural Society* (Bonn: Peter Lang, 2013), 25.
[89] Ibid., 165.

about their views and opinions on the Church and being a Christian.[90] It is interesting to note that Bullivant's study of Catholic disaffiliation makes only passing reference to Catholic schools and their possible role in maintaining affiliation, and neither Casson's study nor the Bishops' survey, mentioned above, are referenced by him.[91]

3.4.1. External and internal challenges to Catholic schools

Catholic schools in Britain have a very particular status in that, other than Catholic independent schools, they are either entirely or almost entirely funded by the state.[92] This legal and economic status has encouraged a well-developed provision of Catholic state schools.[93] It has also meant that the schools have "a dual identity: they are simultaneously part of a religious community and also belong to a wider system of education".[94] This has brought external and internal challenges that should not be ignored.

External challenges

There are several groups and organisations opposed to the existence of faith schools. Some examples include: Humanist UK which campaigns on a range of issues including what it sees as the discriminatory nature of admissions in faith schools and the religious education

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[90] Teresa Carvalho & Christopher Jamison OSB, *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment in England & Wales* (The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2018), 27.
[91] For a reference to Catholic schools see, Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, 208.
[92] In England the legal designation for a Catholic school is a school with a religious character. In Scotland, the term is a denominational school. It is common for both to be called faith schools.
[93] In England, at the start of the academic year 2018, there were 2,122 Catholic schools with 823,572 pupils. This made up 10 per cent of the state funded school population when independent schools are excluded. (Catholic Education Service, *Digest of 2018 Census Data for Schools & Colleges in England* (November 2018), 5, http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/images/CensusDigestEngland2018.pdf
accessed on 02 September 2019. Of those pupils, 70.2 per cent in the primary sector were Catholic and 62.8 per cent in secondary, (fig. 2.2.1, 15). Taking both sectors together, there were 267,330 non-Catholic pupils in state funded Catholic schools, or 34.1 per cent of the pupil population. Of those non-Catholics, 50.8 per cent were other Christian, 24.1 per cent had no religious background, 10.5 per cent were Muslim, 9.5 per cent from other religions, and 5.2 per cent religious affiliation was not known (fig. 2.2.6, 18). In England, the syllabus and the inspection process for RCRE is independent of state or local authority control and is carried out by Diocesan inspectors who report on the quality of teaching and learning in RCRE and the wider religious life of the school.
It is difficult to obtain accurate statistics for Catholic schools in Scotland. (The only available source was Wikipedia which indicated that 366 out of over 2,500 schools are Catholic). There is a different legal status for Catholic schools in Scotland which means that they are under local authority control. The syllabus for RCRE and inspection arrangements are part of a national framework under the auspices of Education Scotland. Within Curriculum for Excellence, the overarching guide for Scottish education, religious and moral education is one of eight curriculum areas with Catholic schools having their own syllabus designed on the same principles as all curriculum areas. The inspection regime is different to England with RCRE being included in the general inspection programme conducted by Education Scotland. Inspection information that is shared with parents makes no mention of RCRE or the wider religious life of the school.
[94] John Sullivan, 'Faith Schools: A Culture within a Culture in a Changing World', in *International Handbook of Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, Volume One, Part Two,* eds. Marian de Souza, Gloria Durka, Kathleen Engebretson, Robert Jackson, Andrew McGrady, (Dordrecht, NL: Springer, 2006) 938.

that is taught in those schools;[95] the Fair Admissions Campaign;[96] and the Accord Coalition.[97] Whilst these groups have different areas of focus, the main areas of challenge for faith schools are that they are a threat to social cohesion;[98] and that they threaten the rights of the child by indoctrinating and hindering rational autonomy.[99] Writing in a Scottish context, Stephen McKinney notes that whilst the debate in Scotland shares similar characteristics to that of England, it has the added dimension of the suspicion that they foster sectarianism.[100]

The debate about faith schools is contentious and, as Casson notes, it "frequently becomes polarized and principled arguments are made for and against without the evidence from detailed empirical research".[101] A good example of this is the belief that faith schools damage or hinder social cohesion. For instance, Robert Jackson argues that the strongest reason against the state funding of faith schools is that they "create barriers between groups".[102] This argument is, however, challenged by two recent empirical studies into the openness to diversity of young people. In Scotland, "the data demonstrated that students attending Catholic schools held a more positive attitude towards diversity, compared to students attending schools without a religious foundation".[103] Findings from this study of 2,530 students indicated that a more positive attitude towards religious diversity is associated with being female, certain personality types, self-assigned religious affiliation, higher levels of religious attendance, Bible reading and prayer frequency, and attending a Catholic school.[104] The positive effect of the last point was over and above "the fact that pupils in Catholic schools tend to be more religious than those from other schools".[105] In England and Wales, a similar study of 5,402 students found that attending a faith school

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[95] https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/schools-and-education/faith-schools/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[96] Fair admissions Campaign, http://fairadmissions.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-08-29-FINAL-Religious-Selection-Research-Survey.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[97] The Accord Coalition, campaign for inclusive schools, http://accordcoalition.org.uk/take-action/campaigns-in-your-area/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[98] Social cohesion is also a complex and contested term. In this thesis it is understood as building "relationships between groups from disparate cultural, racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds". (Madge et al, *Youth on Religion*, 198). Chris Shannahan argues that difference should be understood as a potential source of liberation and "not a problem seeking a solution". Chris Shannahan, 'Zombie multiculturalism meets liberative difference: searching for a new discourse of diversity', *Culture and Religion*, 17:4 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2017.1287109 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[99] There is no agreed definition of rational autonomy and critical enquiry. For analysis of these terms and the term indoctrination see section 5.2.2 and the glossary.
[100] Stephen J McKinney, 'Catholic schools in Scotland and divisiveness', *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 29:2 (2008), 175, https://doi.org/10.1080/13617670802289585 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[101] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity,* 3.
[102] Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education*, 55.
[103] Leslie J Francis, Andrew Village, Gemma Parry & Peter Neil, 'Catholic schools and attitudes toward religious diversity: An empirical enquiry among 13-15 year old students in Scotland', *Scottish Educational Review* 46:2 (2014), 36.
[104] Ibid., 45.
[105] Ibid., 48.

made no difference, either positively or negatively, compared to students at schools without a religious character.[106] The authors of the study note that their findings challenge the perceived wisdom such as that expressed by Robert Jackson.[107] Their conclusions are supported by an empirical study on the attitudes of young people in the Netherlands. This study found that all the responses that were positive about openness to other religions came from religiously affiliated pupils; that, "[i]nstead of a positive relation between non-affiliation and inter-religious openness, the responses to the questionnaires report an opposite relation".[108]

The criticism that faith schools and RCRE hinder rational autonomy and social cohesion is important and, whatever the data may suggest, will not go away. On the one hand, Gerald Grace is right to argue that "there has not been, and in human society, cannot be, a school or educational experience which is entirely autonomous, objective, neutral and ideologically free".[109] On the other hand, RCRE should be keen to teach and encourage the skills of critical enquiry and contribute to social cohesion. What appears as a challenge may in fact be a helpful reminder of the contribution that the subject can make to what Pope Francis describes as "integral human development".[110]

Internal challenges

Internal challenges to Catholic education are identified by Ann Casson and Sean Whittle. Whittle recognises three possible challenges: conflicts caused by differing articulations of what it means to be Catholic; declining religious practice; and confusion over the purpose of Catholic schools.[111] Casson supplements this with the rise of parent power; difficulties in maintaining Catholic ethos due, in part, to declining numbers of Catholic staff and pupils; decline in the authority of the Church; and the changing relationships between the school, parish and the family as a result of the demise of a strongly bonded Catholic community.[112] Some of these challenges are not new and will exist wherever there are Catholics and Catholic schools. There will always be, for instance, differing interpretations

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[106] Leslie J Francis & Andrew Village, 'Church school preparing adolescence for living in a religiously diverse society: An empirical enquiry in England and Wales', *Religious Education* 109 (2014): 264-283, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2014.911623 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[107] Francis et al., "Catholic schools and attitudes toward religious diversity", 36.
[108] Toke Elshof, 'The challenge of religious education to deal with past and present Catholicism', *British Journal of Religious Education,* 41:3 (2018), 267, https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2018.1484689 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[109] Gerald Grace, *Faith, Mission and Challenge in Catholic Education: The selected work of Gerald Grace* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 26.
[110] LS 157.
[111] Sean Whittle, *A Theory of Catholic Education* (Bloomsbury: London, 2015), 21-24.
[112] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity,* 16-27 & 157.

of what it means to be Catholic as people live their faith in the circumstances of their lives.[113] At the same time, some of the challenges are serious threats to Catholic education especially the difficulty in recruiting committed Catholic teachers.

3.4.2. Young people attending Catholic schools and their attitude to their school, and RCRE

Casson's evidence indicates that pupils understand the Catholic ethos of their school mainly in terms of values such as friendliness, respect, fairness and trust between staff and pupils.[114] Linked to this, she argues that whilst schools are good at building community (bonding capital) they are often the only Catholic institution pupils and parents have contact with and therefore are weak at establishing links with the wider Church community (bridging capital).[115] Using Hervieu-Léger's concept of "chain of memory" she suggests that for most young people the school is the only source of "the memory of the Catholic faith tradition".[116]

Both *Youth on Religion* and Casson stress the importance to young people of "personal agency".[117] The *Youth on Religion* study found that young people "did not appreciate being told what they should do";[118] and that they "strongly assert their right to lead their own lives".[119] Casson suggests that most young people in Catholic schools "did not appear to be rejecting the Catholic tradition, but expressed strongly the view that they had a right to choose which aspects they consider necessary".[120] These are helpful insights into the attitudes of young people but the term, personal agency, is problematic. For instance, the exercise of personal agency could lead to a recognition that individualism and choice need to be constrained, and favour a sense of obligation rather than consumption. What the term does point to, however, is the importance of meaning. Charles Taylor identifies this when he writes that "[t]he religious life or practice that I become part of must not only be my choice, but it must speak to me, it must make sense in terms of my spiritual development

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[113] McDonough argues that not only is there no one Catholic identity but that Catholic schools also have different identities. Graham P. McDonough, 'Pluralizing Catholic Identity', in *Religious Education* 114:2 (2019), 168-180, https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2018.1560744 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[114] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity,* 71-74.
[115] Ibid., 125-127.
[116] Ibid., 151. Davie suggests that the "chain of memory" of Christianity in Europe is either broken or hanging by a thread. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, 61.
[117] Madge et al, *Youth on Religion,* 211*;* Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity*, 97-98. The term personal agency emphasises that young people "are active participants in the process of their own socialisation" (Madge et al, *Youth on Religion,* 15).
[118] Madge et al, *Youth on Religion,* 69.
[119] Ibid., 211.
[120] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity*, 62. Bullivant's comment on disagreement with Church teaching would suggest that this does not just apply to young people. *Mass Exodus*, 209.

as I understand it".[121] If the Church wants young people to engage with it, what they offer must mean something to them.

In terms of RCRE, Casson argues that what the Church proposes for RCRE and what pupils take away from lessons are different.[122] She explains that many pupils felt that the only Catholics represented were old and, that they were strict and "really holy".[123] In her conclusion, she identifies a gap between the "portrayal of the Catholic faith in textbooks and [pupils'] understanding of what it was to be Catholic".[124] She describes the Catholicism "portrayed and encountered in lessons" as "artificially monolithic" and notes that textbooks make no reference to groups within the Church that support gay rights and women's ordination.[125] In turn, she argues for recognition in RCRE of "the internal diversity of faith traditions" and "the active agency of young people".[126]

Making use of Hervieu-Léger, she proposes that RCRE should focus on young people as "bricoleurs", whose "religious identity is explained by the generation of fluid spiritual capital, rather than fixed religious capital".[127] Her argument implies that spiritual capital is fluid and religious capital is fixed. This sharp distinction between the two and the suggestion that religion is unchanging can and will be challenged in part two of this thesis. Casson notes that little is taught about other religions in RCRE but that when it is taught there is no evidence that pupils adopt beliefs and practices from other religions.[128] She suggests that young people appear to have many misconceptions about other religions;[129] that guidance views other religions from a Catholic perspective;[130] that religions are often portrayed as homogenous rather than the diverse reality of "lived religion".[131] She acknowledges that there is no evidence that teaching Christianity encourages lack of social cohesion or prejudice towards others.[132] Without explaining what is meant by inter-religious dialogue or what that would look like in RCRE, she proposes that "Catholic RE should include a study of other faith traditions, because a knowledge of Catholicism is

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[121] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007), 486. From chapter thirteen, 'The Age of Authenticity', 473-504.
[122] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity,* 96-97. Teachers might think that this applies to most lessons and not just RCRE!
[123] Ibid., 96.
[124] Ibid., 153.
[125] Ibid., 155.
[126] Ibid., 151.
[127] Ibid., 68
[128] Ibid., 64.
[129] Ibid., 104.
[130] Ibid., 104-105.
[131] Ibid., 106.
[132] Ibid., 107.

incomplete without critical reflection on the beliefs and practices of other faiths".[133] A brief suggestion is made as to the why and how of this argument in a statement that could not, without considerable clarification, be supported as an assumption for RCRE: "students within faith schools should have the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of the 'truths' of other faith traditions so as to enable them to reflect critically on the 'truths' of their tradition".[134] The importance of teaching other religions in RCRE and how to teach them will be considered at length in chapter eight of this thesis.

Casson provides some helpful data on how RCRE is perceived and the attitudes of young people. Whilst her emphasis on personal agency or encouraging young people to be "bricoleurs" is important it needs to be balanced by the challenge to how Christians live that is presented by the Christian message. In addition, it takes no account that the message is safeguarded by the Church and received by Christians before it is enriched by experience.[135] Lieven Boeve appreciates this dynamic when he writes of RCRE as bringing "young people to a reflexive identity formation, taking into account religious plurality and in engaging in dialogue with the Christian tradition".[136] In addition, throughout her study, Casson's focus is on Catholicism. There is no mention in her book or in her sample questions to young people of the Christian message or what young people think about Christ.[137] It does not, therefore, address what this thesis argues should be at the heart of RCRE.[138]

3.4.3. Young Catholics and their attitudes to the Church

In preparation for the worldwide Bishops' Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment in 2018, young people in England and Wales were surveyed about their views and opinions on the Church and being a Christian. A Report on the survey was subsequently published.[139] Amongst its conclusions, it states that "[y]oung people are asking the Church in England and Wales for a monumental change of attitude, orientation and practice".[140] Two distinct groups emerge from the survey: "A small but vocal group who want to draw the Church back into an era that they have been told was far better than it is today and a much larger, though less evident group, who adhere to the predominant

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[133] Ibid., 156.
[134] Ibid., 161.
[135] GDC 78.
[136] Boeve, *Theology at the Crossroads,* 203.
[137] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity,* 166-167, for sample questions.
[138] A similar criticism can be levelled at Bullivant whose focus in *Mass Exodus* is on Church affiliation and not faith in Christ.
[139] Carvalho & Jamison, *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment*.
[140] Ibid., 34.

narratives within society, wanting the Church to follow suit".[141] It notes that neither group is "happy with … current expressions of Church and … desire change".[142] Related to this, in a comment that could be linked to Casson's argument, it states that young people who self-identify as Catholics "interpret being Catholic in a wide variety of ways".[143] What the Report clearly articulates is that "[t]he Church cannot start where young people are not and take them where they do not want to go".[144]

3.5. Implications for Catholic religious education of this analysis of current social and ecclesial conditions

This chapter has attempted to answer the following question: what factors should be taken into account to help adapt RCRE in light of the experience of young people who attend Catholic schools and their attitudes towards their school, the Church and RCRE? In broad terms the principal conclusion is that programmes (and teachers) of RCRE should acknowledge the reality of plural Britain and diversity within the Catholic community. They should face the challenge of the decline of Christian affiliation; the presence of other religions and, in particular, the growth of no religion; and that not all Catholics, especially young Catholics, attend Mass or agree with certain teachings of the Church. If they do not, they are in danger of removing themselves from the experience of young people. This means that Church authorities, when planning guidance for RCRE, must start where young people are. They should plan how the Christian message can help young people to "make sense" of their religious and spiritual development.[145] In practice this means:

1) The guidance should consider what it is to be religious and use this as a starting point for understanding the Christian message, other religions and no religion. This would suggest that the religious experience of humanity that is manifest in so many different ways should have a higher profile in RCRE. To ignore this and how it relates to the Christian message is to disregard the reality of plural Britain.

2) The subject must try to appeal to and challenge young people, and address their desire to find meaning and to exercise personal agency. It should consider how the latter might be a resource rather than a threat. Within this context, it can acknowledge a diversity of views within the Catholic community.

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[141] Ibid., 34.
[142] Ibid., 34.
[143] Ibid., 16.
[144] Ibid., 35.
[145] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 486.

3) When teaching about prayer and worship in the Catholic tradition, RCRE should respond to changing circumstances and consider the model of Christ, the saints and the style of prayer that is most likely to engage young people.

4) Attitudes towards the Church and its teaching within the Catholic community would support the argument for a shift of focus in RCRE away from the Church and towards Christ and the Christian message.

5) RCRE should recognise the importance of encouraging social cohesion and rational autonomy.

6) The recruitment, training and encouragement of Catholic teachers is crucial to the flourishing of Catholic schools, RCRE and the Church. At the same time, no amount of high quality Catholic education and RCRE will encourage affiliation and attendance at Church unless the Church is open to change and transformation.

4. Chapter Four: An evaluation of Catholic religious education guidance for use in England and Wales, and Scotland

4.1. Introduction

Having analysed Church guidance on RCRE and current social and ecclesial conditions, it is now possible to evaluate the local guidance for use in England and Wales, and Scotland. To do so with consistency and transparency, criteria will be developed, based on chapters two and three, that can be applied to *This is Our Faith* (TIOF) for Scotland, and the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD) for England and Wales.[1] In both cases the documents are analysed and no reference is made to other resources or to practice. It is important to emphasise that it is "not easy to develop a course or syllabus for religious instruction classes which will present the Christian faith systematically and, in a way, suited to the young people of today".[2] Neither should the reality of the classroom be forgotten. In addition, whilst good guidance encourages good learning even the best can be ruined by poor teaching. Likewise, poor guidance can be redeemed by high quality teaching. Good RCRE is not what is written in a scheme of work, important though it is, but is found in the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom.

4.2. Criteria for evaluation

The use of criteria to aid self-review and the evaluation of teaching and learning is good practice.[3] Helpful criteria to review RCRE should be based on the key principles in the guidance of the universal Church (chapter two, key principles one to five), and, as the guidance indicates, an analysis of current social and ecclesial conditions (key principle six). When used in practice, the criteria should illustrate what good RCRE should look like.[4] The criteria, outlined below, focus on three areas: social and ecclesial conditions, the purpose of RCRE, and the content of RCRE. Whilst other areas could be added, for instance how the subject should be taught, these three are sufficient for evaluating the local guidance.

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[1] It should be noted that the RECD is currently being reviewed. See http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/component/k2/item/1003664-re accessed on 02 September 2019.
[2] RDE 73.
[3] For example: Education Scotland, *How Good is Our School? 4th Edition* (Livingston: 2015), in particular section 2.2, https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/frameworks_selfevaluation/frwk2_hgios4.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
Diocese of Westminster, *Diocesan Inspection Handbook* (revised January 2019), in particular, 11-23, https://education.rcdow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Inspection-Handbook-revised-January-2019-final.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[4] *Diocesan Inspection Handbook,* 16.

4.2.1. First criterion: social and ecclesial conditions

Church guidance is clear that each diocese or region must "discern the diverse circumstances" in which it works;[5] and prepare an "*analysis of the situation*" before it plans a scheme or programme.[6] The Christian message must be presented in a "meaningful way" and refer to "the fundamental experiences" of people's lives.[7] This is why "[r]eligion courses require an in-depth knowledge of young people's real needs".[8] The *Catechism* uses an important phrase when it refers to the "necessary adaptation" that must be made to take account of "the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition[s] among all those to whom it is addressed".[9] (See section 2.3.4).

An analysis to identify the main features of current social and ecclesial conditions for England and Wales, and Scotland was carried out in chapter three. When considering the "necessary adaptation" as to how the Christian message should be presented, a good starting point can be found in the Report prepared in advance of the Bishops' Synod on Young People. It states that "[t]he Church cannot start where young people are not and take them where they do not want to go".[10] In attempting to understand where young people are the following issues were identified.

Programmes of RCRE should acknowledge the reality of plural Britain and diversity within the Catholic community. They should not ignore the decline of Christian affiliation; the presence of other religions and, in particular, the growth of no religion; and that not all Catholics, especially young Catholics, attend Mass or agree with certain teachings of the Church. In this context, the desire of young people to find meaning and to exercise personal agency was noted. In terms of wider challenges, the guidance should recognise the need for RCRE to encourage social cohesion and rational autonomy; and acknowledge the challenge in the recruitment, training and encouragement of RCRE teachers.

In light of the above, the following questions are used to evaluate local programmes of RCRE:

Is there an analysis of the situation?

Is it used to justify the approach to RCRE that is adopted?

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[5] GDC 76. See also GDC 31, 76, 110, 124, 133, 135,169, 170, 185, 208, 210.
[6] GDC 279. Italics in text. See also GDC 133. See also CCC 24.
[7] GDC 133. Referenced to CT 36-45. See also GDC 87.
[8] ETT Part III 1(h)
[9] CCC 24, referenced by GDC 133.
[10] Carvalho & Jamison, *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 35.

Does it address the diverse religious landscape of Britain, including diversity within the Catholic community; the growth of other religions and, in particular, no religion; and the desire of young people to find meaning and exercise personal agency?
Does it address some of the internal and external challenges facing Catholic education including the importance of the role and recruitment of RCRE teachers, and the criticism that Catholic schools threaten social cohesion and do not support rational autonomy?

4.2.2. Second criterion: the purpose of RCRE

Church guidance is clear that RCRE is an academic subject that is related to catechesis but must be distinguished from it. As an academic subject it is educationally appropriate for all young people, regardless of religious affiliation and, at the same time, it can encourage faith development and the search for meaning (key principle one, section 2.3.1). This leads to the following questions:

Is RCRE, as an academic subject, distinguished from catechesis?
Are the requirements of academic rigour spelt out and exemplified in the guidance?
Is there an educational rationale that shows how the subject is appropriate for all young people, regardless of religious affiliation?
Are the possibilities for faith development and a search for meaning through RCRE, as an academic subject, considered?

4.2.3. Third criterion: the content of RCRE

The analysis of the Church guidance on RCRE in chapter two argued that the primary focus for the content of RCRE is Christian faith in Christ, encapsulated in the term, the Christian message (key principle two, section 2.3.2). The source of the content of this message is the word of God, expressed in both Scripture and Tradition and that, when presenting the message, Scripture should have a pre-eminent position (key principle three, section 2.3.3); that any presentation of the Christian message must be faithful to the message as received and handed on by the Church (key principle four, section 2.3.4). When presenting the Christian message, RCRE must capture the living nature of Christian faith which requires that the message is related to human experience, especially that of young people (key principle five, section 2.3.4). These principles suggest the following questions:

Is the subject content focused on Christ and the Christian message?
When learning about the Christian message, does Sacred Scripture have a pre-eminent position?

Is the guidance faithful to the Christian message as received and handed on by the Church? How does the guidance relate the Christian message to experience, especially that of young people?

4.3. Application of the criteria to *This is Our Faith*

This is Our Faith (TIOF) is published in two editions. The first document (2011) sets out a rationale for RCRE in Catholic schools, presents a theological framework, and sets out the core learning outcomes for P1 to S3.[11] The second document (2015) repeats the rationale and theological framework, and outlines core learning for S4 to S6.[12] The largest section by some margin in both documents is the core learning.[13] The scheme is based on the educational principles laid down in the national guidance for the whole curriculum in Scotland, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Within this, RCRE has its own statement of principles and practice, and the learning that should be encouraged.[14] The three sections that follow evaluate the scheme in light of the above criteria. The purpose of this evaluation is not to offer a comprehensive review but to identify the main features of the document and its strengths and weaknesses.[15]

4.3.1. Social and ecclesial conditions

There is no explicit analysis of the situation in TIOF. There is an explanation of inductive and deductive approaches, with a recognition that they can complement each other but, as the learning outcomes are based around knowledge and understanding, the deductive predominates.[16]

TIOF recognises that we live in a pluralist world and explains briefly the Church's attitude to other Christians and other religions.[17] In the units on Judaism, Islam and other religions, from P3 onwards, there is some opportunity for learning from as well as about other

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[11] TIOF understands RCRE to include the wider religious life of the school though the programme content is generally restricted to classroom-based learning.
[12] *Senior Phase* (2015). Henceforth, *Senior Phase.* Where there is repetition only the reference to TIOF is provided. In Scotland, school years are named in a different way to England and there is a different cut-off date for entry to a particular year. In Primary school the years are P1 to P7, and in secondary S1-S6. The cut-off date is the end of February in Scotland and the end of August in England.
[13] TIOF 63-292, *Senior Phase* 69-134.
[14] Education Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence, *Religious education in Catholic schools: 'Principles and Practice'*, https://education.gov.scot/Documents/rerc-pp.pdf; 'Experiences and Outcomes', https://education.gov.scot/Documents/rerc-eo.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[15] For a positive appraisal of TIOF with an emphasis on the need for continuing professional development see Roisín Coll, 'Catholic Religious Education in Scotland: Bridging the Gap Between Teacher Education and Curriculum Delivery', in *Global Perspectives*, 179-193. For a negative appraisal see Kieran Scott, 'Problem or Paradox: Teaching the Catholic Religion in Catholic Schools", in *Global Perspectives*, 47-60, especially 51-52.
[16] TIOF 59, 296-298.
[17] TIOF 16-18.

religions.[18] The *Senior Phase* makes no reference to learning outcomes for the study of other religions. Whilst there is mention that non-religious symbols, rituals, and texts may be considered, the scheme is explicit that it will not include "stances for living that may be independent of religious belief".[19] Given that recent data indicates that 74 per cent of all 18-34 year olds in Scotland say they have no religion this is an interesting decision to have made.[20]

In terms of internal challenges, TIOF acknowledges the importance of the teacher of RCRE, understood principally as a transmitter of the living faith of the Church, as a catechist and witness who helps to form disciples.[21] Teachers, who should be on their own journey of faith, accompany young people on theirs.[22] At no point is the teacher's role as educator considered. It is a journey of faith, not an educational journey, and the relationship between the two is not considered. External challenges to Catholic schools and RCRE such as the arguments that they hinder social cohesion, and rational autonomy are not discussed. The issue of sectarianism, which is specific to Scotland, is not mentioned.[23]

4.3.2. The purpose of RCRE

In the introduction to TIOF, RCRE is described as an "educational process" that seeks to develop knowledge and understanding of "significant aspects of Catholic Christian faith", together with skills such as reflection and discernment, and "the beliefs, values and practices which are compatible" with Christian faith.[24] Later, when explaining the nature of religious education, it refers to catechesis and the handing on of faith within the community.[25] In this balance between education and catechesis, the principal emphasis in the guidance is on the latter.[26] In attempting to articulate a catechetical model for RCRE, TIOF has, however, a real problem. Most of the pupils in a Catholic school, even when they affiliate as Catholic, are not active members of the wider Church community in particular the parish. As a result, the term community is left vague and refers in reality to

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[18] TIOF 16, 264, (3-27b).
[19] TIOF 18. The 'Principles and Practice' document suggest the reverse, see *Religious education in Catholic schools: 'Principles and Practice'*, 2.
[20] ScotCen, 'Scots with no religion at record level'.
[21] TIOF 59. See TIOF 57-59. *Senior Phase* 62.
[22] *Senior Phase* 62.
[23] McKinney notes that some argue that Catholic schools are divisive and encourage sectarianism. McKinney, 'Catholic schools in Scotland and divisiveness', 175.
[24] TIOF 9. See also 10-11.
[25] TIOF 12.
[26] For instance, in the foreword to TIOF, mention is made of "recognitio" from the Holy See and a copy of the letter from the Congregation for the Clergy is provided (TIOF i-ii). This is unusual as the particular canon cited under the *Code of Canon Law*, can. 775 §2, refers specifically to catechisms. RCRE is covered by a different canon, can. 804 §1, and "recognitio" is not required. *The Code of Canon Law*, English translation (London: Collins, 2001).

the school community. This undermines the catechetical purpose of the guidance as catechesis assumes a wider commitment to the Church and the parish. No consideration is given to the possibility that, as an academic subject and not as catechesis, RCRE can encourage a deepening of faith and the search for meaning.

A range of skills that should be developed in RCRE are identified in TIOF.[27] It is a helpful list which, if applied to the subject content, is a good basis for understanding academic rigour as it includes interpreting experience as well as critical thinking and analysis. The problem lies in the application of these skills to the content. TIOF states that the central purpose of RCRE is to assist learners to respond to "God's call to relationship".[28] When presenting this call, teachers are advised that they "must propose Roman Catholic beliefs and values as objectively true".[29] This statement immediately limits the range of skills that can be applied in RCRE.[30] No reference is made to the historical development of doctrine, to better understanding and expression of what a doctrine means, or to the authority of a teaching.[31] For, if *all* Catholic beliefs and values are objectively true what need is there for "critical, interpretive and evaluative activity".[32] Critical thinking, whilst listed as one of the skills to be developed, applies only to the search for meaning in life.[33] There is no example in the core learning from P1 to S6 of critical enquiry being applied to Church teaching.[34]

Conscious that non-Catholic pupils attend Catholic schools, TIOF explains that RCRE must be suitable for all pupils through contributing to their personal search for meaning. It outlines different responses that are possible for Christians, other faiths, and all learners, which presumably include those with no religion.[35] For Christians, learning should promote knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and opportunities for a deepening of faith; for adherents of other religions, an understanding of Christian belief and support for "reflection on their own faith tradition and spiritual development"; for all other learners, respect for faith, and the Christian faith in particular, and spiritual

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[27] TIOF 10.
[28] TIOF 9.
[29] TIOF 16.
[30] TIOF 10.
[31] For instance, if pupils are taught that "the sacraments were willed and instituted by Christ" (TIOF 41) and later discover that a comprehensive doctrine of the seven sacraments did not exist before the middle ages, what else might they come to question?
[32] Rossiter, 'What sort of school religious education is needed?', 27. Rossiter argues that these skills should be present in RCRE.
[33] TIOF 10. At no point is critical thinking or critical enquiry defined in TIOF or Curriculum for Excellence.
[34] The merest hint can be found in this outcome: 'I have examined situations which pose a moral challenge". TIOF 289
[35] TIOF 63.

development.[36] This is a helpful list that is consistent with the *Directory* but it shares the deficiency, identified earlier, of dividing young people into three discrete categories when a young person's identity is often fluid and could include faith, doubt and lack of faith.[37] It differs from the *Directory* in that it makes no reference to the "great existential concerns" common to all, or the need to examine one's own choices more deeply.[38] In delivering these learning outcomes in TIOF, the onus is placed on the teacher to be sensitive to the differences. Given the nature of the outcomes and the way they are framed, it is difficult to see how they might be adapted by a teacher and apply to all the young people in the classroom. For instance, the S2 outcome, "I know that Jesus is truly divine and truly human and I can acknowledge Him as our Saviour who brings the New Covenant", does not allow much scope for adaptation.[39]

4.3.3. The content of RCRE

The content (principally knowledge and understanding) is found in both the core learning and the theological framework. The latter "is intended to provide readers with an accurate outline of the main teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith which will be addressed in Catholic religious education".[40] Together with the related core learning, it is divided into eight strands:

Mystery of God

In the image of God

Revealed truth of God

Son of God

Signs of God

Word of God

Hours of God

Reign of God

The theological framework and the core outcomes, though related, benefit from being considered separately. The framework is relatively short, only sixteen pages of text, whilst the learning outcomes are lengthy, two hundred and eighty eight pages for P1 to S6.[41] As both framework and outcomes are divided into the eight strands, and given the length of

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[36] TIOF 63.
[37] GDC 75. See section 1.3.2, Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 235-236.
[38] GDC 75.
[39] TIOF 243.
[40] TIOF 22. No distinction is ever made in TIOF between Tradition and traditions.
[41] TIOF 69-292; *Senior Phase* 69-134.

the latter, it is very difficult to discern what is essential, core content, as opposed to what is supplementary.

The theological framework could be described as a selective summary of the *Catechism* as it tries to present an understanding of Catholicism. Despite "the central place of Jesus Christ" being emphasised in the introduction and the repeated reference to God in the titles of the strands, the focus for learning is the Church.[42] For instance, great emphasis is placed on the Magisterium and in the first strand, the mystery of God, the theological framework refers not to the good news of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-2) or the good news of God (Mk 1:14-15) but to "[t]he Good News of Christianity".[43] This emphasis on the Church leads to reduced emphasis on Sacred Scripture, and a sharp distinction between the Church and the world. [44]

With regard to Scripture, you might expect the theological explanation of the word of God strand to be an opportunity to stress its importance.[45] In six short paragraphs, only three are devoted to Scripture and only one suggests how it might be used to inspire and encourage Christian life. There is no other specific section or strand on Scripture and the over-riding impression from this explanation of the word of God is the importance of Sacred Tradition and its authoritative interpretation by the Magisterium, emphasised twice. In justifying this emphasis, TIOF makes selective reference to the *Catechism*. It does not mention, as the *Catechism* does, that the "Magisterium is not superior to the word of God, but is its servant";[46] or, that "the Church desires that in the ministry of the word, Sacred Scripture should have a pre-eminent position".[47] In the theological framework for TIOF the relationship between Scripture and Tradition appears to be reversed.

TIOF aims to be faithful to Church teaching. It does, however, in its theological framework, demonstrate a particular interpretation of Church teaching in making a sharp distinction between the Church and the world. Consideration of three strands provides evidence of this. The seven paragraphs of the signs of God strand has one sentence on God's presence in all people and all creation. The remainder is devoted to God's presence

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[42] TIOF, introduction, 7.
[43] TIOF 25. References to the Magisterium, include TIOF 25, 33, 40, 44, 45.
[44] In the theological framework of TIOF there are 98 references, 22 are from Sacred Scripture, 46 are from the *Catechism*.
[45] TIOF 44-45.
[46] CCC 86. Referenced to DV 10.
[47] GDC 124.

in the Church and in the sacraments.[48] In the hours of God strand, the focus is entirely on prayer and the liturgy with no mention that all hours belong to God including hours at work, at play, with our family and friends, when we work for his Kingdom. The reign of God strand, where you might expect an explanation of the Church being of service to and a sign of the Kingdom, simply equates the Church and the Kingdom of God. There is no suggestion that human advancement and the Kingdom might be related, or that whilst the "progress of culture and society" can be distinguished from the progress of the Kingdom "this distinction is not a separation".[49] There is no mention that the active presence of the Holy Spirit can be found outside of the Church; or that the Church can learn from the adherents of other religions and those with no religion.[50] This strong emphasis on the Church vies with and at times replaces a Christo-centric focus.

Without the Church we cannot know Christ but the Church is not the object of Christian worship and, as Henri de Lubac SJ explains, "we cannot believe in her as we believe in the Author of salvation".[51] The problem is compounded by the instruction in the rationale that "teachers must propose Roman Catholic beliefs and values as objectively true".[52] By making this claim, the idea of God becomes separated from human consciousness. David Grumett, in his study of de Lubac, argues that if you consider your understanding of God to be objective, you will "quite possibly have concealed within it particular suppositions which present God in the image of particular powerful voices in Church or theology and silence other voices".[53] TIOF, especially in its theological framework, is in danger of doing just that.

In its introduction, TIOF acknowledges that RCRE "will involve a process of continual dialogue between the life experience of the learner and the various elements of Catholic Christian faith".[54] As a result, learning outcomes start with the first person. For instance: "I have deepened my understanding of the Reign of God by considering the meaning of the Beatitudes".[55] This is a helpful way of showing a living faith. The problem is that the link to experience in the learning outcomes is always prescriptive and limited. There is no

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[48] TIOF 40-41.
[49] CCC 2820.
[50] GS 44, 62.
[51] Henri de Lubac SJ, *The Splendour of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (London: Sheed & Ward, 1986), 20. (Reprint of 1979 edition, first published in 1956).
[52] TIOF 16.
[53] David Grumett, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007), 116. This is Grumett's explanation of de Lubac's argument.
[54] TIOF 10. See also 13, 14,15.
[55] TIOF 259.

indication that TIOF uses and applies its own understanding of experience which includes "questions and issues that arise in everyday life".[56] No attempt is made to distil or prioritise the large quantity of content in the light of experience, and no examples are provided of the adaptations that could be made given the lived experience of young people.[57] There is no suggestion as to how the content might be interpreted in different ways, no question of disagreement with Church teaching, of diversity of views within the Catholic community or how either might be addressed by the teacher or pupil. The Church and its teaching are always portrayed in an idealised and homogenous manner.

4.3.4. Summary of the strengths and weakness of TIOF

A major weakness of TIOF is that it shows little awareness of current social and ecclesial conditions including plurality and diversity in Scotland as a whole, and within the Catholic community. Any desire by young people to exercise personal agency in a search for meaning is ignored, as is the reality of no religion despite its prevalence amongst young people. TIOF presents no ideas or arguments to show how Catholic schools and RCRE can support social cohesion and rational autonomy, and challenge sectarianism.

In terms of purpose, the educational goals of TIOF are good and compatible with the criteria developed in this thesis.[58] They focus on all learners, are Christo-centric and stress the relationship between revelation and human experience.[59] In explaining the purpose of the subject, however, its conflation of RCRE and catechesis leaves it open to the criticism that it is not educationally valid for all pupils. The possibility that as an academic subject, and not as catechesis, it can contribute to faith development and the search for meaning is not addressed. Whilst the list of skills it provides is good, they are not uniformly transferred and exemplified in the learning outcomes.[60] For instance, there are no examples of critical thinking and analysis being applied to Church teaching.

There is so much content in TIOF that it is difficult to see what is important for young people to know. What is even more problematic is the theological framework which is Church-centric and not Christo-centric in focus, does not place appropriate emphasis on Sacred Scripture, and creates a sharp distinction between the Church and the world.

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[56] TIOF 14.
[57] This is especially evident in the *Senior Phase*.
[58] TIOF 9.
[59] TIOF 7, 10, 11.
[60] See TIOF 10 for the list of skills.

4.4. Application of the criteria to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*

The *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD), which is in the process of being revised, provides "guidance for the Religious Education classroom curriculum in Catholic schools".[61] It is not a scheme of work like TIOF but is a shorter document (73 A5 pages) that provides a structure and an overview for teaching.[62] It is divided into four parts plus associated appendices. Part one, relates the current document to its predecessor of 1996, and sets out the context for RCRE and the importance of the RE teacher; part two, the aims of the subject and its methodology; part three, areas of study or content; part four, the content according to age groups. The largest sections are part three, the areas of study, and the related part four, content by age group.[63] Included in the appendices is a statement of levels of attainment based around three strands of learning: learning about religion (AT1), learning from religion (AT2), and journeying in reflection and contemplation.[64] The first two are assessed, the latter is not. The RECD refers to mainstream Catholic schools and to the "needs of children with disabilities and special needs".[65]

4.4.1. Social and ecclesial conditions

An analysis of the situation can be found at the beginning of the RECD. It notes that, whilst the "context of Religious Education has changed significantly over the last fifteen years", the Church's teaching is timeless.[66] In terms of context, it identifies the "focus on the market economy and personal autonomy" as creating a hostile environment and proceeds to identify eight areas that affect the teaching of RCRE.[67] These include a focus on personal choice and the rise of relativism in moral reasoning; selective adherence to Church teaching and suspicion of sources of authority; the influence of 'New Atheism'; the diversity of religious practice in Britain; and the "changing religious and cultural profile of pupils and teachers in Catholic schools".[68] This list identifies many of the external and internal challenges facing Catholic schools and RCRE and is consistent with the analysis of the situation in the previous chapter. The need for adaptation in methods of teaching and

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[61] RECD 1. For a critical review of the RECD see Sean Whittle, 'Religious Education in Catholic Schools in England and Wales: A Critical Assessment of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*', in *Religious Education in Catholic Schools: Perspectives from Ireland and the UK*, ed. Sean Whittle (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018), 143-161.
[62] RECD 10. The local Bishop is responsible for how the RECD is implemented.
[63] RECD 10-52, 53-62.
[64] RECD 63-67.
[65] RECD 1. RCRE for young people with special needs is not discussed in this thesis.
[66] RECD 1.
[67] RECD 1.
[68] RECD 1.

being attentive to experience are also emphasised.[69] There is, however, no evidence of adaptation and it is not explained how teachers should respond to the challenges.[70] There is no reference to different approaches to RCRE, such as inductive or deductive, though there is discussion of both the importance of experience and the need to understand Catholic belief. How belief and experience might be related is not articulated and appears to be left entirely to teachers and local schemes to consider. The short section on experience is completely overshadowed by an account of Church teaching with no explanation of the relationship between the two. As will become apparent, this dichotomy can be found throughout the document.

The RECD acknowledges "the rich diversity of religious practice found in modern Britain", the "influence of the 'New Atheism' and the rejection of the supernatural".[71] The "[d]esire and longing for God" in all humanity is noted but not developed beyond organised religion.[72] The sections on Judaism and other religions reflect a Church perspective which always relates the religions, including Judaism, to fulfilment in Christ and the Church.[73] At no point in the content does it outline what it might mean to live as an adherent of another religion or how people might be religious outside of organised religion.

The RECD devotes one section to the role of the religious educator.[74] The dominant emphasis is that RE teachers need to be "living witnesses" and it is noteworthy that witness and character are highlighted more than deepening knowledge and understanding.[75] Possibly as an implicit acceptance that most teenagers do not attend Mass, other than passing references, the only place where links to the parish are found is in the content summaries for those aged eleven or younger.

4.4.2. The purpose of RCRE

Archbishop McMahon, in his foreword to the RECD, describes the purpose of RCRE in catechetical language as "hand[ing] on the Deposit of Faith".[76] Later, the primary purpose

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[69] RECD 10. Referenced to the *Catechism* of 1566
[70] RECD 2.
[71] RECD 1.
[72] RECD 41.
[73] RECD 4.1.4, D(d), 4.1.5 E.
[74] RECD 5.
[75] In a list of ten requirements for teachers of RCRE, witness is first on the list, a deepening of knowledge is eighth.
[76] RECD vii. The "deposit of faith", which is safeguarded by the Church, is "the living word of God". GDC 125.

of RCRE is described in educational language as coming to "know and understand God's revelation" which is fulfilled in Christ.[77] The document emphasises that the subject "teaches about the faith in the context of a school which proclaims the Gospel, and invites the individual to respond to the message of Christ".[78] Outside the classroom, a pupil can engage in worship, prayer and outreach activities, described as experience, and this can be integrated with the knowledge received in the classroom.[79] This understanding is supported by reference to Church guidance that states that the subject should be regarded as an academic discipline.[80] In adopting this understanding, the RECD is similar to the educational approach from Australia (see section 1.3.1).

Putting aside the argument in this thesis that the content of RCRE must be related to experience, the educational aims in the RECD require further analysis. For instance, when the document spells out in some detail the aims of RCRE it includes, in order: presentation of a comprehensive content (understood as knowledge and understanding) of the Catholic faith; development of religious and theological understanding (undefined); presentation of the Church's moral and social teaching so that pupils can critique contemporary culture; awareness of other religions to respect and understand them; development of critical faculties in order to relate faith to life; stimulation of the imagination to encourage a search for meaning within the Catholic faith.[81] The statement of aims concludes with the following:

> The outcome of excellent Religious Education is religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills … to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.[82]

This is an important statement that needs analysis. First, there is no explanation of what it is to think ethically or theologically, or what it is to be religiously literate.[83] Second, it is not clear how this relates to previous statements in the RECD that are Christo-centric such as "know and understand God's revelation" which is fulfilled in Christ; and that RCRE

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[77] RECD 3.
[78] RECD 3.
[79] RECD 4.
[80] RECD 3.
[81] RECD 6.
[82] RECD 6. Taken from the RECD of 1996.
[83] If the phrase, "and engaged" is removed or reduced to be being engaged in the learning process, then this outcome could also apply to RE in non-denominational schools.

must "present the Christian message".[84] Third, the assumption is that religious literacy involves knowledge and understanding of Catholicism, and that to think ethically and theologically is to be able to explain what the Church teaches. In putting forward this outcome and these aims, the RECD highlights the strengths and the weakness of the religious literacy approach identified in chapter one (1.3.1). It presents Catholicism as a given that needs to be understood. It overlooks the diverse ways that Catholics live their religion, including selective adherence to Church teaching, downplays the importance of experience, and loses a sense of religion changing and developing. The current RE Adviser to the English and Welsh Bishops supports this understanding and argues that "[t]he core purpose of RE in Catholic schools is to ensure that all pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the Catholic theological tradition".[85] He uses the terms "theological literacy", which he proposes is the core purpose of RCRE, with a deepening of faith a spin-off and "incidental". In this way he makes the case that the study of Catholicism can be appropriate for all pupils, regardless of religious affiliation, because it does not require Christian faith.

An alternative version of the aims and purpose of RCRE can be extrapolated from the levels of attainment in RE and the related strands of learning: learning about religion (AT1); learning from religion (AT2).[86] Leaving aside for the moment the third strand, journeying in reflection and contemplation, which is not assessed, the ATs provide a basis for assessing pupils' work over nine levels, one to eight plus EP or exceptional performance.[87] The descriptors associated with the ATs and the levels reflect a different model of religious education. For example, they are not limited to a study of Catholic Christianity but seek to "[p]rovide independent, and well-informed and highly reasoned insights into their own and others' religious beliefs and world views".[88] There is stress on interpretation;[89] on critical analysis of one's own and others' beliefs;[90] on evaluation of religious and non-religious views.[91] If pupils are to be assessed on these ATs then the purpose of RCRE must include developing the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding so that young people can interpret, critically examine and evaluate their own

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[84] RECD 3.
[85] Robinson, 'Finding purpose in religious education', S3.
[86] RECD 63-67. The ATs have their origin in national guidance for RE for non-denominational state schools though the ATs are no longer used in current guidance. See http://www.reonline.org.uk/assessing/why/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[87] RECD 65-66.
[88] RECD 66, AT2i, EP.
[89] RECD 66, AT1i, L8.
[90] RECD 66, AT2i, L8.
[91] RECD 66, AT2ii, L7.

beliefs and the religious and non-religious views of others. Yet none of this appears in the earlier list of aims for RCRE.[92]

The purpose of RE in the document is confused. If it is educational and not catechetical then why is there reference to the "Deposit of Faith" which is "the living word of God";[93] and why is there no application of critical analysis to Church teaching?

4.4.3. The content of RCRE

In terms of knowledge and understanding, the RECD presents, in part three, what it describes as "a principled statement of the content" divided into four areas: revelation, the Church, celebration, and life in Christ.[94] This is by some margin the longest section of the document and is a careful summary of Church teaching referenced to the *Catechism* and Scripture.[95] In a similar way to TIOF, the sheer weight of content is overwhelming and there is no clear structure to help a teacher prioritise. Whilst the need for adaptation is highlighted no examples are provided. Likewise, though there are references to the importance of experience, the document is weighted towards knowledge presented mainly as formulaic statements.[96] The document does not make explicit the link between Church teaching and human experience. Only one short section is devoted to Christ, two out of forty-two pages, though frequent reference to Christ can be found across the four areas.[97] Given the weight of emphasis on the Church and its teaching, the possibility of an imbalance of focus, away from Christ, can easily be envisaged.[98] There is only one mention of the active presence of the Holy Spirit outside the Church;[99] and the gifts and fruits of the Spirit would appear to be restricted to Christians.[100] There is no suggestion that the Church can learn from others and, in the RECD, as in TIOF, Catholicism is portrayed in an idealised and homogenous manner.

In terms of skills, there is a mismatch, mentioned earlier, between the skills identified in the aims, and the skills in the attainment targets. In terms of the content, it is not evident how there might be scope for "critical, interpretive and evaluative activity".[101] For

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[92] RECD 6.
[93] GDC 125
[94] RECD 10.
[95] RECD 2. In the list of sources, Scripture usually is first. See also RECD 14-16.
[96] RECD 7.
[97] RECD 18-19. Example references to Christ include sections on mission (2.5), sacraments (3.2), dignity of the human person (4.1).
[98] For instance, the section on the sacraments is six pages long. RECD 32-38.
[99] RECD 61.
[100] RECD 43-44.
[101] Rossiter, 'What sort of school religious education is needed?', 27. These skills are encouraged in the national examination Religious Studies for use in England and Wales. Here the structure and rationale of the

instance, the first and predominant reference to interpretation is "[a]uthentic interpretation of the Bible is the responsibility of the teaching office of the Church".[102] If the Pope and the Bishops are the authentic interpreters of God's word in Scripture and Tradition what scope is there for a young person to engage in interpretation?[103] The RECD does, however, develop a strand of learning, journeying in reflection and contemplation, which it distinguishes from learning about and from religion.[104] In a similar way to the educational approach, it points out that reflection and contemplation can contribute to thinking ethically and theologically but understands this strand as aspirational and not appropriate for assessment. Given the exemplars, why this is argued is not made clear. For instance, what makes the following inappropriate for assessment? "Discern how different forms of reflection and contemplation or prayer can be important in people's lives".[105] If pupils do not have some insight into this then their understanding of religion is deficient. Understanding any religion, including Christianity, requires more than insight into its doctrines and teachings.[106] For, as Gerald O'Collins SJ writes, Christian faith "is more than simply confessing a set of truths or affirming some objective facts … [but is about] committing oneself by accepting a personal relationship with Jesus Christ".[107]

Given that the document describes personal autonomy in negative terms it is unsurprising that no guidance is provided as to how a teacher should approach disagreement with or selective adherence to Church teaching in the classroom. Other than acknowledging briefly the changing religious and cultural profile for young people there is no attempt to consider how they might view religion in general or Catholicism in particular, or the different relationships that they might have to the Church.[108]

4.4.4. Summary of the strengths and weakness of the RECD

A strength of the RECD is that there is an analysis of current social and ecclesial conditions which acknowledges, for instance, selective adherence to Church teaching, the desire to exercise personal autonomy and the growth of no religion. Rather than use these factors, however, as a resource to help adapt RCRE, it sees them as a threat to be

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exam is regulated by the Department for Education. For an example see, https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/religious-studies-a-2016.html , the specification for GCSE Religious Studies A, 7, accessed on 02 September 2019.

[102] RECD 15.

[103] RECD 28.

[104] RECD 67.

[105] RECD 67, L6. Possibly the word discern is the issue.

[106] The ATs suggest that pupils, even at Level Two, should "describe some ways in which religion is lived", and "ask questions about what they and others wonder about". RECD 66, AT 1, L2 iii, & AT 2, L2 ii.

[107] Gerald O'Collins SJ, *Fundamental Theology* (Mahwah, New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 146.

[108] RECD 1.

countered. The guidance presents no ideas or arguments to show how Catholic schools and RCRE can support social cohesion and rational autonomy.

The aims of the RECD are educational but fail to explain what it means to think ethically or theologically. The aims and the related content do not suggest opportunities for thinking outside of what it proposes as a "principled statement of the content". As a result, it does not suggest that critical enquiry can be applied to Church teaching. Whilst it differentiates education from catechesis its references to the latter confuse its purpose.[109] In addition, there is no suggestion that RCRE, as an academic subject, can contribute to faith development.

In terms of content, the "principled statement" is, in the main, a good summary of Church teaching with a strong emphasis on Scripture. There is, however, so much content that the focus on Christ is lost. This is compounded by a failure to relate teaching to experience. The assumption is that it is possible to understand a religion, in this case Catholic Christianity, without appreciating what it means to its adherents or that the adherents might express some diversity in understanding.

4.5. Conclusion

Both TIOF and the RECD have strengths and weaknesses and any evaluation should acknowledge that it is not easy to develop a course or syllabus for RCRE.[110] TIOF takes no account of social and ecclesial conditions and presents the content of RCRE as a set of "objectively true" beliefs and values. The RECD takes note of current conditions and the challenges they bring but sees the challenges as a threat and not an opportunity. Both schemes pay some attention to other religions but neither addresses no religion and what it might mean to be religious outside of organised religion.

A strength of TIOF is its focus on a deepening of faith and a search for meaning though in doing so it confuses the catechetical and the educational. The RECD defines itself as an academic discipline and understands faith development as an activity for outside the classroom. Neither suggest that RCRE, as an academic subject, can encourage faith development and the search for meaning; that critical enquiry should be applied to Church teaching; nor how RCRE can contribute to social cohesion.

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[109] RECD 3.
[110] RDE 73.

Both TIOF and the RECD claim to have a Christo-centric focus but this emphasis is lost in the sheer weight of content much of which is about the Church and its life. In the RECD Christianity is not portrayed as a lived experience and in neither programme is there any sense of the diversity that can be found within the Catholic community. In TIOF, this is compounded by a theological perspective that sets the Church apart from the world and not in dialogue with it. The importance of experience, even though it is restricted and prescribed, is present in TIOF in its learning outcomes though this is not evident in the RECD. In both cases, Catholicism is portrayed in an idealised manner with no mention of any difficulties or ambiguities. There is no hint in either set of guidance of the argument, expressed in the Report prior to the Synod on Young People, that "[t]he Church cannot start where young people are not and take them where they do not want to go".[111]

What this evaluation has demonstrated is that both TIOF and the RECD need considerable revision to be both consistent with Church guidance and appropriate for current social and ecclesial conditions. The remainder of this thesis will provide a rationale for how this revision can be achieved through using the Catholic theological tradition to develop a new approach to Catholic religious education in Britain.

[111] Carvalho & Jamison, *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 35.

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO:

What Catholic theological resources can help to address the weaknesses in the current guidance and develop a new approach to Catholic religious education?

P**art one** of this thesis analysed the guidance of the universal Church on Catholic religious education (RCRE) and identified its key principles and the issues that required further clarification. This analysis was complemented by an examination of current social and ecclesial conditions in Britain which indicated factors that need to be considered when adapting the Christian message in RCRE. **Part two** addresses the issues that require further clarification and the necessary adaptations to how the Christian message could be presented in RCRE.

Chapter five focuses on one principal question and two related questions. The principal question is: how can RCRE as an academic subject be educationally appropriate for all young people and be open to faith development and the search for meaning? In answering this question, it also addresses what academic rigour looks like in RCRE and the relationship between the content of the Christian message and experience. David Tracy's understanding of the "classic" and its interpretation provides a theological basis for answering these questions. In the same chapter, Michael Young's concept of "powerful knowledge", together with the distinction and relationship between cognitive and affective learning, are used to translate theological ideas into educational language. The underlying argument is that whilst knowledge is distinct from experience, certain types of knowledge are related to experience, and that knowledge about religion requires both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. The chapter concludes with the argument that academic rigour, critical enquiry and rational autonomy should be essential elements of RCRE.

Chapter six addresses the question: what does a young person need to know and understand about the Christian message, and what skills, experiences and attitudes will help them to engage with it in a plural and diverse Britain? Church teaching on other religions and its guidance on inter-religious dialogue are used to answer this question. The chapter uses these resources to inform how the aim or purpose of RCRE could be framed; what a young person needs to know and understand to be able to engage with the Christian message in the context of plurality and diversity; and the skills, experiences and attitudes that will help them to do so.

5. Chapter Five: How can Catholic religious education, as an academic subject, be both educationally appropriate for all young people and open to faith development and the search for meaning?

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the case will be made that the Christian message from both a theological (5.1) and educational (5.2) perspective cannot be understood without a relationship between content and experience or, in educational language, between cognitive and affective learning outcomes. In addition, that academic rigour, critical enquiry and rational autonomy must be encouraged in Catholic religious education (RCRE) not just because it is an academic subject but because the nature of the Christian message demands it (5.3). Taken together, these arguments will show how RCRE, as an academic subject, can be both educationally appropriate for all young people and open to faith development and the search for meaning.

The principal theological source for the ideas in this chapter is David Tracy. He is used because, as mentioned earlier (1.2), he takes pluralism and diversity seriously and it is the starting point for his theological reflection. He also places great emphasis on experience as an essential element of understanding the Christian message, an argument which is central to this thesis and evident in the approach to RCRE developed by Thomas Groome (1.3.2).

5.2. Understanding the Christian message: a theological perspective

5.2.1. David Tracy and the task of theology

David Tracy (1939 -) is an American Catholic priest and theologian who, in his theology, holds together a firm commitment to Christ and his message, as witnessed to by the Church, and the reality of pluralism both today and in the past. He argues that "on strictly theological grounds, the fact of religious pluralism should enter all theological assessment and self-analysis in any tradition at the very beginning of its task".[1] At the same time, merely taking pleasure in the beauty of a pluralist world is "unworthy of the commitment of the Christian theological traditions to the Word as bearer of meaning and truth for all humanity".[2] Tracy argues that the task of the theologian is to make this tradition understandable to the world: to "make explicit the public character of the meaning and

[1] David Tracy, 'Comparative Theology within Theology', in *The Encylopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 446.
[2] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 249.

truth embedded in the Christian classical texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons".[3]

5.2.2. The "classic" and its interpretation

Tracy's idea of the "classic" and how it is interpreted is the principal way that he seeks to make explicit and public the Christian message. The "classic", which can include "[t]exts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons", contains "an excess and permanence of meaning, yet always resists definitive interpretation".[4] The "classic", which can be religious or non-religious, relates to what Tracy calls "lived experience".[5] Both the "classic" and your experience become meaningful when there is a "relationship between a mediating symbol, image, myth, or concept and the immediate lived experience of self".[6] When there is this relationship between a "classic" and experience, the "classic" makes manifest something important in our lives. The experience that Tracy refers to is common to all humanity and will be usually referred to as common human experience. The religious classic, is rooted in, but not limited to, what Tracy calls "limit situations" such as a sense of finitude and mortality, principles of order, fundamental trust, wonder, a sense of reality of 'something more', a transcendent sense of justice.[7] At the same time, whilst the "classic" resists definitive interpretation the possibilities for a plurality of interpretations does not validate "a mindless, genial pluralism of let a thousand flowers bloom".[8]

Any interpretation must satisfy criteria, it must be "relatively adequate". This is not a particularly helpful term and Tracy's explanation is complex but further consideration of it can shed light on the meaning of academic rigour in RCRE. The criteria for "relative adequacy" include doing justice to alternative readings, being faithful to the vitality of the "classic", and open to various forms of critical analysis.[9] Tracy uses the term "relative adequacy" because no one interpretation of any "classic" will ever be *the* interpretation.[10] To use another of his terms, you will never have "absolute certainty" in interpretation.[11] Whilst your interpretation must be adequate, unless you engage with a "classic", the truth

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[3] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 55.
[4] David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1987) 12.
[5] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 66.
[6] Ibid., 66.
[7] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 164-165. Limit situations, posed as questions, are also found in the documents of Vatican II. For instance, NA 1; GS 4, 10, 18. Peter Berger provides more examples which he calls "signals of transcendence". Peter L Berger, *Rumour of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1970), 52-73.
[8] Ibid., 319.
[9] Ibid., 121-122. For the application of relative adequacy to the New Testament see *Analogical Imagination*, 306-307.
[10] Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity,* 22.
[11] Ibid., 22.

that it contains will not be manifest.[12] To understand a "classic" is not a matter of repetition of some previous understanding but requires one's own interpretation.[13] When you engage in interpretation you bring your own experience and your knowledge of the "classic" together so that, to use Tracy's expression, "[t]he classic … interprets me as I struggle to interpret it".[14]

This idea of engagement and interpretation, of bringing together your experience and the "classic", is an important idea for this thesis. Whilst it is right to respect, for instance, the interpretation of Scripture by the magisterium of the Church, this cannot be a substitute for your own interpretation.[15] The Church can inform your interpretation, as can a teacher or a resource in RCRE, but neither the Church nor a teacher can interpret for others. You have to do it for yourself. The role of the teacher is to "make explicit the public character of the meaning and truth embedded" in the Christian message through encouraging a young person to engage with and interpret it and, at the same time, ensuring that any interpretation is "relatively adequate". Unless you engage with and interpret a "classic", which in RCRE is the Christian message, you will never gain insight into its meaning. No amount of "relatively adequate" knowledge is sufficient.

To interpret a "classic" you must be able to relate its meaning in some way to your own experience. Tracy calls this process the analogical imagination. He explains that: "We understand one another, if at all, only through analogy. Who you are I only know by knowing what event, what focal meaning, you actually live by. And that I know only if I too have sensed some analogous guide in my own life".[16] This idea of analogy is important for RCRE. If young people are to draw meaning from the Christian message, they must be able to relate it, in some way, to their experience.

5.2.3. Christ is the Christian classic

Christ is *the* Christian classic for at "at the center of Christianity stands not a timeless truth, nor a principle, not even a cause, but an event and a person - Jesus of Nazareth experienced and confessed as the Christ".[17] Related to Christ are other Christian "classics" which can

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[12] Ibid., 28.
[13] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 103.
[14] Ibid., 119.
[15] TIOF places emphasis on both explanation and interpretation by the Magisterium. TIOF 44-45.
[16] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination,* 454–455.
[17] Ibid., 317.

include "texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons".[18] These show some insight into his meaning and are mediated to Christians through the Church.[19] In RCRE, young people can be encouraged to engage with and interpret Christ and related "classics", and the subject can make "explicit the public character of the[ir] meaning and truth". As *the* Christian "classic" Christ is relevant to Christians and as *a* classic to non-Christians and those of no religion. A non-believer can learn about and interpret the Gospels, the life of a saint or Church teaching such as the incarnation. He or she does not have to believe to appreciate its meaning and relate it to their experience. If such topics are not or cannot be related to the life of a non-believer, the likelihood is that it will make little sense to others, including Catholics. For, as Church guidance makes clear, Church teaching must relate to experience; or in Tracy's words, "all theological statements involve an existential dimension".[20] To adapt the terminology used in *Educating Today and Tomorrow* (2014), for all pupils in RCRE, "knowing" does not require "believing" but does require interpretation.[21]

5.2.4. Tracy and the Catholic tradition

It would be inappropriate to use the work of one Catholic theologian to help to build a new approach to RCRE. Tracy's ideas of the "classic" and its interpretation, and the need for the Christian message and common human experience to be related must be rooted in the wider Catholic tradition.

With regard to the "classic", Henri de Lubac points out that over the centuries the need for ongoing interpretation is found in the Catholic tradition. He refers to Andrew of St Victor (c1110-1175) who proposes that revelation "is discovered in such a way that there always remains something to discover";[22] and to Newman, that "Catholic dogmas are … but symbols of a divine fact, which, far from being compassed by those very propositions, would not be exhausted, not by a thousand".[23] Pope Francis, proposes that "religious

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[18] The *Directory*'s list of supplementary "sources" includes: liturgical texts, patristic writings, creeds, testimonies of saints, theological reflection. GDC 97.
[19] Ibid., 318-325. Tracy makes the point that in the New Testament and in the Christian tradition, there is always a plurality of interpretations. *Analogical Imagination*, 254.
[20] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 47. See also, "there is no theology which is not also an anthropology. There is no Christian anthropology that is not also a theology". *Analogical Imagination*, 435.
[21] Referring to ETT, Part III, 1(h).
[22] De Lubac, *Splendour of the Church*, 28; reference to Andrew of St Victor, *Prologue to the Explanation of Isaias*.
[23] Henri de Lubac SJ, *The Christian Faith: The Structure of the Apostles Creed*, trans. Illtyd Trethowan & John Saward (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 125; reference to John Henry Newman, sermon of 8 February 1843.

classics can prove meaningful in every age; they have an enduring power to open new horizons, to stimulate thought, to expand the mind and the heart".[24]

In section 2.2.4, the case was made for the importance of relating the Christian message and experience. In doing so, reference was made to Pope John Paul II and his argument that "revelation is not … isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed to it";[25] and in *Dives in misericordia* of the fundamental importance of the link between theocentrism and anthropocentrism.[26] Avery Dulles SJ in his discussion of different models of revelation shows that the Christian message can be interpreted in different ways, and his models can be used to support the argument that learning in RCRE must hold together both content and experience. [27] Dulles outlines seven models though only two are needed to make this point. The "propositional" model, his first, understands faith as "assent to revealed truths on the authority of God the revealer".[28] This model, when applied to RCRE, would focus on knowing the content of Church teaching. In his seventh model, the "personalist" model, faith "is not only a mode of knowing, it is something completely different from simple cognition. It is an essentially personal act … [which] … gives a definite orientation towards one's entire being".[29] In presenting this model in RCRE, experience would have an important role. Dulles argues that the different models are complementary: not either/or, but both/and. His argument supports the principle that teaching and learning the Christian message in RCRE requires that the content of the Christian message and experience can be distinguished but should not be separated. These brief illustrations show that the ideas of Tracy that are explained and used in this chapter are supportive of the Catholic tradition and therefore appropriate for use in developing a new approach.

5.2.5. Using Tracy to develop a new approach to RCRE

Tracy's approach to theology and to understanding the Christian message (and any other "classic") makes the case that the academic study of the message is incomplete or deficient if it is not interpreted. For this to happen, your ("relatively adequate") knowledge of the Christian message (the "classic") must be related to your experience and be interpreted.

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[24] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium* (2013), 256, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth EG. Referenced in LS 199.
[25] CT 22.
[26] *Dives in misericordia* (1980), 1. See also Ratzinger, 'Dei Verbum', 171.
[27] Avery Dulles SJ, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 170-181.
[28] Ibid., 170
[29] Ibid., 179, Dulles is quoting de Lubac, *Christian Faith*, 145-146.

This neither requires nor excludes a faith commitment and it provides a basis for showing how RCRE, as an academic subject, can be educationally appropriate for all young people regardless of their religious affiliation and, at the same time, be open to faith development and a search for meaning.

This interplay between experience and understanding is important in the context of the perceived desire of young people to exercise personal agency and search for meaning.[30] For neither a teacher nor the Church can interpret for you. You have to do it yourself, and it is only when you relate a "classic" to your own experience, through analogy, is meaning obtained. Teachers must, however, be realistic as to the level and the extent that interpretation will be possible in the classroom. Tracy himself notes that it appears to be a feature of our time that people do not reflect on "limit situations" or ask fundamental questions about life.[31] Teachers will have to consider how to encourage pupils to reflect on the Christian message and relate it to common human experience, mediated through the experience of living in a particular place, at a particular time. Tracy's ideas - the "classic", interpretation, the importance of experience, analogy and "relative adequacy" - need translation into educational language which is the purpose of the section that follows.

5.3. Understanding the Christian message: an educational perspective

5.3.1. Michael Young's concept of "powerful knowledge"

Michael Young argues that subject knowledge should be at the heart of the curriculum and is critical of approaches that are too learner centred and rooted in experience.[32] His argument is a valuable reminder of the importance of subject content and a helpful caution to an over-emphasis on experience. For, as he notes, "pupils do not come to school to know what they already know from experience".[33] Subject knowledge should take pupils beyond experience and whilst pedagogic criteria apply to the "selection, sequencing and pacing" of knowledge, they do not apply to the content of the subject.[34] Young develops his argument by explaining that all knowledge is fallible and that there is always better knowledge. Fallibility does not mean that "anything goes" and, depending on the subject and the level of difficulty of study, students have to take some knowledge "on trust".[35] But

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[30] See section 3.3.2.
[31] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination,* 342.
[32] Michael Young, 'Overcoming the crisis in curriculum theory: a knowledge-based approach', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 45:2 (2013), 101-118, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2013.764505 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[33] Ibid., 111.
[34] Ibid., 109.
[35] Ibid., 108-109.

within "any specialist knowledge community, there are rules and concepts which always leave open some questions". There is always, therefore, "better knowledge, more reliable knowledge, knowledge nearer to truth about the world we live in and to what it is to be human".[36] Young calls this "powerful knowledge" and its two key characteristics are that it is "specialized" and it is "differentiated".[37] The former means that it is a subject discipline with a clear boundary around it; that any inter-disciplinary study is predicated on the "discipline-based knowledge" of the subject. It is also "differentiated from the experiences that pupils bring to school or older learners to college or university".[38] Young accepts that it is easier to apply this understanding of "powerful knowledge" to science and similar subjects but argues that it also applies to literature and the arts: "great art works are 'powerful' because they engage with feelings such as guilt, remorse, regret, responsibility and joy that are emotions experienced in particular contexts but common to all human beings".[39] So, having questioned the place of experience, Young appears to suggest that what is described in this thesis as common human experience is a form of knowledge in literature and the arts, the curriculum areas that have most in common with RCRE.

Relating Young's argument to RCRE draws out two ideas that are found in Church guidance. The first is the need for faithfulness in how subject knowledge, in this case the Christian message, is presented. It is not based simply on experience. It is safeguarded by the Church, and handed on and received by Christians, who then enrich it through their experience.[40] In terms of Church teaching some knowledge must be taken on trust, whilst other knowledge can be discussed and questioned. The Church suggests this when it refers to the different levels of authority found in Church teaching.[41] Second, if knowledge in RCRE is to become "powerful", you need to be able to relate your knowledge to your experience (common human experience.) Understood in this way, Young and Tracy have much in common. To understand the "powerful knowledge" of the Christian message we have to relate it to something in our lives, to our experience.

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[36] Ibid., 107.
[37] Ibid., 108.
[38] Ibid., 108.
[39] Ibid., 109.
[40] What the *Directory* refers to as the "*traditio-redditio symboli".* GDC 78.
[41] The basic categories of Church teaching range from definitive dogma through definitive doctrine and non-definitive authoritative doctrine to prudential admonitions and provisional applications of Church doctrine. Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority*, 101-102.

5.3.2. Cognitive and affective learning: Bloom's taxonomy

Amongst the best known and more enduring studies of cognitive and affective learning is what is commonly known as Bloom's taxonomy. Developed in the 1950s and 1960s, it divides learning objectives into three categories: cognitive, affective and psychomotor.[42] The authors also propose three sources for agreeing educational objectives: 1) information about the students, their development, needs and interests; 2) the "conditions and problems of contemporary life"; and 3) the "nature of the subject matter".[43] Bloom and his fellow authors acknowledge that this will produce too many objectives. Selection is therefore necessary and should be made on the basis of a philosophy of education, values, and the psychology of education - what is feasible and age appropriate.[44] There are obvious parallels here with Church guidance. There is subject content, the Christian message, but content alone does not determine the learning objectives. RCRE, in a similar way to all subjects, should be adapted in light of the particular group of students and "the "conditions and problems of contemporary life". This need for adaptation is therefore not unique to RCRE. It is necessary for the teaching of any subject but of more immediate relevance is the relationship between the cognitive and the affective in RCRE.

A detailed study of this relationship is outside the scope of this thesis and the argument is limited to whether cognitive learning in RCRE needs to be related to affective learning.[45] Bloom and his fellow authors found it much harder to write about the affective in comparison to the cognitive.[46] They note that whilst the distinction between the two domains is important they can and do overlap.[47] They divide the cognitive domain into six major classes or categories which provide a helpful summary of the skills necessary for critical enquiry: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.[48] In contrast, at the heart of the affective domain is "internalization", the relationship between what is being studied and one's identity.[49] Here there are five categories: receiving, responding, valuing, organization, characterization by a value

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[42] Benjamin S Bloom, David R Krathwohl & Bertram B Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the classification of educational goals. Handbook One. Cognitive Domain* (London: Longmans, 1956) 7-8. See also, by the same authors, *Handbook Two: Affective Domain* (London: Longmans, 1964).
[43] Bloom et al, *Cognitive Domain* 26. Their definition of an objective is: "By educational objectives, we mean explicit formulations of the ways in which students are expected to be changed by the educational process".
[44] Ibid., 27.
[45] In a wider context for RCRE, including outside of the classroom, it would make sense to include the third domain, psychomotor. Groome's understanding of RCRE as involving "head, heart and hands" does just that. Groome, *Will there be faith?,* 38.
[46] Bloom et al, *Affective Domain,* 8.
[47] Ibid., 7-8.
[48] Bloom et al, *Cognitive Domain* 18.
[49] Bloom et al, *Affective Domain,* 31.

complex.[50] As with all of the classes or categories in their taxonomy, they are sequential. For instance, before you can value something, you have to respond to it and so on.

Given that the *Cognitive Handbook* was published first, and is well known, and that the authors struggled with the *Affective Handbook*, it is unsurprising that the latter has been neglected. The two handbooks also lend credence to the idea that the cognitive and the affective can not only be distinguished but can also be separated. As mentioned briefly in chapter one, some programmes of RCRE, such as the religious literacy and educational approaches, do just that and make a clear distinction between the two. They downgrade the importance of experience and distinguish the cognitive from the affective. They understand cognitive learning outcomes as applicable to all pupils and open to assessment whilst affective outcomes are only for some pupils and are not assessed. This is clearly expressed in this statement from the RE adviser for England and Wales: "[t]he core purpose of RE in Catholic schools is to ensure that all pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the Catholic theological tradition", with a deepening of faith being understood as a spin-off and "incidental to its core purpose".[51] In contrast, one of the arguments that has and will continue to run through this thesis is that when studying religion, cognitive and affective learning (content and experience) must complement each other; that the Christian message cannot be understood without the affective.

5.3.3. Putting together the "classic", "powerful knowledge", and cognitive and affective learning

David Tracy's understanding of the "classic" and its interpretation are the basis for the argument that to understand the Christian message requires that it be related to experience. Without this relationship any understanding of the message will be deficient. As the message relates to common human experience it is open to being understood and interpreted by all pupils, regardless of their religious affiliation. Tracy does not diminish the importance of knowledge but, to use the language of Michael Young, if this knowledge is to become "powerful" it must be related to experience. In educational terms, this means that learning outcomes for all pupils in RCRE must have both a cognitive and an affective dimension. For, whilst the two can be distinguished they should never be separated.[52] This has implications for how the subject is taught and how the content of the message is adapted to enable it to relate to the lives and experience of young people. In the chapter

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[50] Ibid., 37.
[51] Robinson, 'Finding purpose in religious education', S3.
[52] In a similar way to *fides qua* and *fides quae*. See 2.2.3.

that follows Church teaching on other religions and its guidance on inter-religious dialogue are used to address how this adaptation could be carried out. Before moving on, the remaining questions, what academic rigour looks like in RCRE and the role of critical enquiry and rational autonomy need to be considered.

5.4. Academic rigour, critical enquiry and rational autonomy in Catholic religious education

It is not easy to find helpful definitions of the terms: academic rigour, rational autonomy and critical enquiry. These terms are neither defined in curriculum documents such as the guidance for Scotland, *Curriculum for Excellence*;[53] nor prominent in TIOF or the RECD.[54] In fact, you will struggle to find any definition or explanation of academic rigour in a dictionary or encylopedia of educational terms and ideas. Even the term critical enquiry or critical thinking does not appear in two recent examples.[55] In contrast, explanation of the term autonomy is more common. In attempting to explain what these three terms mean, this section will bring together Church guidance, the work of Tracy, Young and Bloom, and more general educational usage as exemplified in educational dictionaries and encylopedias.

5.4.1. Academic rigour and critical enquiry

Church guidance is clear that RCRE is a "scholastic discipline" which should have the same rigour and demands as other academic disciplines.[56] As explained in section 2.2.1, nowhere in the guidance does it explain what academic rigour looks like when applied to RCRE. Some hints are provided, in terms of education as a whole, such as not offering "pre-cast conclusions";[57] refining a "critical sense";[58] and the importance of "critical thinking".[59] Given this lack of detail, further work on what the terms mean is necessary.[60]

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[53] *Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 4, skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*, https://education.gov.scot/Documents/btc4.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[54] In both sets of guidance critical refers to relating faith to life. TIOF 10; RECD 6.
[55] For instance: Gary McCulloch & David Crook, *The Routledge International Encylopedia of Education* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), and Peter Gordon & Denis Lawton, *Dictionary of British Education* (London: Woburn Press, 2003).
[56] RDE 69-70. See also GDC 73; CL 18.
[57] CS 27.
[58] Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009), repeated in the CL 17.
[59] ETT Part III 1(e).
[60] For a recent study of the application of critical thinking in RCRE see JC Go SJ, 'Critical thinking and Catholic religious education: an empirical research report from the Philippines' in *International Studies in Catholic Education* 10: 2 (2018), 184–202, https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2018.1492261 accessed on 02 September 2019.

A helpful introduction to critical enquiry is provided by Robin Barrow and Geoffrey Milburn.[61] Their explanation begins with a description of a critical thinker and the same description could apply also to an academic thinker. Barrow and Milburn identify four elements: the dispositional, which implies an openness to assess and reflect; the intellectual, that you can follow an argument; the strategic, that you know how to tackle the matter; and the contextual, that you know something about the subject.[62] They identify the last element as crucial. What is helpful about their approach is that it avoids the difficulty of identifying particular generic skills and builds a picture of a person who is both able and disposed to use their subject knowledge in a particular way. The dispositional element is important and will be considered further when inter-religious dialogue is examined.

Barrow's and Milburn's explanation complements Tracy's idea of "relative adequacy", Young's "powerful knowledge" and Bloom's analysis of the sequential structure of cognitive learning. Before you can interpret a "classic" you have to have some knowledge of it and what constitutes cognitive learning or "relative adequacy" would need to be determined by the age and ability of the pupils. In a similar way, the possible affective outcomes would also be age and maturity, rather than ability, dependent.

By way of conclusion, the following explanation, not definition, is offered. Academic rigour and critical enquiry in RCRE avoids offering "pre-cast conclusions";[63] tries to encourage young people to use their knowledge to analyse and evaluate, to interpret and draw meaning. To be able to do this, pupils have to know something, they need to be disposed or motivated to reflect on their knowledge and be guided as to how to do so. Academic rigour and critical enquiry are essential elements, therefore, of engaging with and interpreting the Christian message in RCRE.

5.4.2. Rational autonomy

The term rational autonomy is related to academic rigour and critical enquiry. In broad terms, the assumption is that if you are able to think critically you are more likely to be able to exercise rational autonomy. Use of the term is, however, complex and contested, and it needs some context. Gerald Grace argues that "there has not been, and in human

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[61] Robin Barrow & Geoffrey Milburn, *A Critical Dictionary of Educational Concepts: An Appraisal of Selected Ideas & Issues in Educational Theory & Practice, 2nd edn*. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1986), 77-80.
[62] Ibid., 78.
[63] CS 27.

society, cannot be, a school or educational experience which is entirely autonomous, objective, neutral and ideologically free".[64] At the same time, one of the major challenges to faith schools is that they are said to threaten the rights of the child by indoctrinating and hindering rational autonomy (3.3.1).[65] As a result of this argument, it was proposed in chapter three that RCRE should address this challenge (3.4). Contrasting ideas as to what rational autonomy means can be found when comparing two explanations of the term. Whilst both stress that it implies thinking for yourself, they place the concept in a very different setting.

The more recent sees rational autonomy as a "modest counterweight to the power of home and culture", and as upholding the young person's "right to opt out of one's parents' or community's way of life".[66] They link critical thinking (undefined) and rational autonomy with the latter requiring the former. Written some three decades earlier, Barrow and Milburn develop two ideas which do not appear in the later explanation. They propose that when considering rational autonomy, it is important to take into account the "nature of what one is concerned with".[67] For instance, in a medical context, you can exercise rational autonomy and decide that the physical symptoms you are experiencing are unimportant, and be wrong. They also note that "[i]f we wish to end up with autonomous adults we need to ensure appropriate understanding, and this this might be best developed in situations where much of the time students are not granted much autonomy".[68] They go on to state that they do, however, need some experience of it. These two contrasting insights into rational autonomy reflect the times in which they were written, with the more recent taking into account concerns for the rights of the child; a concern expressed by Mary McAleese in relation to the *Canon Law* of the Church.[69] Rational autonomy can also be related to the idea, proposed by Casson, Madge and others, that young people want to exercise personal agency (3.3.2). If personal agency is defined as the desire for young people to be "active participants in the process of their own socialisation", hopefully some element of the rational can be part of that process. [70]

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[64] Grace, *Faith, Mission and Challenge in Catholic Education*, 26.
[65] For instance, Humanists UK are highly critical of the limited nature of confessional RE and the assumption that children share the religion and beliefs of their parents. See https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/schools-and-education/faith-schools/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[66] 'Autonomy' in McCulloch & Crook, *The Routledge International Encylopedia of Education,* 44.
[67] 'Autonomy', in Barrow & Milburn, *A Critical Dictionary of Educational Concepts,* 32.
[68] Ibid., 33.
[69] Mary McAleese, 'Children's Right and Obligations in Canon Law' (PhD diss., Pontifical Gregorian University, 2019).
[70] Madge et al, *Youth on Religion,* 15.

If the rational aspect of autonomy is emphasised then it must mean that indoctrination, which does not encourage or equip a pupil to think for themselves, is not part of the educational experience. Michael Leahy provides a helpful insight into how to avoid indoctrination and in doing so defines the term: "A teacher indoctrinates students in respect of P (some proposition or set of propositions) by teaching students P without at the same time providing them with the 'critical apparatus' necessary to enable them rationally to appraise P".[71] Brian Davies suggests something similar when he argues that Aquinas would have worked on the assumption that you should "inform your students of the best that has been said against what you are telling them, and help them to reflect on it".[72]

What these different explanations of rational autonomy show is that its exercise must involve more than choice or agency. Ideally, it should be informed by academic rigour and critical enquiry both of which presuppose some knowledge. It should include examination of taken-for-granted assumptions and be open to scrutiny for there is, as Grace explains, no society or educational system that is "entirely autonomous, objective, neutral and ideologically free". This explanation of the term, with autonomy differentiated from mere agency and choice, and rooted in academic rigour and subject knowledge, is summed up in Bloom's sequential list of the six main categories for writing cognitive learning outcomes: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.[73] On the assumption that knowledge is implicit, the list could also be summed up by Rossiter's suggestion that RCRE courses need to be adapted to encourage more "critical/interpretive/evaluative activity";[74] and Sullivan's idea of agency that supports the idea of young people deploying their formation and learning in daily life.[75]

Rational autonomy, academic rigour and critical enquiry are interlinked and the encouragement of all three are elements of good education and therefore good RCRE. In the latter context, it is helpful to recall that autonomy is essential in coming to Christian faith. For, as *Dignitatis humanae* (1965), explains "[t]he truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with

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[71] Michael Leahy, 'Indoctrination, evangelisation, catechesis and religious education', in *Critical Perspectives on Christian Education*, eds. Jeff Astley & Leslie Francis (Leominster: Gracewing, 1994), 432.
[72] Brian Davies, 'Aquinas on Teaching and Learning', *New Blackfriars* 95, 1060 (2014): 640, https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12089 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[73] Bloom et al, *Cognitive Domain* 18.
[74] Rossiter, 'What sort of school religious education is needed?', 25-26.
[75] John Sullivan, 'A space like no other', in *Does Religious Education Matter?*, 22.

power";[76] and that "as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to it".[77] This is also consistent with Church teaching on conscience and freedom of choice. On the one hand, the teaching recognises that the exercise of freedom has been damaged by sin;[78] and appreciates the dangers of "false autonomy".[79] On the other hand, it asserts a "rightful freedom even in matters religious";[80] and "a sacred reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice".[81] This teaching applies to adults, in Canon Law defined as those over eighteen years of age, but in school, teachers will appreciate that, in practice, agency and autonomy begin to pass to most young people in their early teens. What Church teaching draws out is that RCRE should encourage academic rigour, critical enquiry and rational autonomy, not just to defend itself from those who challenge it but because the nature of the Christian message demands it.

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, theological and educational ideas have complemented each other in answering the question: how can RCRE as an academic subject be both educationally appropriate for all young people and open to faith development and the search for meaning? In doing so, it has also addressed what academic rigour, critical enquiry and rational autonomy look like in RCRE; and that experience and the content of the Christian message must be related.

To sum up, two theological ideas form the basis of the arguments in this chapter.

1) The idea expressed by David Tracy that "all theological statements involve an existential dimension";[82] that the Christian message from both a theological and educational perspective cannot be understood without a relationship between content and experience, cognitive and affective learning.

2) As *Dignitatis humanae* (1965) explains, "[t]he truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth".[83] This supports the argument that academic rigour, critical

[76] Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis humanae*, 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. . Henceforth DH.
[77] DH 3.
[78] GS 17.
[79] GS 41.
[80] GS 26.
[81] GS 41.
[82] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 47.
[83] DH 1.

enquiry and rational autonomy must be encouraged in RCRE not just because it is an academic subject but because of the nature of the Christian message itself.

Taken together, and related to the educational language of “powerful knowledge” and cognitive and affective learning outcome, these arguments show how RCRE, as an academic subject, can be both educationally appropriate for all young people and open to faith development and the search for meaning.

6. Chapter Six: What does a young person need to know and understand about the Christian message, and what skills, experiences and attitudes will help them to engage with it in a plural and diverse Britain?

6.1. Introduction

Whether your goal, as a teacher, is to teach the Catholic religion or, as argued for in this thesis, the Christian message, your first task when planning a lesson or writing a scheme of work is to establish your aim or purpose and then to specify objectives such as what content (knowledge and understanding), skills, attitudes and experiences should be taught to achieve the aim.[1] In chapter five (5.2.2), it was explained that Bloom *et al* propose three sources for agreeing such objectives: 1) information about the students, their development, needs and interests; 2) the "conditions and problems of contemporary life"; and 3) the "nature of the subject matter".[2] This is wholly consistent with the argument in the *Catechism* that the Christian message must be adapted for "differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity and social and ecclesial condition[s]".[3] In this chapter and thesis, adaptation with regard to age and maturity are left to the professional judgement of teachers. The focus of the chapter is the adaptation that is required in light of the current "social and ecclesial condition[s]" or, in Bloom's language, the "conditions and problems of contemporary life". The *Directory* argues that when considering how to do this, the first thing that should be carried out is an "analysis of the situation".[4]

In chapter three, the findings of such an analysis indicate that plurality and diversity are a feature of British society.[5] This includes the decline of Christian affiliation; the growth of other religions and, in particular, of no religion; and that not all Catholics, especially young Catholics, attend Mass or agree with certain teachings of the Church. The argument that was made in chapter three, which is taken up again in this chapter, is that RCRE must face this challenge. To apply the terminology of Francis X Clooney SJ to RCRE, the subject

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[1] This division into content, skills, attitudes and experiences is based on the programme for Scotland, TIOF 9-11. This in turn can be related to *Curriculum for Excellence, religious education in Catholic schools, principles and practice*, 2. The RECD uses a broadly similar format, see RECD 6. The great advantage of the TIOF model is its simplicity and clarity.
[2] Bloom et al, *Cognitive Domain*, 26.
[3] CCC 24.
[4] GDC 133, 279.
[5] In this thesis the terms "plurality" and "diversity" are broadly defined. They refer to the variety of religious and non-religious viewpoints that are found in Britain, and to different views that are found within the Catholic community.

cannot ignore the diversity that is both "around us" and "within us".[6] Clooney understands the diversity that is "around us" in terms of the presence of other religions. He argues that this, in turn, can "unsettle" and raise "awkward questions" about religious commitment which then leads the diversity, which is "around us", to become a diversity "within us".[7] The evidence of chapter three, with particular regard to young people, would support Clooney's argument and extend this diversity to beyond the religious dimension. Programmes of RCRE must not ignore this diversity. If they do, they are not equipping young people and their teachers to deal with the "awkward questions" which will arise, which may or may not be articulated in the classroom. This is the context for the objective of this chapter which is to answer this question: what does a young person need to know and understand about the Christian message, and what skills, experiences and attitudes will help them to engage with it in a plural and diverse Britain?

It is important to note that this context is recognised in Church guidance on education. The Congregation for Catholic Education describes plurality as "a plain fact in today's world";[8] and rather than present it as a problem the Congregation sees it as an opportunity to be used in Catholic education.[9] It states that schools should become "place[s] for dialogue … encourage[ing] attitudes of respect, listening, friendship and a spirit of collaboration".[10] An indispensable condition for achieving this is an "openness to plurality and difference".[11] The document proposes that "teaching has the duty to favour dialogue, as well as cultural and spiritual exchanges".[12] Whilst the guidance encourages recognition of diversity "around us" and dialogue with others, it does not develop specific ideas as to how to respond to it or to the diversity that is "within us". Other resources or tools within the Catholic tradition are needed to help address this challenge.

A good starting point for considering possible resources can be found in an address given by Pope Francis on how to renew theological studies. He explains that presenting the Christian message ("the kerygma") and dialogue are the "criteria for renewing studies"; and he describes a "dialogical way of proceeding [that is] capable of creating a

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[6] Francis X Clooney SJ, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 4-8.
[7] Ibid., 7.
[8] EICD 21.
[9] EICD 27. The document calls this an "intercultural approach". At the same time, the document warns Catholic schools that they must not lose their identity and ethos. EICD 16, 63, 65, 74.
[10] EICD 17. The words are taken from a speech by Pope Francis to students of the Jesuit schools of Italy and Albania, 7 June 2013. The context is an Albanian Jesuit school which re-opened in 1994 and admits children from Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim and atheist families.
[11] EICD 61. Not at the expense of the Catholic identity of the school but because of it (63).
[12] EICD 68.

corresponding spiritual environment and intellectual practice".[13] This involves integrating living faith in Christ "with that of analogy, which discovers connections, signs, and theological references in reality, in creation and in history". When applied to RCRE, this suggests that the subject should not present the Christian message in isolation but should seek to renew and enrich the message through relating it to the world around us. This is not a new idea in Catholic theology and is rooted in what the Church calls natural theology.

6.2. Natural theology and Catholic religious education

Natural theology is "what we can know about the mystery of the divine in light of philosophical reflection; it relies on natural reason, not revelation".[14] This relates to an idea that will recur in this chapter, that Church teaching holds that human beings are by nature religious. How this nature is expressed over millennia has and does take various forms. These different forms are a sign of the human search for meaning which can be understood as a search for truth and for God. This search is expressed in other religions, and also in art, music, drama, literature, philosophy and science.[15] Natural theology is the term that is used to describe this use of reason and it is a much-valued idea in the Catholic tradition. It shows that the human search for meaning and truth is universal; it does not begin with the people of Israel or the Church; and the application of reason and intelligence can lead to belief in God. Natural theology opens up a wide range of possibilities such as art and literature to explore the mystery of God and the mystery of humanity.

The human desire to ask fundamental questions about the meaning of life features prominently in both *Nostra aetate* and *Gaudium et spes*. The former highlights the "unsolved riddles of the human condition" such as: "What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? … Whence do we come and where are we going"?[16] *Nostra aetate* proposes that through this questioning and in some of the responses that humanity has proposed, some people "have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father".[17] In *Gaudium et spes,* the final question is understood as death itself: "it is in the face of death that the riddle of human existence grows most acute".[18] This search for

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[13] Pope Francis, Address on the theme 'Theology after *Veritatis gaudium* in the context of the Mediterranean', Naples, 21 June 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/june/documents/papa-francesco_20190621_teologia-napoli.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[14] Thomas P Rausch, *Systematic Theology: A Roman Catholic Approach* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 3-4.
[15] GS 44, 62.
[16] NA 1. See also GS 10.
[17] NA 2.
[18] GS 18.

meaning is also prominent at the very start of the *Catechism*: "only in God will [humanity] find the truth and happiness [it] never stops searching for".[19]

Another example of natural theology pointing to God the Father is found in Church teaching on the exercise of freedom and the use of reason, both of which are signs of our dignity as human beings.[20] The Church teaches that through reason we are capable of knowing God though reason must be perfected by wisdom and by the gift of faith.[21] In an address, Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that it is "a particularly urgent task of religion today to unveil the vast potential of human reason, which is itself God's gift and which is elevated by revelation and faith".[22] A clear statement of the link between dialogue and reason can be found in the *Catechism*:

> In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists.[23]

This anthropological base, which highlights the search for meaning, can be related to the arguments put forward by Davie and Woodhead about religiosity (3.1.3). It also has the potential to transcend what might be considered as 'religious' to include other ways of searching for meaning such as art, literature, music and philosophy.[24] This idea will be developed further but given the large numbers who say they have no religion, natural theology suggests possibilities for dialogue beyond formal religion.

References to natural theology are noticeably absent in both the RECD and TIOF despite its importance for Catholic theology. This is a missed opportunity as it provides a way of understanding the human search for God; it emphasises our common humanity; it holds together religion and reason and challenges any idea that they are in opposition; and it opens up different ways of exploring the religious dimension. Natural theology must be

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[19] CCC 27.
[20] DH 2.
[21] GS 15. See also GS 12, 59.
[22] Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Muslims in Cameroon, 19 March 2009, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090319_comunita-musulmana.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[23] CCC 39.
[24] GS 44, 62.

completed, however, by revelation for, as Irenaeus (c130-c202) explains, "the Lord did not annul [the law of nature] but extended and fulfilled it".[25]

Natural theology is helpful, therefore, both as a starting point for dialogue and as a complement to understanding revelation but it is not a sufficient resource to help adapt the Christian message in the light of current conditions. Something more is needed from within the Catholic theological tradition to help answer the question: what does a young person need to know and understand about the Christian message, and what skills, experiences and attitudes will help them to engage with it in a plural and diverse Britain? The section that follows makes the case that a good resource for addressing this question is the teaching of the Catholic Church on other religions and its guidance on the related practice of inter-religious dialogue.[26]

6.3. Why the teaching of the Catholic Church on other religions and its guidance on inter-religious dialogue are helpful resources for adaptation

One of the great strengths of using the teaching of the Catholic Church on other religions is that it has the potential to address the challenge laid down by David Tracy that "the fact of religious pluralism should enter all theological assessment and self-analysis in any tradition at the very beginning of its task".[27] It does so, however, from the standpoint of Christian faith and sets out how the Christian message understands religious plurality and diversity. In doing so, it identifies key aspects of the content of the message (knowledge and understanding). This content articulates both the message itself and how it relates to plurality and diversity. Church teaching on other religions also provides the foundation and rationale for the Church's guidance on the practice of inter-religious dialogue. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, when taken together, this theology and the practice of dialogue provides a way of shaping and structuring both *how* the Christian message is taught and *what* is taught. It does so in a way that should help young people to understand and engage with the message in the context of diversity, that is both "around us" and "within us". Using Church teaching on other religions and inter-religious dialogue as a

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[25] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV. Xiii. 1, from *The Early Christian Fathers: A selection of the Fathers from St Clement of Rome to St Athanasius*, ed. & trans. by Henry Bettenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 101.

[26] In this thesis, the term inter-religious is hyphenated, unless a text or author uses it unhyphenated. This follows Tom Greggs argument that "the hyphenated nature of the term is key … [and i]f the very enterprise of inter-faith dialogue replaces or overwhelms the distinctive faith communities … [then it] ceases to be the very means for genuine dialogue that it was designed to be". Tom Greggs, *Theology against Religion: Constructive Dialogues with Bonhoeffer and Barth* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 198.

[27] Tracy, 'Comparative Theology within Theology', 446.

resource or tool also adds an additional dimension. Not only does it help to shape and form the content of the Christian message and how it is taught, it uses the content of the message and the related skills, experiences and attitudes to show how and why Catholics should value, work with and learn from the adherents of other religions. It provides a Christian rationale for social cohesion that can be both implicit and explicit when presenting the Christian message. In turn, the principles that inform Church teaching on other religions and inter-religious dialogue can be applied to non-religious viewpoints and those with no religion. Given the prevalence of no religion, especially amongst young people, this is important. The focus of this chapter, however, is not on teaching other religions or no religion, which are addressed in chapter eight, but on how to teach the Christian message in the light of contemporary conditions. Before engaging with that task, it is helpful to define certain terms and explain what documents will be used to analyse Church teaching and guidance.

6.3.1. Clarifying terms

a) The theology of religions

In this thesis, the term the "theology of religions" means a Catholic "theology of religions". It can be defined as "the theology of the function of non-Christian religions in collective and individual Salvation History".[28] Whilst the actual function of non-Christian religions can be debated certain limits to the debate are clearly laid down.[29] The Catholic Church does not teach exclusivism which holds that "only those who hear the Gospel and explicitly confess Christianity are saved".[30] This teaching has been explicitly condemned by the Church.[31] Neither does the Church teach pluralism, that "all religions are equal and valid paths to one divine reality".[32] If a term must be used to describe Church teaching it is

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[28] This is Karl Rahner's definition. See Karl J Becker, 'Trends in German writing on theology of religions' in 'Christianity and Non-Christian Religions', in *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study*, eds. Karl J Becker & Ilaria Morali with the collaboration of Maurice Borrmans & Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 322.

[29] For an explanation of the various theological positions see International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions* (1997), 4-22, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1997_cristianesimo-religioni_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

[30] Gavin D'Costa, 'Theology of Religion', in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, eds. David, F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 627.

[31] This was made clear by the Holy Office (now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) in August 1949 in a letter concerning Fr Leonard Feeney SJ, https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=1467 accessed on 02 September 2019.

[32] D'Costa, 'Theology of Religion', 627.

inclusivism: that "salvation is possible outside of the explicit Christian church, but this salvation is always through Christ".[33]

b) Inter-religious dialogue

Inter-religious dialogue can be defined as all relations between religions, on an individual and community basis, which leads to "mutual understanding and enrichment", including witness, working together for the good of all, and theological discussion.[34] This understanding of dialogue presupposes commitment to a religion. Use of the term dialogue in this context is different to its use in the dialogical approach to religious education (RE). Whilst this approach encourages reflection on one's own tradition and ideas and stresses that RE must be more than personal narrative as knowledge of religion(s) is required, it is set within a neutral context that makes no assumptions about religious commitment.[35] In inter-religious dialogue and in the context of a Catholic school and RCRE, religious commitment is assumed. It provides the foundation for the school and the subject though this does not mean that faith is required for pupils.

c) Other Religions

The Church's understanding of the term, other religions, is rooted in an anthropology that holds that all men and women are essentially religious and that this religiosity is expressed in different ways. It is not limited to the major religions of the world and is inclusive of "traditional or tribal religions".[36] It is therefore unsurprising that the *Catechism* begins not with the revealed truth of God but with humanity's capacity or search for God.[37] This is important for RCRE. It has implications for how the Christian message is understood, how other religions are taught and how the religious nature of humanity is expressed. In

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[33] Ibid., 627. These three terms – exclusivism, pluralism and inclusivism – are taken from the so-called threefold paradigm or typology first proposed by Alan Race, *Christianity and Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1983). D'Costa has reservation about the typology and argues that all three 'types' are variations on exclusivism. For "pluralism … has its own intolerant, illiberal and exclusivist logic [as] all truth claims other than its own are ruled out," and Christian inclusivism also tends to exclusivism as it ultimately requires participation in the beatific vision (D'Costa, 'Theology of Religion', 638).

[34] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of the Jesus Christ* (1991), 9 http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html
accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth DP. Written in conjunction with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

[35] For further information on the dialogical approach to RE see Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education*, 109-125; Mike Castelli, 'Dialogic skills for religious education', 151-167.

[36] Pope John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), 6, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

[37] CCC 27-49. In the words of Cardinal Ratzinger, "[t]he longing for the infinite is alive and unquenchable within man". Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 137.

addition, it should be noted that the Church does not understand Judaism as an other religion. This is explicit in the remit of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (henceforth the Pontifical Council).[38] Relations with Judaism are the responsibility of the Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, which comes under the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.[39] The reasons for this distinction will become clear in chapter eight where how the Church understands Judaism and other religions is analysed.

6.3.2. The Church documents and other sources that will be used

a) Church documents

The Church has, since its foundation, related to and engaged with people of other religions. A good example of this is found in the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's Areopagus speech in Athens when he praises the religious spirit of the Athenians though they worship an "unknown God' (Acts 17: 22-31).[40] Over the centuries, Church teaching on other religions and their adherents has been articulated in different ways but prior to Vatican II the Church had affirmed that non-Catholics can be saved if they "live honest lives";[41] and later, that all men and women can be related to the Church.[42] At Vatican II, the Church's relationship to Judaism and other religions was addressed. *Lumen gentium* is the first document of a Council of the Church to have an entire section on non-Christians;[43] and *Nostra aetate* sets out an understanding of Judaism and other religions. These documents, and others such as *Ad gentes,* provided an impetus for further theological reflection on other religions and how they relate to Christ and the Church. Even though Vatican II should be considered as as a watershed for how the Church understands other religions, explaining a Catholic theology of religions on the basis of the documents of Vatican II alone is problematic as they do not reflect how the Council has been understood and interpreted over the subsequent five decades. Rather than use the conciliar documents as the principal sources for this and subsequent chapters, five documents, written subsequent to the Council, will be used. These documents are fruitful sources because they are a way into the authoritative

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[38] https://www.pcinterreligious.org/the-nature-and-goals-of-the-council accessed on 02 September 2019.
[39] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_relations-jews.htm accessed on 02 September 2019.
[40] See DP 23.
[41] Pope Pius IX, Encyclical letter on promotion of false doctrines, *Quanto conficiamur moerore* (1863), https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/it/documents/enciclica-quanto-conficiamur-10-agosto-1863.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[42] Pope Pius XII, Encyclical letter on the mystical body of Christ, *Mystici corporis* (1943), 103, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html accessed on 02 September 2019. See, Francis A Sullivan SJ, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), for an account of how the Church's understanding of the doctrine, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus,* changed over the centuries.
[43] Ilaria Morali, 'Salvation, Religions and Dialogue in the Roman Magisterium: From Pius IX to Vatican II and Post Conciliar Popes', in Becker and Morali, *Catholic Engagement* 125.

documents of Vatican II, and they reflect how Council teaching has been received. The five documents also reflect the tensions within the theology of religions especially the different ways of understanding the "function of [other religions] in collective and individual salvation history".[44] They provide evidence to support Ashlee Kirk's argument that "the magisterium has no single, straightforward theology of religions".[45] As will become evident in chapter eight, these differences are helpful for developing the new approach to RCRE, but they must not be over-emphasised for the documents also have much in common.

The five documents are: three documents of the Pontifical Council, *Dialogue and Mission* (1984);[46] *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991); *Dialogue in Truth and Charity* (2014);[47] Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris missio* (1990); and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's statement, *Dominus Iesus* (2000), which will be used mainly in chapter eight in an analysis of other religions.[48] Other documents will be used in a supplementary manner, in particular other encyclicals and addresses by Pope John Paul II, and statements from the International Theological Commission on *Christianity and World Religions* (1997). It is important to acknowledge that the five documents are different in purpose, authority, and in how they have been received. All have a theological understanding of other religions but only *Dialogue in Truth and Charity* considers practical implications. As an encyclical, *Redemptoris missio* is the most authoritative followed by *Dominus Iesus.*[49] In terms of their reception, little has been written about the

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[44] For two different perspectives on subsequent theological reflection see Morali, 'Salvation, Religions and Dialogue', 122-142, and Francis A Sullivan SJ, 'Vatican II and the Postconciliar Magisterium on the Salvation the Salvation of the Adherents of Other Religions', in *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics* eds. James L Heft SM & John O'Malley SJ (Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 68-95.

[45] Ashlee Kirk, 'Between Novitas and Traditio? Analyzing Francis Clooney's comparative Theology in the Light of Doctrinal Roman Catholic Theology of Religions' in *The Normativity of History: Theological Truth and Tradition in the Tension between Church History and Systematic Theology,* eds. Lieven Boeve, Mathijs Lamberigts & Terrence Merrigan (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 158. See also International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions* (1997), 4.

[46] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Mission: the attitude of the Church towards the followers of other religions* (1984), https://www.pcinterreligious.org/pcid-documents accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth DM.

[47] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue in Truth and Charity: Pastoral Orientations for Interreligious Dialogue* (2014), https://www.pcinterreligious.org/pcid-documents accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth DTC.

[48] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, declaration on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, *Dominus Iesus* (2000), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth DI.

[49] An encyclical calls for "as attitude of respectful listening and a willingness to conform one's judgement to [its] teaching as far as one is able to do so". With regard to *Dominus Iesus*: "[a] declaration issued by the CDF with such strong papal confirmation is certainly authoritative, and must be taken seriously by all members of the Catholic Church. But it remains a document of the Congregation, not of the Pope himself, and thus has a lesser degree of authority than a papal encyclical would have". Francis A Sullivan SJ,

documents of the Pontifical Council;[50] though the same cannot be said of *Dominus Iesus* which has provoked considerable comment, much of it adverse.[51] This chapter will show that these five documents are a helpful tool or resource for adapting the content of the Christian message and how it should be taught; and, in the final chapter, how other religions should be taught.

b) Other sources

To supplement Church documents, the work of a variety of mainly Catholic theologians and practitioners of inter-religious dialogue will be used, in particular that of Michael Barnes SJ, Catherine Cornille and Francis X Clooney SJ. The latter is one of the principal advocates of comparative theology, which does not study another religion for its own sake but is a way of "faith seeking understanding … rooted in a particular tradition but from that foundation, venture[ing] into learning from one or more other faith traditions".[52] The experience of these three theologians in the actual practice of dialogue, from a Catholic perspective, enriches the potential resource of dialogue for adapting RCRE.

6.3.3. Applying the theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue to Catholic religious education

This chapter proposes that a Catholic theology of religions and the related practice of inter-religious dialogue has the potential to be a valuable resource or tool for adapting RCRE given contemporary conditions. It is now time to use the resource or tool. To ensure that the focus of the chapter is not lost, the headings for the remainder of the chapter are based on how a programme or scheme of work in RCRE might be set out. The structure or format of the programme for Scotland, *This is Our Faith,* mentioned earlier, is used, with minor variation, as a template.[53] The headings are: the purpose or aim of RCRE; the content (knowledge and understanding) of the Christian message; and skills, experiences and attitudes needed to understand the message.

'Introduction and Ecclesiological Issues' in *Sic et Non: Encountering Dominus Iesus*, eds. Stephen J. Pope & Charles Hefling (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 47.

[50] One helpful review of DM & DP is by Michael L. Fitzgerald, 'A Theological Reflection on Interreligious Dialogue' in Becker and Morali, *Catholic Engagement*, 383-394. Archbishop (now Cardinal) Fitzgerald is one of the authors of DP and is a former President of the Pontifical Council.

[51] Pope & Hefling, *Sic et Non,* contains a number of essays on DI. For a helpful and balanced summary see, Francis X Clooney, 'Implications for the practice of inter-religious learning', 157-168.

[52] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 10.

[53] TIOF 9-11.

6.4. How the guidance of the Catholic Church on inter-religious dialogue can help to frame the purpose or aim of Catholic religious education

A helpful starting point for understanding how inter-religious dialogue can help to form the purpose or aim of RCRE is to appreciate how both dialogue and Catholic schools relate to the mission of the Church. In the documents of the Pontifical Council, the principal elements of the one mission of the Church are expressed as: "living witness"; "commitment to the service of mankind"; "liturgical life … prayer and contemplation"; "dialogue in which Christians meet the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together toward truth and to work together in projects of common concern"; "announcement and catechesis in which the good news of the Gospel is proclaimed".[54] In this description, dialogue is a sub-set of the one mission of the Church, and though distinct from proclamation is "oriented towards proclamation".[55] Catholic education, Catholic schools and RCRE serve the mission of the Church by helping Catholic young people to develop a living faith, and by promoting for them and all others in the school "the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human".[56] Like dialogue, Catholic schools are a sub-set of the mission of the Church, and like dialogue, RCRE is distinct from "announcement and catechesis" but can be considered as "oriented towards proclamation".

Pope John Paul II, in *Redemptoris missio*, explains that inter-religious dialogue is an expression of the one mission of the Church, and that the "two elements [dialogue and mission] must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness". He explains that "they should not be confused, … or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable".[57] He sets out a vision for the purpose of dialogue which is helpful when applied to RCRE. The Pope explains that dialogue is fruitful when it leads to "inner purification and conversion".[58] In order to be fruitful, those engaged in dialogue must have both religious commitment and an openness to learning from others "without pretense or close-mindedness, but with truth, humility and frankness". He continues, "[t]here must be no abandonment of principles nor false irenicism, but instead a witness given and received for mutual advancement, … and at the same time for the elimination of prejudice, intolerance and misunderstandings".[59]

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[54] DM 13.
[55] DP 82. See also DTC 39.
[56] GE 3.
[57] RM 55. For a broadly similar analysis see DP 77-84.
[58] RM 56. See also DM 21; DP 47; DTC 40, 42. The term "inner purification" is a helpful complement to "conversion" as it has no suggestion of change of religion.
[59] RM 56.

So, how does this explanation of the purpose of dialogue help to frame the purpose or aim of RCRE? Like dialogue, the subject is rooted in religious commitment and whilst distinct from proclamation can be "oriented towards proclamation". RCRE should encourage an open-minded attitude towards others and can contribute to challenging prejudice and intolerance. Is it possible, however, for RCRE, as an academic subject, to encourage "inner purification and conversion"? Further consideration needs to be given to this which requires examination of what is meant by conversion as understood in inter-religious dialogue.

Dialogue and Mission devotes four paragraphs to conversion.[60] It does not rule out a change of religion but distinguishes it from the call to conversion which applies to all people: "the humble and penitent return of the heart to God in the desire to submit one's life more generously to him".[61] This call to conversion is found in the religions of the world. Donald Nicholl illustrates this in the context of the search for holiness. For instance, all the religions of the world, "without exception, lay great stress upon the need to order one's day, one's week, month, year and span of years according to a pattern".[62] They do so, not to provide comfort and security, but to aid awareness that every event of daily life can be a spiritual exercise. Once this is understood, God is able to break into the order and disturb it with his presence.[63] If dialogue can lead to conversion, it does so by enabling the disturbing presence of God to enter our lives though engagement with the other.

6.4.1. Application to RCRE

Applying Church guidance on inter-religious dialogue to RCRE draws out some important ideas regarding the purpose of the subject.

1) As an academic subject, RCRE contributes to the mission of the Church.
2) The subject has a role in encouraging open-mindedness, and challenging prejudice and intolerance.
3) The idea of inter-religious dialogue leading to conversion makes manifest something inherent in the nature of the subject, *religious* education. Religion is open to the possibility that the mysterious presence of God can challenge and disturb human life. If that element of the subject is missing in either RE or RCRE then something

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[60] DM 37-40.
[61] DM 37. See also DP 11, 79. The process of (ongoing) conversion can lead to a change of religion in the search for truth but the starting point is always a change of heart. DP 41, 52e.
[62] Nicholl, *Holiness*, 103.
[63] Ibid., 107-110. Theistic language could be substituted by 'ultimate reality'.

fundamental is absent. To appreciate the mysterious presence of God, young people have to relate it, in some way, to their own experience. David Tracy's understanding of the "classic", and his argument that "[w]e understand one another, if at all, only through analogy" provides a rationale for how teachers of RCRE can try to find a way to do this in an educationally appropriate manner. When that happens, conversion of heart is not only possible but a wholly appropriate aim for the subject.

6.5. The content of the Christian message: the religious dimension of humanity

If plurality and diversity are taken seriously then RCRE cannot stand apart and ignore the reality that Christianity is one religion amongst many. The Christian message is not the only message that invites a response and the subject needs to take account of the "diversity around us". Before considering the truth about God that has been revealed, it is helpful to return to natural theology and, from the perspective of the theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue, consider the religious dimension of humanity and what it is to be religious.

6.5.1. How the theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue can aid understanding of the religious dimension of humanity and what it is to be religious

The Church understands that "the religious dimension … is an integral part of the [human] person".[64] This assumption is the basis for the argument that all schools should teach RE.[65] A Catholic theology of religions would suggest that this idea should be integral to understanding what it is to be religious and the religious dimension of humanity.[66]

When describing the religious dimension, Gavin Flood argues that religions should be understood as "cultural forms that mediate the human encounter with mystery".[67] He stresses that "religions are not primarily abstract systems but lived realities … [that] give a sense of identity, a path to walk … Religions are ways of life … which encounter and respond to the raw facts of being … that offer explanations of, and sometimes solutions to,

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[64] Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009).
[65] LC 56.
[66] There is no attempt in this thesis to provide a definition of the term "religion" and as far as possible the broad term, "religious dimension" is used.
[67] Gavin Flood, *The Importance of Religion: Meaning and Action in Our Strange World* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 15.

suffering and death".[68] Jeannine Hill Fletcher emphasises also the "lived" nature of religion, as something that is more than what is written in a book. Her focus on women's lives brings this out very forcefully. She proposes that "[r]eligion is always 'found' embedded in and intertwined with other aspects of our lived condition: economics, gender, social relations, material conditions, life stages, family relationships and more".[69] A similar emphasis on the "lived" nature of religion can be found in Michael Barnes' study of inter-religious learning:

> Before religions like Buddhism and Islam can be categorised as systems of belief, they are communities of faith, groups of struggling human beings who, like their Christian dialogue partners, seek to bring certain sources of wisdom - rituals, texts, devotions, legal and commercial traditions - into correlation with the exigencies of everyday life.[70]

These ideas are supported by the documents of the Pontifical Council and *Redemptoris missio* in their description of the four interrelated forms of dialogue. These are summarised as dialogue in and through daily life; action and work together for the common good; theological reflection; and sharing spiritual insights.[71] Implicit in the interrelatedness of these forms is an understanding that religion is related to the lives of individuals and communities, connecting everyday life and behaviour, systems of thought and spiritual journeys. This emphasises the argument, of previous chapters, that religion is more than a system of thought and must relate to the lives and experience of people (2.2.4, 5.2.2, 6.1.2). It is also a recurring theme of the *Directory* which identifies, in relation to the Christian message, the importance of the lived nature of faith and the need to relate it to experience: "[e]very dimension of the faith, like the faith itself …, must be rooted in human experience and not remain a mere adjunct to the human person".[72]

For Flood, Fletcher and Barnes, the documents of the Pontifical Council, and *Redemptoris missio* religion is not simply an abstract concept or a list of doctrines to be believed but is first and foremost a "lived reality" for individuals and communities. Religion addresses "the great questions" of life and assures us, in the words of David Tracy, that "we can still

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[68] Ibid., 15/16.
[69] Jeannine Hill Fletcher, 'Women in Inter-Religious Dialogue' in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2103), 179.
[70] Michael Barnes SJ, *Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7.
[71] DM 28; DP 43.
[72] GDC 87.

find a fundamental trust in the very meaningfulness of existence".[73] These ideas will be taken up again in the next section on natural theology but for the moment three additional points can be related to the "lived reality" of religion. First, the changing nature of religion; second, how to assess what is authentic; and third, the danger of reducing religion to experience.

The "lived reality" of religion explains why religions change and develop. The Church understands that religious life, thought and practice will change in the light of experience.[74] Francis Clooney conveys this neatly when he provides a highly condensed ten-point summary of Hinduism.[75] The final bullet point in his summary begins "and this complex set of Hindu traditions continues to change today" and ends, "this occurs in relation to other religions, which also keep changing in our changing world".[76] There are, however, problems with an over-emphasis on religion as "lived reality". Does it mean that anything that is a product of and tries to make sense of experience is authentic and acceptable as a religion and in a religion?

Church teaching provides some guidance on this matter. The term "authentic" is used by Pope John Paul II in the context of the World Day of Prayer for Peace in 1986. He includes all those who "seek in religion spiritual and transcendent values that respond to the great questions of the human heart".[77] A few weeks later, in an address to the Diplomatic Corps, Pope John Paul II spoke of

> [r]eligions worthy of the name, the open religions … which are not just projections of human desires but an openness and submission to the transcendent will of God which asserts itself in every conscience … This is also true of philosophies which recognise that peace is a reality of the moral order.[78]

Criteria for assessing authenticity can be found in an essay by Catherine Cornille on the work of Fr Frank De Graeve SJ. Using De Graeve, she proposes that "[i]n 'sizing up' or 'evaluating' other religions, we have to discover their authenticity, their specificity, their

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[73] Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination,* 54.
[74] DV 8.
[75] Clooney *Comparative Theology*, 71-73.
[76] Ibid., 73.
[77] Pope John Paul II, Address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 1986 in *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005),* ed. Francesco Gioia (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 398 (562).The number in brackets refers to the paragraph.
[78] Pope John Paul II, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 10 January 1987, in Gioia, *Official Teaching*, 411 (581). This understanding is inclusive of all "authentic" forms of human reason.

integrity, particularly in their founders, prophets, saints and mystics".[79] She argues that every religion is a mix of authentic and inauthentic forces and she - and De Graeve - caution against caricaturing other religions by comparing them to an idealised form of Christianity. De Graeve insisted on looking at a religion through its "most eminent representatives, its most elevated practices and beliefs, and its most sophisticated philosophical systems".[80] His golden rule of reciprocity was "to treat other religions, as you would have them treat yours".[81] But Cornille, in turn, cautions that this may distort how one understands a religion as a "lived reality". David Tracy would agree with this as he points out that the idea of a "pure religion" is an "exhausted rhetoric" that "makes all religions so pure, so loving, so nice that no recognizable historic expression of religion fits the portrait".[82]

What is less problematic than judging authenticity is the emphasis that dialogue places on the differences between religions which should not be reduced to their social and experiential context. In an age when for many people formal religion has little relevance (see chapter three), the term religion can be used simply as a sociological descriptor.[83] Kirstin Beise Kiblinger in evaluating a range of different theologies of religion argues for a position where "traditions are not gutted of their distinctiveness".[84] She sees this happening, for example, when looking at other religions through the lens of a particular tradition, "seeing how they do in their way what we do in our own", or proposing that all religions "share a common essence … but … vary merely due to cultural and historical circumstances".[85] RC Zaehner uses the phrase "concordant discord" as opposed to "discordant concord" to describe the range of religions.[86] Tracy, who is very alive to the dangers of comparing similarities and differences, avoids using the term similarity and always substitutes it with "similarities-in difference".[87]

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[79] Catherine Cornille, 'The Eleven Theses of F. De Graeve', in Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, no. 9, *A Universal Faith?, Peoples, Cultures, Religions and the Christ*, eds. Catherine Cornille and Vacker Neckebrouck (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1993), 186.
[80] Ibid., 186.
[81] Ibid., 186.
[82] Tracy, *Dialogue with Others,* 10.
[83] See, Woodhead, 'Introduction', 24.
[84] Kirstin Beise Kiblinger, 'Relating Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology' in *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation* ed. Francis X Clooney (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 27.
[85] Ibid., 27.
[86] RC Zaehner, *Concordant Discourse: The interdependence of faiths* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 15.
[87] Tracy, *Dialogue with Others, 42.* For a full explanation see *The Analogical Imagination,* 405-457.

6.5.2. Application to RCRE

Inter-religious dialogue articulates an understanding of the religious dimension of humanity and what it is to religious that can be applied to RCRE. This includes:

1) Religion addresses questions about life and its mystery which supports the argument that human beings are by nature religious.
2) Religion is rooted in experience and as our experience changes so does our understanding of religion. As a result, religion, including Christianity should not be portrayed in an unchanging and ahistorical manner.
3) The Church would challenge the understanding that anything that is the product of human experience should be classed as authentic though it would accept that not everything that is found within a religion, even Christianity, is authentic. As Tracy argues, the idea of a "pure religion" is an "exhausted rhetoric". This challenges the way Christianity is presented in the RECD and TIOF.
4) When teaching other religions, whilst the "lived reality" of religion is important, religions must not be reduced to experience or "gutted of their distinctiveness".

6.6. The content of the Christian message: the revealed Truth about God

One of the failings, identified in chapter four, of both the RECD and TIOF is that they are content heavy. So much is provided that it is difficult to see what is essential to teach as opposed to what might be desirable. This section addresses this problem. It shows how the theology of religions can be a really useful lens or filter for considering what a young person needs to know and understand to help them engage with the Christian message in the context of a plural and diverse Britain. It does not define everything that could be taught in RCRE but concentrates on what is essential and its starting point is the Trinity, "the central mystery of Christian faith and life".[88]

6.6.1. The Trinity

Unitatis redintegratio (1964) states that "when comparing doctrines with one another, [Catholic theologians] should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith".[89] In this hierarchy there is no more fundamental Christian doctrine than the Trinity. It is the starting point for the theology of religions and, as will be shown, should be the foundation of the

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[88] CCC 234.

[89] Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964), 11, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

content of RCRE. An outline of the Trinitarian foundations of a Catholic theology of religions can be found in *Dialogue and Proclamation*:

> First comes the fact that the whole of humankind forms one family, due to the common origin of all men and women, created by God in his own image. Correspondingly, all are called to a common destiny, the fullness of life in God. Moreover, there is but one plan of salvation for humankind, with its centre in Jesus Christ, who in his incarnation 'has united himself in a certain manner to every person' (GS 22). Finally, there needs to be mentioned the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the religious life of the members of the other religious traditions.[90]

This passage sums up succinctly the Trinitarian nature of a Catholic theology of religions and in so doing proposes a framework for the content of RCRE.

6.6.2. The Father

If natural theology draws out the common humanity of all men and women, revelation makes this even more explicit. In doing so, the theology of religions develops a central theme: the relationship between God and humanity made manifest in 1) God's covenant with all men and women; 2) that human beings are made in the "image and likeness of God"; and 3) that we have a common origin and end.

Dialogue and Proclamation notes the importance of God's covenant with all people (Gn 1:11) and with Noah (Gn 6), both of whom pre-date Abraham.[91] The implications of this covenant are simply expressed in *Dialogue and Mission*: "Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all mankind, we are all called to be brothers and sisters".[92] Our common humanity is used, in particular, by Pope John Paul II in his frequent pleas for peace exemplified by his call to leaders from across all religions to join him for the world days of prayer for peace in Assisi which began in October 1986.[93]

One of the most potent expressions of our common humanity is that human beings are made in God's "image and likeness" (Gn 1:27). Vatican II was the first ecumenical council of the Church to make use of that phrase and Gerald O'Collins suggests that in *Gaudium et*

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[90] DP 28. See also DM 9.
[91] DP 19. See also DP 5.
[92] DM 42. Referenced to GS 92.
[93] DP 5. See also DM 42; DTC 13.

spes it "becomes a *leitmotif*".[94] "For having been created in the image of God … all men are called to one and the same goal, namely God Himself".[95] Church teaching is also clear that our common bond with each other and with God the Father extends to His offer of salvation to all men and women;[96] and that God has "pervasive love" for all.[97]

The Fatherhood of God lays the foundations for a Catholic theology of religions. In doing so it shows how teaching about the Father can be adapted in light of current "social and ecclesial conditions":

1) It holds together God and humanity, and reveals how all men and women are made in the "image of God" and should be considered as brothers and sisters.
2) It draws attention to a Christian argument to support social cohesion;
3) The language of common origin and common end provides a rationale and basis for understanding and responding to the human search for meaning.

Given the importance attached to social cohesion and the tensions and conflicts found in Britain and throughout the world it is surprising that the above are not prominent in either the RECD or TIOF. For social cohesion is not an add-on or "incidental" but an essential element of understanding God the Father.

6.6.3. The Son

In Christian doctrine, to understand the Father it is necessary to look to the Son, for Jesus says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).[98] Understanding Christ, the Son of God, through the theology of religions provides a good example of how both Sacred Scripture and Church teaching can help to make explicit the content of the Christian message.

Both the RECD and TIOF make considerable reference to the life of Christ in particular his birth, death and resurrection, and his miracles, parables and teachings. Whilst it can be argued that a Christocentric focus is lost because of the mass of wider content that is

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[94] Gerald O'Collins SJ, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 129.
[95] GS 24. See also GS 12, 22, 29, 34, 41, 52, 68. See also DP 28; DTC 17, 56.
[96] For example, see NA1; AG 3, 7; RM 9; DP 15 (referenced to GS 22), DP 19, 20, 25, 28, 29, 58, 67, 68, 75, 86; DTC 15, 23. Morwenna Ludlow compares the eschatology of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner and questions whether Rahner's focus on humankind, as opposed to Gregory's more cosmic focus, is too narrow. She argues that consideration needs to be taken of new insights into ecology and space which should be included in accounts of salvation. Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal Salvation: Eschatology in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 275. Pope Francis' encyclical letter on the care of our common home, *Laudato si'* (2015), could be understood in light of Ludlow's comments.
[97] DM 22. See also DM 9, 15, 23. This stress on love is a particular feature of *Dialogue and Mission*.
[98] Used in RM 38, 55; DP 1, 62, 67; DI 2, 5; DTC 38.

provided, both schemes contain much information about Christ. At the same time, the theology of religions would suggest four areas where more focus is helpful.

First, one passage from *Gaudium et spes* is referenced twelve times across the five key documents and should be considered as central to a Catholic theology of religions:

> The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light ….
>
> He who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), is Himself the perfect man … For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man.
>
> All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.[99]

This is a really fruitful passage for RCRE. Whilst it mentions Jesus the "perfect man", this is intimately linked to Christ being "the image of the invisible God". In noting this passage, RCRE teachers need to ask themselves if they have the right balance or emphasis in their lessons between portraying Jesus, the man, and Jesus who shows us the Father.[100] As Jacques Dupuis SJ explains, a Catholic theology of religions rests not on a low Christology, based on the humanity and goodness of Jesus, but on a high Christology, God become man in Jesus. For, the "Christian tradition amply attests … that the only adequate foundation on which the singular uniqueness of Jesus Christ can be based is his personal identity as the Son of God made man, as God's incarnate Word, that is God made human in history".[101]

Second, given the amount of content on the miracles and parables of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, which are taught in current RCRE programmes, it is easy to neglect John's Gospel. Aside from the signs and discourses, John's prologue is important for the theology of religions in its understanding of Christ as the pre-existent Word (*Logos*), through which "all things came into being" (Jn 1:3), and which "enlightens everyone" (Jn 1:9). How these

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[99] GS 22. The passage is referenced in DM 23 (via RH 14), 24, 37; DP 15, 28, 68; DTC 18; RM 10, 18, 28 (twice); DI 12.

[100] "Jesus is way that the Father comes to us". Herbert McCabe OP, 'Nobody comes to the Father but by me', in *God Still Matters*, ed. Brian Davies (London: Continuum, 2002), 103.

[101] Jacques Dupuis SJ, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 89.

ideas have developed in theology show how scripture and tradition can be related as well as being insightful into Christ's presence in all people and indeed all creation. Justin Martyr (c100-c162/168) introduces the phrase "seeds of the Word" (*logos spermatikos* or *semina Verbi*) which can be found in all humanity but come to fulfilment only in Christ.[102] He uses this term to explain that when people (Platonists, "the Stoics, the poets and prose authors") speak truth they do so because of "the seed of the *Logos* implanted in them"; though the seed must be distinguished from the *Logos* itself, Christ.[103] Gerald O'Collins makes use of Irenaeus to support the importance to the Church Fathers of the presence of Christ throughout creation: the Son of God "has traced the sign of the cross on everything".[104] O'Collins also refers to Origen (c184-c253): "Christ is so powerful that although invisible because of his divinity, he is present to every person and extends over the whole universe".[105] In terms of the content of the Christian message, these references to John's prologue and the early Fathers identify two important principles. One, that it is through Christ that the Father is visible, not just in Palestine 2,000 years ago, but from the beginning, in all creation, and in all men and women. Two, that the seeds must be distinguished, but never separated, from the Word itself which "became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1: 14). Difficult though the prologue of John's Gospel is to teach, it sets out important ideas for understanding the relationship between the Father and the Son, and through Christ with all humanity.

Third, the theology of religions adds weight to the Christocentric focus in RCRE argued for in this thesis. *Dialogue and Proclamation* draws on scripture to show that the content of the Christian message is Christ himself.[106] It proposes that all the different formulations of the content, whether they be based on the Kingdom or the Gospel, "really mean the same thing: to preach Jesus … , to preach Christ".[107]

Finally, it should not pass unnoticed that in the one paragraph from *Gaudium et spes* 22 (not the abridged version used above), the word "mystery" appears six times. When, the

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[102] The phrase "seeds of the Word" is found in LG 17; AG 9, 11, 15; GS 3; and DM 26, 27, 41; RM 28, 56; DP 16, 24, 70, 82; DI 12; DTC 19. O'Collins proposes that the phrase pre-figures Rahner's idea of anonymous Christianity. (O'Collins, *Other Religions*, 17-20). In contrast, Joseph Carola is more cautious in his analysis of the phrase. His analysis of both Justin and LG & AG leads him to argue that "seeds of the Word" refers to natural revelation only. For Carola, there is nothing supernatural suggested in the idea. Joseph Carola, 'Appendix: Vatican II's Use of Patristic Themes with regards to Non-Christians', in Becker & Morali, *Catholic Engagement*, 147-149.
[103] Justin Martyr, *Apologia II*, xiii, in *The Early Christian Fathers*, 63-64.
[104] Gerald O'Collins SJ, *A Christology of Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018), 56.
[105] Ibid., 56.
[106] DP 60-63.
[107] DP 63.

phrases "in some fashion", "grace works in an unseen way" and "in a manner known only to God" are also taken into account, the importance of mystery is emphasised even more. In doing so it highlights the importance of the mystery of God.[108] *Dialogue and Proclamation* addresses this when it sets up the following dialectic. On the one hand, Christians know that "the fullness of truth [is] received in Jesus Christ".[109] On the other hand, they also know that they do not "possess the truth in a perfect and total way".[110] This dialectic will be developed further in the course of this thesis but for the moment further insight can be gained through use of the well-known phrase, *deus semper maior*. Emil Anton uses this phrase to sum up Pope Benedict XVI's understanding not just of God but of the potential of inter-religious dialogue.[111] For, as Anton argues, Benedict understands that even though Christians believe they have the Truth in Jesus Christ, dialogue can help to clarify and live it more fully.[112] This sense of the mystery of God is fundamental to theology and Christian anthropology.[113] It will be argued later that it must also be fundamental to RCRE and its presentation of the Christian message.

For good reason this is a long section. Applying the theology of religions as a filter or lens to examine the content of RCRE would encourage teachers and writers of guidance to emphasise:

1) An appropriate balance between an emphasis on a low Christology and a high Christology;
2) The understanding of Christ as the pre-existent *Logos* and how "seeds of the Word" are found in all humanity and all creation;

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[108] Mystery or mysterious is used 19 times in DP in relation to God, Christ, salvation, the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom, the unity of mankind and salvation (DP 10, 15, 25, 28, 29, 35, 50, 58, 67, 68, 69, 70e, 75, 79, 82, 84). In RM, mystery is used 28 times; in *Redemptor hominis* (1979) it is used 50 times. Gerald O'Collins notes the move from using the plural, mysteries of the faith, to the singular, mystery of faith. In the documents of Vatican II, mystery is used 106 times, mysteries only 21 times. *Fundamental Theology*, 56.
[109] DP 49.
[110] DP 21.
[111] Emil Anton, 'Mission Impossible? Pope Benedict XVI and Interreligious Dialogue', *Theological Studies* 201778:4 (2017), 879-904, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0040563917731744 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[112] Ibid., 882-884.
[113] "Negative theology? Indeed, it is rather just theology, in the oldest, profoundest and most necessary meaning of the word". de Lubac, *Christian Faith,* 139. "The clearest formulations, the most sanctified formulas, the classic condensations of the centuries-long work of the Church in prayer, reflection and struggle concerning God's mysteries: all these derive their life from the fact that they are not end but beginning, not goal but means, truths which open the way to the-ever greater-Truth". Karl Rahner SJ, *Theological Investigations, Vol One*, trans. Cornelius Ernst OP (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 149 (First published in German in 1954).

3) That whatever the topic, a Christocentric focus should be retained, as Christ is the Christian message;[114]
4) A sense of the mystery of God, *deus semper maior*, which should be embedded in the teaching of RCRE.

6.6.4. The Spirit

Considering what should be taught about the Holy Spirit, through the lens of the theology of religions, suggests further ideas for adapting RCRE. In existing programmes there is a strong emphasis on the presence of the Spirit in the Church. This special presence is important and must be taught but, given the degree of diversity outside of the Church and within the Church, it is also important that young people appreciate that the Spirit is universal and can be found in all people.[115] This idea is a feature of the magisterium of Pope John Paul II and in his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis* (1979), the Pope explains that the firm beliefs of the adherents of other religions can be ascribed to "the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the mystical Body".[116] He develops this further in *Dominum et vivificantem* (1986) and writes of the active presence of the Holy Spirit, "even before Christ".[117] To support his argument he uses the words of Nicodemus: "The wind (the spirit) blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8). In *Redemptoris missio* he notes that the Spirit is specially present in the Church but its presence and activity is universal, and at work in every human heart.[118] What becomes evident in this encyclical and other writings is that the search for meaning as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit is at the heart of Pope John Paul II's theology of religions: "the Spirit … is at the very source of man's existential and religious questioning, a questioning which is occasioned not only by contingent situations but by the very structure of his being".[119] He explains that this presence is found not just in

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[114] This sheds light on the phrase, "trinitarian christocentricity", used by the *Directory* to sum up the heart of the Christian message. GDC 99.
[115] GS 22; AG 15; DM 4, 24, 41; DP 26; LG 16; DTC 19.
[116] Pope John Paul II, Encyclical letter, *Redemptor hominis* (1979), 6, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth RH.
[117] Pope John Paul II, Encyclical letter, *Dominum et vivificantem* (1986), 53, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_18051986_dominum-et-vivificantem.html accessed on02 September 2019. Henceforth DViv.
[118] RM 28-29 and RM 55-57.
[119] RM 28. This spiritual questioning and search for meaning is a recurring theme in many addresses of Pope John Paul II to the leaders and adherents of other religions. Gioia, *Official Teaching*: Message to the People of Asia, 21 February 1981, 277 (371); Address to the Various Religious Leaders of India, 2 February 1986, 353 (489); Address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 1986, 399 (562); Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 10 January 1987, 411 (581); Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 5 October 1995, 592, (840); and many more. The number in brackets refers to the paragraph number.

individuals but also in "society and history, peoples, cultures and religions".[120] Later he states his conviction, in relation to other religions, that "every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart".[121] At the same time, the Pope teaches that the Spirit "is … not an alternative to Christ" but always linked to him.[122] This is important because where and when the Spirit is present, so is Christ.

Discerning the presence of the Spirit in, for instance, other religions is not as easy as discerning its presence in individuals.[123] Here Sacred Scripture provides a straightforward basis for doing so through the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. For where the gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord) and fruits of the Spirit (charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity) are present, so is God.[124]

The implications for RCRE of this short section on the Spirit are important:

1) Attention must be given to the presence of the Spirit outside of the Church as a balance (asymmetrical) to the special presence of the Spirit in the Church;
2) The gifts and fruits of the Spirit are a straightforward way of discerning the presence of the Spirit in all individuals, regardless of religion or no religion;
3) On a more theological level, whilst the Spirit and Christ can be distinguished, they must not be separated.

6.6.5. The Church

This section suggests a different way of looking at the Church when compared to the RECD and TIOF. It gives prominence to the ideas, developed at Vatican II, of a "pilgrim Church";[125] in constant need of "renewal and reform";[126] which accepts that "many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside" of the visible structure of the Church.[127] These ideas are taken up in *Dialogue and Proclamation* where the Church's mission is described as "to foster 'the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ' (Rv 11:15), at whose service she is placed".[128] Related to this understanding of mission is an underlying image of the Church as a pilgrim people: "[t]he Church on earth is always on pilgrimage"

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[120] RM 28.
[121] RM 29.
[122] RM 29.
[123] DP 30.
[124] See Is 11:1-2; Gal 5:22-23; CCC 1803-1845.
[125] LG 48-51.
[126] UR 6. Referenced by DP 36.
[127] LG 8.
[128] DP 35. See also DP 58 & 59.

and "[a]lthough she is holy by divine institution her members are not perfect".[129] As a consequence, the Church's "transparency as a sacrament of salvation is blurred".[130] Using *Unitatis redintegratio*, the document explains that, as a result, "the [C]hurch herself, 'insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth,' and not only her members, is constantly in need of renewal and reform".[131]

Both *Dialogue and Mission* and *Dialogue and Proclamation* look towards the eschatological fulfilment for the Church and all humankind: "The reign of God is the final end of all persons. The Church, which is to be 'its seed and beginning' (LG 5, 9), is called from the first, to start out on this path toward the kingdom and, along with the rest of humanity, to advance toward that goal".[132] *Dialogue and Proclamation* develops this further through reference to *Dei verbum*:

> the Church 'is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her' (DV 8). This in no way contradicts the Church's divine institution nor the fullness of God's Revelation in Jesus Christ which has been entrusted to her.[133]

In *Redemptoris missio*, a broadly similar understanding of the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom is found. Whilst, Pope John Paul II is keen to dispel false ideas that detach the Kingdom from the Church and from Christ;[134] he understands the Church as "effectively and concretely at the service of the kingdom".[135] At the same time, the Church, even though in "need of renewal and reform" is the "universal sacrament of salvation", necessary for the salvation of all;[136] and the "the sign and instrument of the divine plan of salvation, the centre of which is the mystery of Christ".[137]

On the one hand, the Holy Spirit is specially present in the Church, and it is a divine institution; and, on the other hand, the Church is imperfect, it is a human institution, and is

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[129] DP 36. See also: "The Church, as … a pilgrim people who go forward together with all of mankind with whom they share the human experience". DM 10.
[130] DP 36.
[131] DP 36. Referenced to UR 6. A similar understanding, and the need to link renewal and reform with conversion, is re-emphasised by Pope John Paul II some thirty years later in, Pope John Paul II, Encyclical letter, *Ut unum sint* (1995), 15-17, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[132] DM 25.
[133] DP 37. Referenced to DV 2, 8.
[134] RM 18.
[135] RM 20. It should be noted that *Dialogue in Truth and Charity* does not develop the ideas of a pilgrim Church in constant need of reform or that sanctification and truth can be found outside of the Church.
[136] LG 1, 9, 48; DM 2; DP 33; DTC 20.
[137] LG 1, 14; DP 33 DTC 22

like a pilgrim on a journey, advancing "towards the plenitude of divine truth". The tension between these two ways of understanding the Church is well expressed by Henri de Lubac. Writing before Vatican II, he argues that the Church is the "providential means of salvation";[138] "[b]ut if the Church- the historic, visible, hierarchic Church - is thus necessary to transform and complete human endeavour, she herself is by no means complete";[139] the Church is "a building in need of construction".[140] Given current social and ecclesial conditions, this image of the Church, in constant "need of renewal and reform", has particular resonance and power.[141]

The theology of religions raises another matter when teaching about the Church which is relevant for RCRE. How does the Church carry out its function as the "sign and instrument" of salvation for *all* men and women? Its role for Christians can be relatively easily understood. O'Collins proposes that it would be principally, not exclusively, through proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments.[142] What is not clear is how the Church plays an *instrumental* role in the salvation of all those who are not Christians. Making use of *Lumen gentium*, and its idea of all men and women being "related or oriented" to the Church, *Dialogue and Proclamation* suggests that as the Church and the Kingdom cannot be separated, if you are related to the Kingdom you must be related to the Church.[143] But this does not explain how the Church is an "instrument" of salvation, or what it does to make the offer of salvation available for those who are not Christians. In its penultimate paragraph, the document hints that it is through the Eucharist that the Church carries out its role as "instrument" of salvation for all.[144]

Gerald O'Collins has considered this question at some length and proposes three possibilities. The first is to focus on the decisive role of the Kingdom of God for which the Church exists; the second is to acknowledge that it is a mystery; the third, is "the function of the prayers made by the Church for the world through Christ the high priest".[145] He develops the latter by linking the "common priesthood of the faithful" (LG10), the high

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[138] Henri de Lubac*, Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man,* trans. Lancelot C Sheppard (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), 111. Fergus Kerr OP notes that this book is one of the major texts of modern Catholic theology. It was written prior to 2nd World War and a slightly expanded edition was published in French in 1947. The English translation was published in 1950. (Fergus Kerr, *20th Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell), 70.
[139] Ibid., 114.
[140] Ibid., 116.
[141] UR 6.
[142] O'Collins, *Other Religions*, 195.
[143] DP 35.
[144] DP 86.
[145] O'Collins, *Other Religions,* 195.

priesthood of Christ and the prayers of the faithful at Mass for the salvation of the world. This brings together Christ's self-offering for all and the Church as an "instrument" of salvation for all.[146] What is fascinating about this is that it introduces another dimension to the mystery of God. By extending the way that the Church and Christians can serve the Kingdom, to include prayer, contemplation and worship, especially the Eucharist, an image of the world and humanity is presented, that crosses time and space, that is touched by the divine, where human beings can act on behalf of God. This sense of mystery, this sense of the sacred, where the human and the divine come together, should be made manifest when the Christian message is presented in RCRE.

Two important points emerge from this section and are an important balance to the way the Church is taught in the RECD and TIOF:

1) It is right to stress the divine nature of the Church and the special presence of the Spirit in the Church but this must be balanced with the image of the Church as a human institution, which is on a pilgrimage, and in constant need of renewal and reform.
2) When teaching about the Church, the sacred and the mystery of the presence of Christ must not be neglected.

6.6.6. Conclusion

The theology of religions is a powerful lens with which to view the content of the Christian message. Given that the next chapter explains the new approach to RCRE, and that this includes a summary of the main features and insights provided by the theology of religious into the content of the message, any conclusion or summary is deferred until then.

6.7. The skills necessary for inter-religious dialogue and their application to RCRE

6.7.1. Skills

The documents of the Pontifical Council offer very little explicit advice on skills.[147] In *Dialogue and Proclamation*, there are some skills are implied such as the ability to link together experience, life together and reflection in response to the "great questions" of

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[146] Gerald O'Collins, 'The Church and the Power of Prayer for "the Others"'. *Horizons*, 41:2, (2014), 228-229, https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2014.75 accessed on 02 September 2019. See also O'Collins, *Christology of Religions*, 76-99.

[147] A skill is understood as a "facility *in* an action or *in* doing something or *to* do something". *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 7th Edition*, ed. JB Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 991.

life.[148] The most developed ideas on skills are found in the work of Francis Clooney whose ideas on how to carry out comparative theology have much in common with Tracy's concepts of relative adequacy, the "classic" and its interpretation. Clooney argues that comparative theology can be carried out in many contexts such as prayer, liturgy, art, music, and, above all, critical reading of texts that have endured over centuries.[149] In reading a text, the theologian needs to read intelligently, with care and attention; acknowledge his/her own presuppositions; place the text in the context of contemporary religious practice; read inter-religiously, learning to read as others would; and leave room for other readers.[150] Later, when reflecting again on the skills necessary for comparative theology he stresses the need to pay "attention to concrete particularities", to keep "our eyes open", and to see "ourselves differently in light of the new".[151] Comparative theology does not "seek a theory by which to account for all religions";[152] it is "small-scale and particular, a matter of examples diligently worked through".[153] Clooney makes use of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola to explain what he is trying to achieve: "to consider, observe, and contemplate what persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it".[154]

Clooney provides many examples to show how comparative theology works in practice.[155] The problem, in terms of transfer to the context of school and teaching RCRE, is the level of difficulty in "translating" from one religion to another. For example, he reflects on the devotion to the Goddess Laksmi in Hindu worship and Sura 19 in the *Qur'an* as a means of providing insight into understanding the Virgin Mary in Catholic tradition.[156] His reflections are not so much difficult to understand in themselves but hard to relate to Mary. In contrast, the section on Sojourner Truth, the black American Christian woman, who was a former slave, and her preaching of the Gospel, together with her beautiful account of God's mercy, is more immediate and accessible for Christian readers. The message of the love of God that it contains is so powerful that it is possible to concur with Clooney that

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[148] DP 43.
[149] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 57-58. Marianne Moyaert argues for the importance of ritual. See, 'Towards a Ritual Turn in Comparative Theology: Opportunities, Challenges, and Problems', *Harvard Theological Review,* Vol 111:1, Jan 2018, 1-23, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816017000360 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[150] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 59-67.
[151] Ibid., 106.
[152] Ibid., 111.
[153] Ibid., 120.
[154] Ibid., 142. *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius: A New Translation*, trans. Louis J Puhl SJ (Westminster MD: The Newman Press, 1957), n 115.
[155] See, Francis X Clooney SJ, *Hindu Wisdom for All God's Children* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001).
[156] Clooney, *Comparative Theology,* 87-108.

"[b]y reading her book and finding her voice in the midst of so many voices, I have started to see differently yet again".[157]

6.7.2. Application to RCRE

In this short section, the skills necessary for inter-religious dialogue and more specifically comparative theology are identified. The following are potentially relevant for RCRE:

1) Trying to understand a text or a symbol, and relate its possible meaning to one's own understanding and experience, is a fundamental skill.
2) This skill is broken down by Clooney into more specific skills which include:
   a) being aware of one's presuppositions and that of the author;
   b) placing a text in its context;
   c) reading as others would, (for instance a marginalised group);
   d) considering alternative interpretations.

   Such skills could be applied easily to a Biblical text and use of these skills could help both teacher and pupil to draw meaning and even possibly "see differently" (conversion of heart).
3) Clooney proposes that to practise these skills, small-scale, particular examples are needed that are diligently worked through. This idea could be used to adapt the content of the Christian message and is related to the pedagogical idea that a "solid, profound and basic formation" is preferable to covering a large quantity of material, (*non multa, sed multum*).[158]

6.7.3. Is inter-religious learning possible in RCRE?

The question of whether it is possible to have the necessary skills and knowledge to learn inter-religiously in RCRE has not been considered in this thesis.[159] Dermot Lane argues that "inter-religious education is an essential element within Catholic religious education today".[160] Thomas Groome acknowledges the reality of diversity and the need for education in one's own faith tradition and calls for "interreligious understanding and respect".[161] But neither are explicit about what they mean. The new approach being developed in this thesis should help pupils be open to the possibility of learning from outside the Christian faith and tradition. An obvious example would include being inspired

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[157] Ibid., 103.
[158] *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986). section 18, para. 163, 'Some Characteristics of Jesuit Pedagogy'.
[159] The term "interreligious learner" is used by Barnes, *Interreligious Learning*, 264.
[160] Lane, 'Nostra Aetate and Religious Education', 93.
[161] Groome, *Will there be faith?*, 11.

by the devotion shown by the adherents of other religions. The approach should also, through its presentation of the Christian message, provide a basis for relating Christian faith to other religions. But that is different to learning inter-religiously which implies more than simply learning from one off examples from another religion. Whilst pupils, who affiliate as Christians, might learn about another religion and ways of being religious in that tradition, which in turn might provide insight into the Christian message, it will always remain learning from one's own perspective. The same applies to pupils of other religions in RCRE. But here there is a difference. Given the weight of emphasis on the Christian message they may have the opportunity, *if they choose to take it*, to relate that message to their own tradition on a regular and frequent basis. Through becoming aware of "difference" and "similarities-in-difference" between their religion and Christianity, they could become inter-religious learners. But for most pupils, the challenge for teachers is more likely to be encouraging young people to become, in the first instance, *religious* learners, before any possibility of inter-religious learning can be considered.

6.8. The experiences and attitudes necessary for and developed through dialogue and their application to RCRE

It is difficult to make clear distinctions between experiences and attitudes because one can be dependent on the other and, in addition, both are encouraged by choice of content. For instance, a resource that stimulates the imagination about the plight of migrants can encourage a particular attitude but will be dependent on a teacher having the flexibility to find and use the material (content) that will help pupils put themselves in the situation of others. That said, this section will distinguish the attitudes and experiences that RCRE should develop in light of the practice of inter-religious dialogue. The term experience, though widely used in education, is not well defined and can appear at times to be no more than a list of areas to be studied.[162] In this section, experience will refer to learning outcomes that emphasise the affective, rather than the cognitive, though both the cognitive and the affective can be related (5.2.2 & 5.2.3). Attitude is understood to be a "disposition", "manner of acting" or "mode of regarding".[163]

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[162] For example, see Education for Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence, *Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools*, 1.
[163] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary,* 129.

6.8.1. Experiences

The experiences necessary for dialogue, that are prominent in the work of practitioners of inter-religious dialogue, are the imagination and empathy. Michael Barnes writes about the importance of the imagination in his comment on places of worship:

> Churches, temples, mosques, gurdwaras, holy sites of all kinds, are tangible records of the myriad ways human beings negotiate this mysterious world … What gives them life … is not some intrinsic quality of 'the sacred', but that elusive quality of 'otherness' … [T]hey map out crossing-places for the imagination.[164]

If in RCRE, pupils are to be encouraged to understand "otherness" or the "sacred" their imaginations must be stimulated.[165] Catherine Cornille makes the same point when she argues for the importance of empathy as one of the five virtues (humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy, hospitality) that are necessary for dialogue.[166] She identifies empathising with 'the other' and the affective as essential elements for understanding religion. Cornille's conditions for empathy are sympathy, experience and imagination;[167] and whilst she acknowledges that religion is more than feeling, she uses Simone Weil to support her argument that "[t]he comparison of religion is only possible in some measure through the miraculous virtue of sympathy".[168] Applied to RCRE, Barnes' and Cornille's ideas can be used to make the case that to understand religion, whether it is Christianity or any other religion, experience of use of the imagination, empathy, and sympathy for others are essential.

6.8.2. Attitudes

In terms of attitudes, mention has already been made that Church guidance is clear that dialogue requires both commitment to one's own religion and a willingness to learn from

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[164] Barnes, *Interreligious Learning,* 86.

[165] "Imaginative prayer is one of the hallmarks of Ignatian spirituality". David L Fleming SJ, *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 55. John O'Malley SJ, notes that in the early Jesuit schools students were introduced to classical authors "to stretch [their] minds and imaginations by introducing them to cultures not their own - in this case, a pagan culture - and by giving them a sense of the wider possibilities of the human spirit". John W O'Malley SJ, 'Jesuit schools and the Humanities: Yesterday and Today', in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 47/1, Spring 2015, 12-13. David Tracy places great emphasis on the importance of the imagination and what he calls "fictional facts" (*Blessed Rage for Order*, 215). "Fictions can open our minds, our imaginations, and our hearts". (*Blessed Rage for Order*, 208).

[166] Catherine Cornille, *The im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2008). See also, 'Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue' in Cornille, *Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, 20-33.

[167] Ibid., 153-165.

[168] Ibid., 138. Simone Weil, *Waiting on God*, trans Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2001, first published in 1951), 118.

others.[169]. Christians (indeed all those engaged in inter-religious dialogue) need this "balanced attitude" (*in medio stat virtus*) that demonstrates "firmness of religious conviction; readiness to understand people of other religious traditions without pretence, prejudice, or close-mindedness; genuine love; humility; prudence; honesty, and patience".[170] An important document, which encouraged the Church to engage in dialogue with others, was issued during Vatican II. In the Encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam*, Pope St Paul VI shows how the right attitude can be combined with the intellect to encourage conversion, in this instance expressed as holiness:

> We want it [dialogue] to be sincere. We want it to be an inspiration to genuine holiness. We want it to show itself ready to listen to the variety of views which are expressed in the world today. We want it to be the sort of dialogue that will make Catholics virtuous, wise, unfettered, fair-minded and strong.[171]

Cornille and Barnes develop further these initial ideas about the attitudes or virtues necessary for dialogue and the fruits that will accrue from dialogue.

Mention has already been made of Cornille's five virtues or attitudes necessary for dialogue. The first, humility, is the acceptance that we may have something to learn from others, the "admission of the fact that God is greater than man and his Church".[172] The second, commitment, takes issue with those who seek to relativize truth, as "a religion that has given up claiming uniqueness, one might fairly say, is of no special interest".[173] At the same time, for Cornille, "mature religious commitment presupposes a certain degree of critical refection".[174] Her third quality is interconnection. This quality urges the religions to work together for world peace, for the alleviation of suffering, for ecology, for gender equality etc. and in exploring the possibilities of what may be common to religious experience. Her fourth quality, empathy has already been mentioned. Her fifth and final quality is hospitality which she proposes is the "sole and sufficient condition for dialogue".[175] On one level, hospitality can be understood as friendliness and neighbourliness (dialogue in daily life) but Cornille's virtue is more focussed on epistemic

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[169] RM 56. See also DM 21; DP 47; DTC 40, 42.
[170] DTC 40. Referenced to ES 58-91, RM 56, DP 47-50.
[171] Paul VI, Encyclical letter on the Church, *Ecclesiam suam*, (1964), 113, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html accessed on 02 September 2019. Henceforth ES.
[172] Cornille, *The im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue,* 43. Referenced to Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations Vol. 5*, trans. Karl-H Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 134.
[173] Ibid., 87. Referenced to Jürgen Moltmann, 'Is Pluralistic Theology Useful?' in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 155.
[174] Ibid., 66.
[175] Cornille, 'Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue', 28.

hospitality. The recognition that helpful ways of understanding one's own religion, or insights into how it can be lived, might be found outside of one's own tradition. At the heart of hospitality is the question of whether "the seeds of the Word" and the working of the Holy Spirit which are found outside of Christianity hold anything that might help Christians understand the fullness of revelation that is found in Christ. Without an affirmative answer to this then the dialogue is a monologue.[176]

Cornille's ideas are not without its critics. For instance, Paul Knitter critiques her five virtues and calls into question the very possibility of dialogue.[177] He can only accept two of Cornille's virtues: commitment to one's own religion and humility. Knitter then proceeds to set out his vision as to why religions should work together in social action and peace building which he sees as *the* priority. He argues that, "we have to take seriously the critique of Marxists and humanists that religion serves as opium for the suffering masses" and accept that religion plays its part in the world's troubles.[178]

Michael Barnes places emphasis on virtue as the fruit of the process of dialogue and not simply as a condition for it. He explains that the virtues articulated by Cornille are implicit in his work.[179] For Barnes, the heart of inter-religious dialogue is not the acquisition of truth but growth in virtue.[180] He explains that his focus "privileges the interpersonal";[181] and his underlying thesis is that at the heart of the practice of dialogue "is the inspiration of the virtues that underlie all holy living – the theological virtues of faith, hope and love".[182] He emphasises the affective without ignoring the cognitive, the content of faith.[183] This does not leave theology out of the discussion but requires theology and spirituality to work together.[184] For:

> While remaining members of very different religious traditions, we – interreligious learners –witness not just to the particular truths

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[176] Cornille, *The im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, 194-196. Cornille suggests some areas where hospitality to truth outside of Christianity might help Christians receive "new accents, connotations and conceptions" into the uniqueness of Christ. (206-208).
[177] Paul F Knitter, 'Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action' in Cornille, *Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, 136.
[178] Ibid., 139.
[179] Barnes, *Interreligious Learning,* 110.
[180] Ibid., 109. This can be related to Paul Murray's distinction between truth as "cognitive understanding and conceptual articulation", and truth as "efficacy and fruitfulness". Paul D Murray, 'Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism' in *Interreligious Readings After Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism*, eds. David F Ford & Frances Clemson (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 80.
[181] Ibid., 109.
[182] Ibid., 183.
[183] Ibid., 246
[184] Ibid., 264

> and values sedimented in our funds of ancient wisdom but – more profoundly – to the action of that Holy Mystery, however it be understood, which has made the life of faith possible.[185]

6.8.3. Application to RCRE

This section, on the experiences and attitudes necessary for dialogue, has the potential to yield much that is relevant to RCRE. Given the repeated emphasis in this thesis on the need to hold together the cognitive and the affective dimension of the Christian message, the experiences and attitudes that might encourage this to occur include:

1) Use of the imagination which provides an insight into the religious dimension and the sacred that cannot be obtained from cognitive understanding alone. It is therefore a key experience that RCRE must seek to develop. In turn, use of the imagination can encourage empathy for others and insight into the religious experience of adherents.
2) The encouragement of epistemic humility, an openness or willingness to learn from others and their experience is a pre-requisite for learning in RCRE. This attitude must be fostered if a young person, regardless of their religious affiliation, is to learn from the Christian message or any other source. In inter-religious dialogue, this humility or openness is coupled with religious commitment which cannot be assumed of the pupils in the classroom. The commitment that must be encouraged in the classroom is the openness or willingness to learning from others, and in particular the Christian message.
3) Whilst the focus has been on the attitudes necessary for dialogue, Barnes' argument that virtue can accrue from dialogue is important. When related to RCRE, if young people are open to learning from the Christian message, if their imaginations are stimulated, if they are encouraged to have empathy for others then not only is conversion of heart possible but they may be encouraged to work with others for the good of all (interconnection). In this way, the classroom is an appropriate place for the encouragement of the virtues of faith, hope and charity.

In drawing together skills, experiences and attitudes, a helpful summary phrase, is Clooney's use of St Ignatius: "to consider, observe, and contemplate what persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it". To consider, to observe, to contemplate, to reflect and to draw fruit (conversion of heart), describes a sequential

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[185] Ibid., 264.

process that should be present in RCRE. The practice of these skills will not be possible without the experiences and attitudes described above.

6.8.4. Concluding note

Before concluding this section on experiences and attitudes, a concern about an over-emphasis on values, and the importance of diversity within Catholic theology should be noted. Lieven Boeve argues that an emphasis on values in Catholic schools can have a "secularising effect" and be "counter productive".[186] Encouraging and valuing the right attitudes towards, for instance, other people and the environment can become a substitute for valuing religious faith. Catholic schools and teachers of RCRE have to work hard to demonstrate the importance of the latter.

Whilst this chapter has focussed on the diversity that is "outside us", the need for a balanced attitude also applies to the diversity "within us" for Catholic theology is itself plural. The International Theological Commission expresses this well when it explains that:

> As it [theology] explores the inexhaustible Mystery of God and the countless ways in which God's grace works for salvation in diverse settings, theology rightly and necessarily takes a multitude of forms, and yet as investigations of the unique truth of the triune God and of the one plan of salvation centred on the one Lord Jesus Christ, this plurality must manifest distinctive family traits.[187]

A good example of this plurality is that, as was explained earlier, Catholic theology does not have one understanding of the function of non-Christian religions.

6.9. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide at least a partial answer to the question: what does a young person need to know and understand about the Christian message, and what skills, experiences and attitudes will help them to engage with it in a plural and diverse Britain? It has tried to demonstrate how a Catholic the theology of religions and the practice of inter-religious dialogue can help to adapt how the Christian message is taught in RCRE.

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[186] Boeve, 'New Thinking on Catholic education', 67-68.
[187] International Theological Commission, *Theology Today: Principles, Perspectives and Criteria* (2011), 2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

END OF PART TWO

PART THREE:

What does the new approach to classroom Catholic religious education for use in Britain look like?

Part three sets out a new approach to RCRE based on the ideas and arguments that are presented in parts one and two. In doing so, it tries to answer the question: what does good classroom RCRE look like given the current situation of the Church in Britain, and the Catholic and wider community which its schools seek to serve?

The starting point for the new approach, which is articulated in chapter seven, is Church guidance on RCRE. From this foundation, the resources of the Catholic theological tradition, in particular the insights of the theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue, and the theology of David Tracy, are used to develop the guidance and suggest necessary adaptations. In doing so, a new approach to Catholic religious education is set out. It is important to note, with regard to the content of RCRE, that this chapter focuses on what *should* be taught given current social and ecclesial conditions. It does not comment on everything that *could* be taught including important topics such as moral and social teaching, the sacraments, Church history and the lives of saints. A brief further comment on these additional topics can be found at the end of chapter seven. Chapter eight explains how the new approach can be applied to diversity both within the Catholic community and in wider society. It considers how to handle disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom, and how other religions, non-religions viewpoints and Judaism should be taught.

7. Chapter Seven: A new approach to Catholic religious education

7.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out a new approach to Catholic religious education (RCRE) based on the analysis of previous chapters. Its focus is on teaching and learning the Christian message in the classrooms of Catholic schools in England and Wales, and Scotland. In setting the scene, the chapter begins with an explanation as to why a new approach is needed; and its foundations in Church guidance on RCRE and in the Catholic theological tradition. Following this, the approach is set out in terms of aims; general or cohering themes; skills, experiences and attitudes; and the method of teaching and learning needed to support it. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the content of the Christian message that is appropriate for current social and ecclesial conditions. How Judaism, other religions and non-religious viewpoints should be taught is addressed in the chapter that follows.

7.2. Why is a new approach needed?

The perfect programme or scheme of work does not and never will exist. Any scheme or programme will have strengths and weaknesses, as was evident in the evaluation in chapter four of *This is Our Faith* (TIOF) in Scotland, and the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD) for England and Wales. The weaknesses of TIOF and the RECD include:

- either ignoring current social and ecclesial conditions or understanding some of its features as a challenge rather than an opportunity;
- confusing the educational and the catechetical and not appreciating that the educational can support faith development and the search for meaning;
- not having a clear Christo-centric focus for the content of the subject.

The new approach that is explained in this chapter was developed in response to these weaknesses. It sets out an alternative vision for Catholic religious education and seeks to draw out more clearly the relevance of the study of religion to the lives of both teachers and pupils. The new approach could be used in conjunction with TIOF and the RECD as a way of helping teachers think about RCRE and how they might use and adapt their existing resources. Given the use of GCSE examinations in England and Wales, it embeds an approach to knowledge, understanding and evaluation that is supportive of these examinations.[1]

[1] For example, the two assessment objectives for GCSE are: AO1 – knowledge and understanding; AO2 – analysis and evaluation, https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/gcse/religious-studies-b-8063/scheme-of-assessment accessed on 02 September 2019.

7.3. What are the foundations of the new approach?

7.3.1. Church Guidance

Any approach to RCRE should be based on the Church's universal guidance. This guidance, which has developed over recent decades in light of the experience of the Church in a changing world, sets out certain principles which need to be applied by local Bishops in the diverse circumstances in which the Church exists.[2] Chapter two analysed and identified the key principles of this guidance and in proposing a new approach a clear link must be established between these principles and the new approach.

Church guidance makes the case for religious education (RE) being taught in all schools (not just Catholic schools) because the religious dimension is integral to the human person (2.3.1). On this basis, RE is understood as an essential part of a young person's formation and therefore an essential element of education.[3] RE in a Catholic school (RCRE) understands this dimension from the perspective of the Catholic Christian faith. It is to be distinguished from catechesis because it is an academic subject like any other in the school curriculum.[4] It must be educationally appropriate not just for Catholics but for all the young people who attend Catholic schools.[5] At the same time, as RCRE and not as catechesis, it can and should be open to a deepening of faith and the search for meaning.[6] The centre of the Christian faith is Christ and, for Catholics and all Christians, the human search for meaning and for God finds its fulfilment only in Him who is the "image of the invisible God" and the perfect man.[7] This faith entails much more than accepting a list of doctrines and teachings to be believed. It is a living faith which is enriched by human experience;[8] and the deposit of faith, which the Church guards and hands on, should be understood as Christ Himself, "the living word of God";[9] "the living treasure of the church".[10] On this basis, the argument was made that the content of RCRE should be described as the Christian message (2.3.2). The advantage of the term, "Christian message", is it keeps a focus on Christ and Christian life, and that, as a message, it can invite a response. It highlights that RCRE is not an examination of a past event or a list and description of the teachings and rites of the Church. It proposes Christ as someone with

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[2] ETT Part III, 1h; see also GDC 74; the *Code of Canon Law*, Can. 804 § 1.
[3] LC 56; RDE 99.
[4] RDE 69-70; GDC 73; CL 18.
[5] LC 42; GDC 75; CL 16; ETT Part III, 1i.
[6] GDC 75; RDE 69; Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009); ETT Part III; LC 32-33; EIDCS 47.
[7] GS 22.
[8] GDC 78 & footnote 233, GDC 107; EN 44; CT 7;
[9] GDC 125.
[10] Nancy C. Ring, 'Deposit of Faith', in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph A. Komonchak et al (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1992) 279.

whom Christians can try to engage and have a relationship. The implications of this for RCRE, as an academic subject, are that it must be a "serious and orderly study of the message of Christ" and at the same time it must not be "isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed to it".[11] An insight from inter-religious dialogue is that this principle of relating teaching to life experience also applies to the study of all religion.[12]

Church guidance explains that the source of the Christian message and its content is found in Sacred Scripture and tradition of the Church which together transmit the word of God (2.3.3).[13] It continues by noting that in transmitting the word, "the Church desires that … Sacred Scripture should have a pre-eminent position".[14] The Vatican II Declaration, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (1963), reinforces this understanding when it explains that Christ "is present in His word, since He Himself speaks when the holy scriptures are read in Church".[15] Any presentation of the Christian message must be faithful to the message as received and handed on by the Church and to assist in this task, the *Catechism* is proposed as a "sure and authentic reference text".[16] There is a major difference, however, between the status of Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism*. Sacred Scripture is "the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit"; the *Catechism* is "an official text of the Church's Magisterium";[17] and as an act of the Magisterium it is at the service of the word of God.[18]

When presenting the Christian message, the *Catechism* explains that "necessary adaptation[s]" must be made to take account of "the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition[s] among all those to whom it is addressed".[19] Adaptation is necessary because the Christian message is not just a list of doctrines to be believed but is a living faith that relates to human life and experience. To be faithful to the message requires that it should be related to experience and in RCRE this means the experience of young people. In order to relate the message to experience, Church guidance explains that it is necessary to carry out an "analysis of the situation" as a guide as to how

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[11] CT 22.
[12] As Michael Barnes explains: "Before religions like Buddhism and Islam can be categorised as systems of belief, they are communities of faith, groups of struggling human beings who, like their Christian dialogue partners, seek to bring certain sources of wisdom - rituals, texts, devotions, legal and commercial traditions - into correlation with the exigencies of everyday life". Barnes, *Interreligious Learning,* 7.
[13] GDC 127. Referenced to DV 21.
[14] GDC 127.
[15] SC 7.
[16] GDC 121.
[17] GDC 124.
[18] GDC 125.
[19] CCC 24. Referenced by GDC 133. See also GS 44.

the message should be adapted.[20] Such an analysis, focussing on social and ecclesial conditions in Britain, was carried out in chapter three and its results are summarised in the section that follows.

7.3.2. The need for adaptation

The Report on the views of young people in England and Wales, prepared prior to the worldwide Synod on young people (2018), noted that the Church must start where young people are and that they will not be taken where they do not want to go.[21] In making this simple but important statement the Report articulates a basic pedagogical principle. The learning outcomes or objectives for any academic subject are never determined solely by subject content. Other factors such as information about the students (their development, needs and interests) and the "conditions and problems of contemporary life" are additional and important sources for determining outcomes.[22] The guidance in the *Catechism* on the need to adapt how the Christian message is presented is therefore rooted in the nature of the message itself, and in educational principles. In terms of the new approach to RCRE, adaptation for age, maturity and ability are not considered as these are best left to teachers and their knowledge of their classes. The adaptations that are considered are those that are necessary in light of current social and ecclesial conditions.

Francis Clooney provides helpful terminology to describe current conditions when he writes about diversity that is both "around us" and "within us".[23] When applied to this thesis, "around us" includes the growth of other religions, and those who say they have no religion. This diversity can, in turn, lead to diversity "within us" because it unsettles and raises "awkward questions" about religious commitment. In terms of the Catholic community, whilst affiliation has not declined as sharply as some other Churches, the evidence would suggest that in Britain most Catholics do not attend Mass on a regular basis or necessarily support Church teaching on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage. This is particularly the case amongst young Catholics. Recent studies, such as *Youth on Religion* and Casson also stress the importance to young people of "personal agency".[24] The *Youth on Religion* study found that young people "did not appreciate being told what they should do";[25] and that they "strongly assert their right to lead their own

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[20] GDC 242.
[21] Carvalho & Jamison, *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 35.
[22] Bloom et al, *Cognitive Domain* 26.
[23] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 4-8.
[24] Madge et al, *Youth on Religion,* 211*;* Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity*, 97-98.
[25] Madge et al, *Youth on Religion,* 69.

lives".[26] Casson suggests that most young people in Catholic schools "did not appear to be rejecting the Catholic tradition, but expressed strongly the view that they had a right to choose which aspects they consider necessary".[27]

With regard to "diversity around us", if the Christian message is to be credible it cannot ignore diversity both religious and non-religious. Even though religious diversity is not evenly distributed across Britain, and many Catholic schools will have only Catholic pupils on roll, young people will be aware of the plurality of religions through social media, TV, film and other sources. There is also another dimension to plurality, that of no religion. Data released by ScotCen (July 2017) indicates that 74 per cent of all 18-34 year olds in Scotland say they have no religion.[28] In the same way that RCRE should not ignore the plurality of religions neither should it ignore non-religious viewpoints or ways of thinking. If it does, it is not equipping young people to negotiate the world in which they live.

To start where young people are, teachers and writers of RCRE guidance must question and ask, what will help a young person to engage with the Christian message? This includes what they need to know and understand about the message, and what skills, experiences and attitudes will help them to engage with it, given plurality and diversity both within the Catholic community and in wider society? In trying to answer these questions, the new approach views this diversity as an opportunity rather than a threat and in carrying out this task, the resources of the Catholic theological tradition are used to adapt teaching and learning in RCRE.

7.4. The resources of the Catholic theological tradition that are used to build the new approach to Catholic religious education

The resources of the Catholic theological tradition that are used to build the new approach were analysed in chapters five and six. They included the work of David Tracy, Church teaching on other religions, its guidance on and the practice of inter-religious dialogue, and the related practice of comparative theology. These resources were used to help shape and form the new approach and to address the areas in Church guidance on RCRE that required clarification. These were:

- What does academic rigour look like in RCRE?

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[26] Ibid., 211.
[27] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity*, 62.
[28] ScotCen, 'Scots with no religion at record level'.

- How can RCRE be an academic subject that is educationally appropriate for all young people, regardless of religious affiliation, and be open to faith development and a search for meaning?
- What is meant by experience?
- How can the content of RCRE and experience be related?

7.4.1. Using the ideas of David Tracy to address the issues in RCRE that require clarification[29]

The basis of an answer to the above four questions is found in the theology of David Tracy and his understanding of the "classic" and its interpretation (5.2.2). The "classic", which can include "[t]exts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons", contains "an excess and permanence of meaning, yet always resists definitive interpretation".[30] The "classic", which can be religious or non-religious, relates to what Tracy calls "lived experience".[31] Both the "classic" and your experience become meaningful when there is a relationship between them.[32] When this happens the "classic" makes manifest something important in your life. In the context of the religious "classic", the experience that Tracy refers to is common to all humanity and includes "limit situations" such as a sense of finitude and mortality, principles of order, fundamental trust, wonder, a sense of reality of 'something more', a transcendent sense of justice.[33] At the same time, whilst the "classic" resists definitive interpretation the possibilities for a plurality of interpretations does not validate "a mindless, genial pluralism of let a thousand flowers bloom".[34] Any interpretation of a "classic" must satisfy criteria, it must be "relatively adequate" which includes doing justice to alternative readings, being faithful to its vitality, and open to various forms of critical analysis.[35] When you engage in interpretation you bring your own experience and your relatively adequate knowledge of the "classic" together so that, to use Tracy's expression, "[t]he classic … interprets me as I struggle to interpret it".[36] When relating the "classic" to your own experience, you use your "analogical imagination". Tracy explains that: "We understand one another, if at all, only through analogy. Who you are I only know by knowing what event, what focal meaning, you actually live by. And that I know only if I

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[29] See 5.2.
[30] Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity,*12.
[31] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 66.
[32] Ibid., 66.
[33] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 164-165. See also, NA 1; GS 4, 10, 18.
[34] Ibid., 319.
[35] Ibid., 121-122.
[36] Ibid., 119.

too have sensed some analogous guide in my own life".[37] Christ is *the* Christian "classic";[38] and related to Christ are other Christian "classics", such as texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons, which show us something of his meaning and which are mediated to Christians through the Church (5.2.3).[39] As *the* Christian "classic" Christ is relevant to Christians and as *a* classic to non-Christians and those of no religion. Anyone, regardless of their religious affiliation, can interpret and draw meaning from Christ and related "classics". Tracy himself notes, however, that it appears to be a feature of our time that people do not necessarily reflect on experience or ask fundamental questions about life.[40] Teachers will have to consider how to encourage pupils to reflect on the Christian message, and relate it to their (common human) experience. To do so, teachers will appreciate that this is mediated through the experience of living in a particular place, at a particular time.

This very brief outline of some of the ideas of David Tracy provides the basis of the answer to all five questions that required clarification. "Relative adequacy" is the beginning of the answer to what academic rigour looks like in RCRE. His understanding of the "classic" and its interpretation, shows how teaching the Christian message can be educationally appropriate for all young people, regardless of religious affiliation, and that if they draw meaning from the message, it can be open to faith development and a search for meaning. Experience is best described as common human experience which is, however, always mediated through the experience of living in a particular place and time. The key to relating the content of RCRE and human experience is interpretation, the drawing of meaning. Someone else cannot do this for you. You have to do it yourself and this is only possible if you can relate the Christian message to your own experience, and not the experience that a teacher or scheme think you should have. This presents a challenge for RCRE and its teachers for unless they can encourage a young person to engage with and draw meaning from the Christian message something very important is missing from the subject.

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[37] Ibid., 454-455.
[38] Ibid., 317.
[39] Ibid., 318-325.
[40] Ibid., 342.

7.4.2. Using the Catholic theology of religions, inter-religious dialogue and comparative theology to help shape the new approach to RCRE

The Catholic theology of religions, inter-religious dialogue and comparative theology can help to shape and structure the purpose of RCRE (6.3); its content (6.4 & 6.5); and the skills (6.6), experiences and attitudes it should seek to encourage (6.7).

Purpose

The goal of inter-religious dialogue is conversion of heart (not change of religion) and this is a helpful insight when considering the purpose or goal of RCRE. [41] It relates to Tracy's idea of interpretation, which involves the drawing of meaning from a "classic", and also to Clooney's goal for comparative theology which he sums up in these words of St Ignatius: "to consider, observe, and contemplate what persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it".[42] To draw meaning; to reflect and draw fruit; and to experience conversion of heart can result from the study of the Christian message and that of others religions and any "classic". It is not an aspirational goal for RCRE but is an essential element of the academic nature of the subject. To understand the message requires that you understand its meaning, and this you can only do if you can relate it to your own experience. If you do this then conversion of heart is possible.

Content

The theology of religions acts as a filter for the mass of content that is found, for instance, in both TIOF and the RECD. It focuses on what a young person needs to know and understand about the Christian message in a plural and diverse world. Its focus is Trinitarian and Christo-centric (6.5.1 - 6.5.4), and the predominant image of the Church is that of a pilgrim, who is always in need of "renewal and reform";[43] on a journey with others towards "the plenitude of divine truth" (6.5.5).[44] When compared to TIOF and the RECD, this is a shift in focus away from the Church, towards the Trinity, and away from the idealised and homogenous image of the Church that is presented in those programmes.

Inter-religious dialogue also supports the need to relate the Christian message, and that of any religion, to experience. This is found in Church guidance in its description of the four interrelated forms of dialogue: in daily life; action and work together; theological

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[41] DM 37. See also, RM 56; DP 11, 41, 52e, 79.
[42] *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, n 115, see Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 142.
[43] UR 4.
[44] DV 8.

reflection; and sharing spiritual insights.[45] Implicit in the interrelatedness of these forms is an understanding that religion is connected to the lives of individuals and communities, linking everyday life and behaviour, systems of thought and spiritual journeys. This is also a recurring theme of the *Directory* which argues that "[e]very dimension of the faith, like the faith itself …, must be rooted in human experience and not remain a mere adjunct to the human person".[46] The Church's understanding of other religions and the religious dimension of humanity provides further ideas for considering the content of RCRE. For whilst the main focus for the content will be the revealed truth of God, a good starting point is the human search for God and the Church's understanding of natural theology; what we can know about God through the use of reason alone (6.4.3). This is after all where the *Catechism* begins its presentation of the Christian message.[47]

Skills, experiences and attitudes

Dialogue and comparative theology can help to shape the skills, experiences and attitudes that RCRE should seek to encourage. To be able to engage with and interpret the message requires that a young person has some knowledge of the message, how it has been passed on, how it has been interpreted by others, and that they have the critical skills to examine and evaluate it (6.6). In terms of experiences and attitudes, the practice of dialogue draws out the importance of empathy and the imagination as the way of gaining insight into religion and what it is to be religious (6.7.1); and the need for a balanced attitude of commitment and open-mindedness, what Cornille calls "epistemic hospitality" (6.7.2). Without this attitude, without willingness to learn from and engage with the Christian message, no interpretation is possible. As the section that follows will demonstrate, these theological resources when applied to the key principles as set out in Church guidance help to build the new approach to Catholic religious education.

7.5. The new approach to Catholic religious education

The new approach developed in this chapter presents an alternative way of thinking about the subject. When teaching the Christian message, it tries to make the Catholic Church and Christian faith more attractive to young people and does so by directing attention away from the Church and towards Christ and His message. The new approach should also be understood as a response to the way that the Catholic faith is presented in TIOF and the RECD.

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[45] DM 28; DP 43.
[46] GDC 87.
[47] CCC 27-43.

What follows sets out the foundations of the new approach and provides a basis for developing and planning schemes of work and individual lessons. It explains:

- the purpose of RCRE (7.5.1);
- the general or cohering themes which should be implicit and, as appropriate, explicit in planning schemes of work and lessons (7.5.2);
- the skills; attitudes and experiences that are distinctive of the approach (7.5.3);
- the style of teaching and learning that should be adopted (7.5.4).

These four elements are the foundations of the approach. The new approach also directs attention to key areas of knowledge and understanding of the Christian message which are addressed in the penultimate section of this chapter (7.6).

The focus of this new approach is on teaching and learning in the RCRE classroom. It makes no comment on the wider life of a Catholic school which is an important element of the school's mission. Implicit in this limitation is that the learning that takes place should be open to assessment in the classroom.[48] The approach makes no reference to the identity formation of young people but recognises the desire amongst young people for personal autonomy.[49] Given the nature of the new approach, it applies to both primary and secondary phases of education but makes no specific proposals regarding adaptation for age, maturity and ability.

7.5.1. The aim or purpose of Catholic religious education

The central purpose of RCRE in this new approach is as follows:

- RCRE aims to help young people in Catholic schools to know and understand the Christian message, and in doing so engage with and interpret it.

Two assumptions are implicit in this central purpose: that RCRE is an academic subject and that its content is best described as the Christian message. First, as an academic subject

[48] Assessment can take many forms: written, oral, visual, and kinaesthetic.
[49] This approach is different to that proposed by Lieven Boeve who advocates the "Catholic dialogue school" and for RCRE "to bring young people to a reflexive identity formation, taking into account religious plurality and in engaging in dialogue with the Christian tradition". Boeve, *Theology at the Crossroads,* 203. The approach advocated in this thesis focuses on teaching and learning the Christian message. Whilst this might encourage reflexive identity formation the latter is considered as outside of the RCRE teacher's responsibility.

it contributes to the mission of the Church and must be educationally appropriate for all, regardless of their religious affiliation or lack of it. This means that critical enquiry should be applied to all areas of knowledge and understanding, as appropriate for age and maturity (5.4.1). At the same time, its academic status does not prevent it being open to the deepening of faith and the search for meaning in life. Second, the content of the subject is the Christian message and not the Catholic faith.[50] There is clearly considerable overlap between the two terms. Christian faith is passed on within the context of a Christian community, and how the message is interpreted is always mediated through a community. For Catholics, and for all Christians, without the Church (however it is understood) there would be no Christian message. Use of the term, the Christian message, has the advantage, however, in sharpening the focus on Christ and suggesting that the message, like most messages, is open to a response. This emphasises the living nature of faith in Christ and that the Christian message should always be related to the experience of people. The last point applies to the study of all religion.

The central purpose of RCRE is explained further through the following broad aims:

- RCRE aims to help young people to know and understand the content of the Christian message. The source of this message is the word of God expressed in Sacred Scripture and the living tradition of the Church. Given that Church guidance explains that Scripture should have a pre-eminent position, the new approach should model how, together with tradition, the content of the Christian message can be articulated.

- RCRE aims to develop the skill of interpretation as the distinctive skill of the subject. The principal elements of this skill are an ability to examine critically the Christian message and to engage with it through relating the message to life experience. Interpretation encourages the possibility of being changed or affected by the message and can lead to conversion of heart.

- RCRE aims to develop a balanced attitude of openness and commitment which holds together commitment to knowing and understanding the Christian message (regardless of religious affiliation) and an openness to learn from the message. Without this balanced attitude, engagement with the message will be limited. To

[50] The term, Catholic faith with minor variations, is used in TIOF 9; RECD 6.

encourage an open-minded approach and, therefore engagement, the particular experiences that RCRE aims to develop are empathy and the imagination which encourage insight into the lived experience of religion.

Given that this thesis uses Church teaching on other religions and its guidance on inter-religious dialogue to assist the development of a new approach to RCRE, the absence of any reference to other religions in this statement of purpose should be noticed. In the first instance, this new approach is not about teaching other religions but the Christian message. The reality of plural Britain, including diversity within the Catholic community, and the existence of other Christians, adherents of other religions and people of no religion, is an important element, however, in relating the Christian message to the experience of young people. This new approach tries to hold together the distinctiveness of other religions and non-religious views, and their relationship to the Christian message. Adherents of other religions and holders of non-religious views of humanity must be able to recognise themselves in any description; there must be no hint of relativism, either explicit or implicit; and critical enquiry must be applied to all religions and viewpoints. At the same time, the Christian message explains how all people relate to it; how it values other religions and ways of thinking and can learn from them and their adherents; and it exhorts Christians to work with all people of good will for the common good.

With this in mind, the following additional aim, which will be addressed in the chapter that follows, is proposed:

- RCRE aims to help young people to know, understand, engage with and interpret other religions and non-religious ways of thinking in order to value and learn from them and their adherents, and to encourage work together for the common good.

7.5.2. The general or cohering themes in Catholic religious education

A general or cohering theme identifies an aspect of the study of the Christian message that should be implicit and on a regular basis explicit in all schemes of work and lessons. They apply to both primary and secondary phases though how they are made explicit will vary. The themes are highlighted in a Catholic theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue and reflect a fundamental emphasis of the Catholic tradition. The two general and related themes are:

- Learning about the Christian message must have the mystery of God (*deus semper maior*) and the mystery of humanity at its heart. RCRE should encourage a sense of how the mysterious presence of God can enter human life and how men and women search for meaning in the mystery of life.

- Learning about the Christian message, and any other religion, requires the study of texts, doctrines, rituals and symbols. It is an academic and orderly study of the message but, at the same time, if the lesson or series of lessons cannot be related to the experience of a young person and/or the experience of an adherent then the lesson should be re-considered.

The above two general themes apply to the Christian message but could also be applied to learning about most other religions and, in principle and with some modification, to the study of non-theistic religions, of no religion and non-religious stances.[51]

7.5.3. The skills, attitudes and experiences that are distinctive of the new approach

The distinctive skill of this new approach is interpretation, understood as the ability or facility to examine critically the Christian message, engage with it through relating the message to your experience and draw meaning from it. Whilst you can be taught how to examine critically and relate the message to experience, it is only when the two elements are brought together that interpretation takes place. Another person can help and encourage you to interpret but in the end you have to do it yourself. Developing this skill encourages the possibility of being changed or affected by the message which can lead to conversion of heart. This focus on interpretation is implicit in Church guidance on dialogue.[52] It is explicit in the theology of David Tracy and his idea of the "classic" and its interpretation explained earlier and in chapter five (5.2). For Tracy, interpretation relates your experience and the "classic" with which you are engaging. The "classic" shows or discloses to you something meaningful about your life but any interpretation must be more than opinion and feeling, and should include an appropriate degree of critical analysis, and openness to alternative readings. There are parallels here with Francis Clooney's work on comparative

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[51] These two cohering themes could be related to the much more comprehensive work on Big Ideas in RE. See, *Big Ideas for Religious Education*, ed. Barbara Wintersgill (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2017), 15, https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/research/groupsandnetworks/reandspiritualitynetwork/Big_Ideas_for_RE_E-Book.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[52] DP 43; RM 56.

theology (6.6.1). When reading a text, Clooney argues that the theologian needs to read with care and attention; acknowledge his/her own presuppositions; place the text in the context of contemporary religious practice; learn to read as others would; and leave room for other readers.[53] Clooney goes on to suggest that this is best carried out in small-scale studies that can consider detail. In the classroom, an example of a small-scale study might be to examine one parable or miracle of Jesus in detail and in different ways over a series of lessons rather than study a number of parables or miracles.[54] For both Tracy and Clooney, this reading is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end, which is engagement with the text or the classic which, in turn, makes interpretation, reflection, and drawing of meaning (fruit) possible.

This understanding of interpretation can be applied to the Christian message and to the message of other religions and non-religious viewpoints. You do not have to be an adherent to interpret as meaning can be disclosed through engagement with any "classic". A non-Christian can engage with, and interpret the Gospels, the life of a saint or Church teaching such as the incarnation. He or she does not have to believe to appreciate its meaning in relation to life experience. If such topics are not or cannot be related to the life of a non-Catholic, the likelihood is that it will make little sense to others, including Catholics. Understood in this way RCRE can be educationally appropriate for all pupils regardless of religious affiliation. In a similar way, if engagement with and interpretation of the Christian message occurs then RCRE can also lead to the deepening of faith and the search for meaning. It encourages a young person to relate academic learning to life experience. With careful use of resources, there is no reason why the skills, which make interpretation possible, could not be practised in secondary school and with top juniors in primary schools.

An emphasis on the skill of interpretation has a particular advantage in current social and ecclesial conditions. As explained earlier, someone cannot interpret for you. You have to do it yourself. In trying to teach young people how to engage with, for instance, a text or an image, through critical examination and relating it to experience, there are opportunities to exercise personal autonomy rather than just following a current trend or taken-for-granted assumption. It models a way of searching for truth through engaging primarily with the Christian message but also with the message of other religions and non-religious viewpoints.

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[53] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 59-67.
[54] A possible example of *non multa, sed multum*. 'Some Characteristics of Jesuit', section 18, para. 163.

Before a young person will attempt to engage with and interpret the Christian message, they need to have the right attitude, they must want to do it. The teacher of RCRE must try to interest and motivate them to know and understand the Christian message (regardless of religious affiliation) and be open to learning from it. Using the terminology of inter-religious dialogue, this is a balanced attitude which, in the context of dialogue, holds together commitment to one's religion and an openness to learn from others. In the classroom, however, religious commitment by pupils cannot be required but they can be asked to show what Cornille calls "epistemic hospitality", an openness to learn from the message.[55] If religious commitment cannot be required of pupils, what does a balanced attitude mean for teachers? The case will be made in the next chapter, when disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom is discussed, that the teacher of RCRE should, unlike pupils, be expected to show commitment to the Christian message and, at the same time, be open to learning from others; that they should support Church teaching and enable critical enquiry to be applied to the teaching.

If a willingness, an openness, to learn from the Christian message is the key attitude that RCRE should encourage, the key experiences are empathy and the imagination. As explained in chapter five (5.3.2), these experiences can be transferred into the educational language of affective learning outcomes which can complement cognitive outcomes associated with knowledge, understanding and skill.[56] They are a complement and not a supplement because without these experiences, without the affective, without the linking of content and experience, understanding will be incomplete and interpretation will not be possible. Empathy, understood as feeling for or putting yourself in the place of others, is necessary to understand what it is to be religious, and the imagination can stimulate empathy and provide a glimpse of the mystery of God and the mystery of humanity.[57] To achieve this, teachers need good resources - literature, art, film, music - to help them stimulate their own imagination and that of their pupils.[58] Seamus Heaney makes this point very well when writing about what constitutes good poetry. He notes the "double capacity" in human beings to be "attracted at one and the same time to the security of what is

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[55] Cornille, *The im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, 194-196.
[56] Bloom's taxonomy divides educational objectives into the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Bloom et al, *Cognitive Domain*, 7-8.
[57] Cornille, *The im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, 153-165; Barnes, *Interreligious Learning*, 22 & 86.
[58] For an unusual example, relevant to primary aged pupils, see this reflection on the Disney cartoon 'Frozen' and the beatitudes, https://www.pathwaystogod.org/resources/thinking-faith/beatitudes-film-let-it-go-let-god?utm_source=Jesuits+in+Britain&utm_campaign=8b6487ecf5-PWG+190808&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_22ed05a35f-8b6487ecf5-87589077&mc_cid=8b6487ecf5&mc_eid=9df59c3c5c accessed on 02 September 2019.

intimately known and the challenges and entrancements of what is beyond us".[59] Poetry springs from this "double capacity" and "[a] good poem allows you to have your feet on the ground and your head in the air simultaneously".[60] Something of this "double capacity" must also be present in RCRE.

7.5.4. The method of teaching and learning to support the new approach

What follows should be understood as guidance for teachers. It is based on a 'soft' distinction between teaching and learning for the latter requires the former, and the teacher should be influenced by the needs of the learner. Therefore, whilst it is guidance for a teacher of RCRE it could also be adapted into a learner profile.

In this new approach, dialogue must be modelled in the classroom in how the teacher relates to pupils and how pupils relate to each other. It assumes that there will be difference and disagreement and therefore the classroom must be a "safe space" not just for pupils, as identified by Linden, but also for teachers.[61] They (teachers) need the confidence and the skill to take the risk of creating the right relationships and atmosphere in the classroom to enable this new approach to be possible. It is very easy to make suggestions for teachers and much harder to put them into practice in the classroom. Teachers must have some freedom, therefore, to determine the balance of classroom activities depending on the available resources, his or her skills and knowledge, and the age and maturity of the class. If they are not sure what best fits the new approach, then the words of St Ignatius Loyola, used by Francis Clooney, are a good guide: "to consider, observe, and contemplate what persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it".[62] Whatever method of teaching and learning contributes to encouraging each of those elements should be practised in the classroom.

Teachers must demonstrate a balanced attitude of commitment to the Christian message and an openness to consider other views and possibly learn from them. In a classroom context, others mean other religions and non-religious viewpoints, *and* pupils' views. In articulating the Christian message and being faithful to it, teachers must recognise that no

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[59] Seamus Heaney, 'Something to Write Home About', in *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), 48.
[60] Ibid., 48-49.
[61] Ian Linden, 'From Freire to religious pluralism: exploring dialogue in the classroom', *International Studies in Catholic Education,* 8:2, (2016), 236-237, https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2016.1206404 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[62] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 142.

Christian lives up to the demands of the Gospel; must be respectful of the presence of the Holy Spirit in others; ensure that the pupil is not a passive receiver, and that the message is intelligible and relates to experience.[63] The idea that a pupil is not a passive receiver and that dialogue is an appropriate model for school is found in Church guidance. For instance, Johannes Pohlscheider explains that article eight of *Gravissimum educationis* provides a model for dialogue within school between teachers and between teachers and pupils, and that the pupil, as "a partner in the conversation, must be taken seriously according to his phase of development".[64] A more recent statement from the Congregation for Catholic Education, reinforces the importance of dialogue in school, with Christ providing an "anthropological and pedagogical paradigm" for its practice.[65]

This understanding of young people means that the teacher must show respect for the liberty of each individual pupil and the openness to understand and learn from them.[66] This does not mean that RCRE is simply the personal narrative of the pupil;[67] or that the new approach should lead to a false irenicism in the classroom.[68] The content of the Christian message has to be known and understood and in the same way that critical enquiry must apply to that message it must also apply to any opinion or judgement by a pupil and any other message or viewpoint. Respect and openness do not mean freedom from scrutiny. In this context, personal agency should be seen as a resource not as a threat. This is consistent with Church teaching on conscience and freedom of choice. On the one hand, the teaching recognises that the exercise of freedom has been damaged by sin;[69] and appreciates the dangers of "false autonomy".[70] On the other hand, it asserts a "rightful freedom even in matters religious";[71] and "a sacred reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice".[72] This teaching applies to adults, in Canon Law defined as those over eighteen years of age, but teachers will appreciate that, in practice, agency and autonomy begin to pass to most young people in their early teens.[73] The new approach to RCRE proposed in this chapter does not seek assent to a list of teachings but engagement with and interpretation of the Christian message. When interpretation occurs, a pupil becomes an

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[63] DP 70.
[64] Pohlscheider, 'Christian Education', 33.
[65] EICD 57.
[66] DM 18, 19. This relies heavily on DH 3, 4, 14.
[67] The same principle applies in dialogical approaches to RE. See, Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education*, 124-125; Castelli, 'Dialogic skills', 163.
[68] RM 56.
[69] GS 17.
[70] GS 41.
[71] GS 26.
[72] GS 41.
[73] Mary McAleese, 'Children's Rights and Obligations in Canon Law'.

active participant and exercises personal autonomy. The approach sets out a way of proceeding in RCRE that recognises that assent to Christ and his message requires freedom of choice, for "it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to [the truth]".[74]

Finally, as an academic subject, RCRE has a content that needs to be known and understood. Like any other subject, didactic teaching; considering texts and other resources individually, in small groups and as a class; and communicating ideas in writing, orally, and visually will be part of lesson planning. What is distinctive about the content of the subject, because it is distinctive of religion, is that this knowledge should be related to experience, that of the young person and/or an adherent. The teacher of RCRE must consider how this relationship to experience, especially empathy for others and the imagination, can be stimulated through appropriate resources and classroom activities. This linking of knowledge-understanding-experience encourages engagement with the Christian message and the possibility of interpretation.

7.5.5. Conclusion

To conclude, the new approach to RCRE is summarised as follows:

- RCRE is an academic subject that must be educationally appropriate for all young people who attend Catholic schools and at the same time it can be open to faith development and the search for meaning.

- The Christian message is the best descriptor of the content of RCRE because it indicates that the focus of the message is Christ and that, as a message, it can invite a response.

- The source of the Christian message is the word of God expressed in the tradition of the Church and in Sacred Scripture, with Sacred Scripture having a pre-eminent position.

- To know and understand the Christian message requires an orderly study of the message and its relationship to life experience.

[74] DH 3.

- The key skill is interpretation which requires engagement with the message, critical examination of it, relating the message to your own experience, and the drawing of meaning. This supports the exercise of personal agency.

- The key attitude is openness, the willingness to learn from the message.

- The key experiences are empathy and use of the imagination which encourage engagement with the message, relating it to experience, and the possibility of glimpsing something of the mystery of God and humanity.

- Relating the Christian message to life experience and glimpsing something of the mystery of God and humanity are fundamental to the new approach and should be implicit themes, and at times explicit, throughout the course.

- The new approach requires the active participation of learners and the creation of a 'safe space' for teachers and learners to enable both critical examination of the message, and any other view that is expressed, and a willingness to learn from them.

7.6. The content of the Christian message in Catholic religious education

Having outlined the aims and cohering themes of the new approach to RCRE, and the skills, experiences and attitudes to be encouraged, together with suggestions as to how the subject should be taught, the final aspect to be considered is the content of RCRE. What follows is not an attempt to define all the areas of knowledge and understanding that could be considered as appropriate. It is an attempt to explain what a young person needs to know and understand to make sense of the Christian message in the context of plurality and diversity, both within society and within the Catholic community. It sets out the core or essential content for developing learning outcomes;[75] and recognises that the proposed core learning should be supplemented by other important topics. A very short excursus, at the end of this chapter, addresses this matter.

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[75] Claude Geffré OP, in setting out a basic principle of ecumenism argues that "[t]hat which is required is that which is sufficient". This is a helpful guide to reducing the weight of content in RCRE. Claude Geffré, 'Double Belonging and the Originality of Christianity as a Religion', in *Many Mansions: Multiple Belonging and Christian Identity*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 99.

In proposing the following as core content, this section summarises and supplements the analysis of Church teaching on other religions and the practice of inter-religious dialogue carried out in chapter six (6.4 & 6.5). It offers a succinct guide to writers of schemes, programmes and resources, and teachers. How the content is taught, and the ideas and materials used to support learning, will vary as pupils mature. The core content should form, however, the basis of the curriculum for every year group in primary and secondary school. Given that it is centred on the Trinity and the Church this is not a radical suggestion.

7.6.1. Natural theology: a good starting point for RCRE[76]

The foundation for the content of the Christian message is the Trinity and in particular Christ who, in turn, directs us to both God and humanity.[77] It is important to note, however, that the *Catechism*, in its account of the Christian message, does not begin with revealed truth but with the human search for God.[78] The Church holds that all men and women are by nature religious which is manifest in the human search for meaning and truth, or in Christian language, the search for God. Even when, in the light of Christ, this search leads to erroneous or incomplete answers it neither invalidates the search nor every feature of it. This use of human intelligence expressed in other religions, and also in art, music, drama, literature, philosophy and science, is the basis of what the Church calls "natural theology". It is a good starting point for knowledge and understanding of the Christian message. For, the human search for meaning and truth is universal; it does not begin with the people of Israel or the Church; and the application of reason and intelligence can lead to belief in God. It opens up a wide range of possibilities such as art and literature for RCRE to explore the mystery of God and the mystery of humanity. Natural theology must be completed, however, by revelation and it is the Trinity, the central doctrine of Christian faith, that begins to shape how the content of RCRE should be expressed.

7.6.2. The Trinity[79]

The Father[80]

Revelation shows God, the Father, to be the origin and end of all humanity. Even though separated in time and divided in many ways, humanity is united with and through God.

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[76] See 6.4.3.
[77] GDC 123.
[78] CCC 27-43.
[79] See 6.5.1.
[80] See 6.5.2.

The Genesis account of creation suggests a covenant between God and Adam (Gn 1-5), who represents all human beings, which is made explicit in the covenant between God and Noah (Gn 6-9). Both of these covenants precede the covenant with Abram/Abraham (Gn 12). This understanding of our common humanity is reinforced by the description that all men and women are made in the "image and likeness" of God (Gn 1:27). These Biblical accounts provide a basis for understanding social cohesion from a Christian perspective and are a good starting point for exploring the universal fatherhood of God and Trinitarian theology.

But to understand the Father it is necessary to look to the Son for Jesus says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).

The Son[81]

Understanding Christ, the Son of God, through the prism of the theology of religions provides a good example of how both Sacred Scripture and Church teaching can help to make explicit the content of the Christian message. The Prologue of John's Gospel proclaims Christ as the pre-existent Word (*Logos*), through which "all things came into being" (Jn 1:3), and which "enlightens everyone" (Jn 1:9); and Church Fathers developed further this relationship between Christ and humanity, and all creation. A good example is Justin Martyr's use of the phrase "seeds of the Word" (*logos spermatikos* or *semina Verbi*) which can be found in all humanity but come to fulfilment only in Christ. In terms of the content of RCRE, John's Prologue and use of the Church Fathers identifies two important principles. First, that it is through Christ that the Father is visible, not just in Palestine 2,000 years ago, but from the beginning, in all creation, and in all men and women.[82] Second, that the seeds must be distinguished, but never separated, from the Word itself which "became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1: 14). These ideas are reinforced in more recent Church teaching. For instance, *Gaudium et spes* articulates how, through Christ, the mystery of God and the mystery of humanity takes on a new meaning for all men and women, and how Christ is the answer to the human search for truth and meaning.[83] He is the "image of the invisible God (Col 1:15)" and the "perfect man". Through His incarnation Christ is united "in some fashion with every man" and "died for all men". A teacher looking for a visual image to capture this idea might consider Salvador Dali's

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[81] See 6.5.3.

[82] O'Collins suggests criteria for discerning seeds of the Word outside of Christianity. These include the level of profundity, the ability to change or modify behaviour, orientation to Christ and the Spirit, a Trinitarian shape. *Christology of Religions*, 138.

[83] GS 22.

Christ of St John of the Cross, which portrays Christ on the cross with the earth and the sea of Galilee below.[84]

Whilst RCRE teachers will understandably want to avoid becoming involved in complex theology, the incarnation is fundamental to understanding Christ and the Christian message. It can be too easy for a teacher to focus attention on the accounts of Jesus' life and the miracles and parables in the synoptic Gospels and, as a result, neglect that the singular uniqueness of Jesus Christ is based on his "personal identity as the Son of God made man, as God's incarnate Word, that is God made human in history".[85] A Catholic theology of religions holds together Christ as "image of the invisible God" and the "perfect man" and RCRE must do the same.

When teaching about the life of Christ, the theology of religions can be helpful in showing how the Christian message should be adapted for current conditions. The Gospels show that Jesus' main concern was to draw together his people, the people of Israel, but in his limited encounters with Gentiles he displays an open and inclusive attitude. (The healing of the Centurion's servant is a good example, Mt 8: 5-13). Teachers will focus on Jesus's actions and teaching but this can be supplemented by Jesus in prayer and in silence, activities that are at the heart of much inter-religious dialogue today.

Opportunities can also be taken to explore the meaning of the incarnation in an imaginative way, relating it to other aspects of the Christian message such as the sacraments. For instance, that through goodness of creation (Gn 1), which is completed by the incarnation, "the fruit of the earth", and the "fruit of the vine, by the "work of human hands", can become the Body and Blood of Christ.[86] This linking, through the incarnation - of the glory of creation and humanity, and the Church and the Eucharist - is captured in George Mackay Brown's short story: A Treading of Grapes.[87] In a sermon by Fr Halcrow, a priest in Orkney at the time of the Reformation, all men and women are invited to Mass, to share in the presence of Christ in the same way that he was present at the marriage feast of Cana (the Gospel for the Sunday). This is possible through the Church, and the invitation extends to "not only you, princes [the princes were Olaf the fisherman and Jock the crofter], all creation rejoices … animals, fish, plants, yea, the water, the wind, the earth, the

[84] Salvador Dali, Christ of St John of the Cross,: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-44486330 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[85] Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 89.
[86] Preparation of the Gifts, from the New Translation of the Mass, https://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Order-of-Mass.pdf, 11, accessed on 02 September 2019.
[87] George Mackay Brown, 'A Treading of Grapes', in *A Time to Keep* (London: Hogarth Press, 1970), 63-76.

fire, stars, the very smallest grains of dust".[88] Signs of the presence of Christ, "seeds of the Word", are also found outside of the Church: in the behaviour and actions of people, when goodness, love and justice are manifest; and in texts, both religious and secular. For instance, the United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights;[89] the United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child;[90] and the Equality Act (2010) could be considered as "seeds of the Word".[91]

The Spirit[92]

An emphasis on the active presence of the Holy Spirit in all men and women is a particular feature of recent Catholic writing on the theology of religions, influenced by Pope John Paul II and his theology of the Spirit. In *Redemptoris missio*, the Pope notes that the Spirit is specially present in the Church but his presence and activity is universal, and at work in every human heart. He explains that this presence is found not just in individuals but also in "society and history, peoples, cultures and religions".[93] Later he states his conviction, in relation to other religions, that "every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart".[94] Discerning the presence of the Spirit in, for instance, other religions is not as easy as discerning its presence in individuals. Here Sacred Scripture provides a straightforward basis for doing so through the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. For where the gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord) and fruits of the Spirit (charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity) are present, so is God.[95] Where and when these gifts and fruits are found, the Holy Spirit is present.

Looking at the content of the Christian message in RCRE, through the theology of religions, emphasises the importance of the presence and activity of the Spirit outside of the Church, an emphasis which is absent in TIOF and the RECD. Given the plurality of Britain today and possible signs of the presence of the Spirit in other religions and their adherents, and in the lives and ideas of so many people unconnected with the Church or Christianity, this is a missed opportunity. Without taking away from the special presence

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[88] Ibid., 75.
[89] https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[90] https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[91] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents accessed on 02 September 2019.
[92] See 6.5.4.
[93] RM 28.
[94] RM 29.
[95] See Is 11:1-2; Gal 5:22-23; CCC 1803-1845.

of the Spirit in the Church, this emphasis reinforces a Trinitarian theology that gives Christians further reason to value and work with others in "protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity".[96] Teachers of RCRE should therefore consider devoting more curriculum time to the Spirit and how it is manifest in the Church and in the world. This is never at the expense of a Christocentric focus for, as Pope John Paul II explains, the Spirit is not an alternative to Christ for it is always Christ and his Spirit.[97]

7.6.3. The Church[98]

A Christocentric focus in RCRE leads us to the Father and the Spirit, and to all men, women and children. The same focus also leads us to the Church, the body of Christ. For, whilst "[w]e cannot believe in [the Church] as we believe in the Author of salvation, … we do believe that she is the Mother who brings us our regeneration".[99] For, without the Church there is no Christianity, and without the Church Jesus would not be proclaimed. The Christian message is not absorbed by osmosis but needs to be passed on through the actions and words of people, by and through the Church. Jesus commanded his followers to go and "make disciples of all nations" and to "remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28: 19-20). This teaching is at the heart of Christ's, and his Spirit's, special presence in the Church. But what images or teaching about the Church are highlighted by dialogue and the theology of religions, and will they help teachers to present the Christian message in RCRE? The following five ideas are proposed: that the Church is always in need of "renewal and reform"; it is a pilgrim people; a witness to the Truth; at the service of the Kingdom; and a sign and instrument of salvation for all humanity.[100]

The phrase "renewal and reform" is found in *Unitatis redintegratio*, the Vatican II decree on ecumenism.[101] In the same decree the idea is developed further: "Christ summons the Church to continual reformation … Thus if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated these can and should be set right".[102] It is hard to imagine a more opportune and appropriate re-statement of Church teaching given current social and

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[96] LS 201.
[97] RM 29.
[98] See 6.5.5.
[99] De Lubac, *Splendour of the Church*, 20.
[100] See 6.5.5.
[101] UR 4.
[102] UR 6.

ecclesial conditions. It would be very interesting for teachers to ask secondary pupils to consider possible areas of moral deficiency in the Church and Christian life, and what Church teaching might need to be re-formulated. The teacher could introduce the latter idea by showing how it has taken centuries for the Church to understand the truth contained in the doctrine, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.[103] This idea of the Church, in need of "renewal and reform", is consistent with the model of the Church as a pilgrim or a pilgrim people proposed at Vatican II and articulated in guidance on inter-religious dialogue. It also points to the wider concept of pilgrimage found in the religions of the world and even amongst those with no religion as the popularity of the *Camino de Santiago* would suggest.[104] In inter-religious dialogue there is an image of Christians and the adherents of other religions "walk[ing] together toward truth and … work[ing] together in projects of common concern".[105] This ideal suggests two further ideas: the Church as a witness to the Truth, and at the service of the Kingdom.

Christ gave his disciples a mission: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news (or Gospel) to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).[106] The Church understands this mission in the context of Jesus' own mission, given to him by the Father: "the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mk 1:15). Jesus proclaimed this good news in both word and actions which is why evangelisation "does not mean simply to teach a doctrine, but to proclaim Jesus Christ by one's words and actions".[107] The Church and all Christians are called to witness to this truth, definitively revealed by Christ, through both words and actions.[108] At the same time, Christians know that they do not "possess the truth in a perfect way and total way but can walk with others towards that goal".[109] Neither is the Kingdom of God the possession of the Church or Christians. The Church is at the service of the Kingdom though any understanding of the Kingdom is incomplete without the Church.[110] This is a complex idea and it is much more straightforward for a teacher to explain that the Church and Christians can help to build the Kingdom by co-operating with the adherents of other religions and with all men and women to work for "the integral

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[103] See, Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?*
[104] See, http://santiago-compostela.net accessed on 02 September 2019.
[105] DM 13.
[106] See also Mt 28: 18-20; Lk 24: 46-48; Jn 17: 18; Ac 1: 8.
[107] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal note on some aspects of evangelization* (2007), 2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20071203_nota-evangelizzazione_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019. See also EN 31.
[108] DTC 15 referenced to DI 22); DP 37 referenced to DV 2 & 8.
[109] DM 21. "We bear this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Co 4:7).
[110] RM 20.

development and liberation of people";[111] and "join one another in taking up the duty of serving justice and peace".[112] Working with others for the common good and the advancement of society is one way of witnessing to the truth and building the Kingdom. This understanding of the Kingdom is taken up again in the idea of the Church as a "sign and instrument" of salvation for all men and women.

"Sign and instrument" of salvation is a rather anodyne descriptor and it is only when it is considered further that its potential application to RCRE becomes clear. As a sign of salvation, the Church is witness to a salvation that has already begun in Jesus and his announcement of the Kingdom. For, as Gerhard Lohfink explains, when reflecting on Mark 6:30-44, and how the hungry will be filled, "[t]he solution the reign of God, which alone can feed and satisfy the poor of the world, has long been given to us. We only have to live it".[113] A similar idea is found in John's Gospel and its use of "life" and especially "eternal life". As Graham Stanton explains, eternal life is not just about life after death but indicates that "in Jesus future blessing becomes present reality".[114] The Church and Christian life should be a sign of this blessing, a sign of the reign or Kingdom of God, in the world today. It should be manifest in how the Church lives its mission through word and action: its living witness; service of humankind; dialogue with others; proclamation or announcement of the Gospel; and prayer, contemplation, worship and celebration of the sacraments especially the Eucharist.[115] These *signs* of salvation, of future blessing as present reality, can be the *instrument* of salvation for Christians and they hint at how they might also be the *instrument* of salvation for non-Christians. The Eucharist, offered for all, and the prayers of the faithful for the salvation of all, are more than just friendly words and generous thoughts. They point to a mystery that is intelligible but ultimately incomprehensible, where heaven and earth are drawn together, where the prayers of Christians and the actions and words of the priest can be offered on behalf of God for all creation.[116] In a beautiful turn of phrase, even in translation, Teilhard de Chardin SJ (1881-1955) creates a wonderful image where "mysteriously and in very truth, at the touch of the substantial Word the immense Host which is the universe is made flesh. Through your own

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[111] DP 42.
[112] EG 250. The Encyclical, *Pacem in terris* (1963), of Pope John XXIII, is the first articulation in 'modern times' of the Church's concern for serving justice and peace, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[113] Gerhard Lohfink, *No irrelevant Jesus: On Jesus and the Church Today*, trans. Linda M Maloney (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014), 46.
[114] Graham Stanton, *The Gospels of Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113.
[115] This list is based on DM 13.
[116] Another paradox from de Lubac expresses this idea: "Is the sacred untouchable? Yes certainly, and yet we touch it". *Theology in History*, 240.

incarnation, my God, all matter is henceforth incarnate".[117] With the help of imaginative resources, both visual and written, a teacher of RCRE needs to make manifest some sense of the mystery of the Eucharist, and the mystery of God's presence though the incarnation, otherwise something very important is missing in any understanding of the Christian message.

7.7. Conclusion

To conclude, a summary of the proposed core content is outlined.

The human search for God

- Natural theology shows that the search for meaning and truth is common to all humanity and can be expressed in religious and non-religious ways.

Revelation of the Triune God

The Father

- Through the universal Fatherhood of God, evident in God's covenant with Adam and with Noah, all men and women are brothers and sisters.
- All men and women are made in the "image and likeness of God".

The Son

- The Son shows us the Father; he is God's incarnate Son, God made man in history; the "Word made flesh"; the "image of the invisible God", and the perfect man.
- Through his incarnation, Christ is united with all men and women, and died for all.
- Through his incarnation, the goodness of creation is redeemed and perfected.
- The pre-existent Word indicates that all that is right and good, today and since the beginning of time, is through Christ ("seeds of the Word").
- In the Gospels, Jesus' priority is to draw together his people, the people of Israel, and at the same time he is open to and inclusive of Gentiles.
- In the Gospels, Jesus acts and teaches, especially through his miracles; parables; suffering, death and resurrection, but he is also found in dialogue, prayer and silence.

The Spirit

- The Spirit is specially present in the Church.

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[117] Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Mass on the World', in *Hymn of the Universe*, trans. Gerald Vann (London: Collins, 1977), 23.

- The Spirit has been active since the beginning of time and is also present outside of the Church, in all humanity.
- The gifts and fruits of the Spirit are a sign of its presence in the Church and in all humanity.
- It is always Christ and his Spirit.

The Church

- Christ needs the Church. Without people there are no witnesses (in word and in deed) and no one to spread his Gospel and help to build his Kingdom.
- The Church is like a pilgrim on a journey, always in need of renewal and reform in how it witnesses to Christ, and how it formulates its teachings.
- Through witness, the Church and all Christians are called to build the Kingdom of God; and through their co-operation with the adherents of other religions and all people of goodwill, to draw all men and women into this Kingdom.
- The Church is the sign and instrument of salvation for all men and women, through its living witness; service of humanity; dialogue with others; through proclamation of the Gospel; and through prayer, worship and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist which is offered on behalf of all humanity

7.8. Excursus: Teaching other topics or content relating to the Christian message in Catholic religious education

This chapter has considered what *should* be taught in RCRE given current social and ecclesial conditions. It has not addressed what *could* be taught including important topics such as Scripture, the sacraments, the liturgical year, the moral and social teaching of the Church, Church history and examples of Christian life, as well as other religions and non-religious viewpoints. The new approach applies, however, whatever the content and should be used to teach any additional topic. This includes:

- The need to consider necessary adaptations in the light of current conditions. For instance, certain moral and social questions are addressed today that might not have been considered as issues twenty years ago. Gay marriage and care of creation are two possible examples. Whilst certain moral principles, such as the intrinsic dignity of every human being will always apply, how the principles are exemplified will depend on current conditions. The need for adaptation is relevant to all content including the Scripture passages that are selected for study; the image of Christ that

is portrayed; how the sacraments are taught; what saints are used as models; and what topics in Church history are taught. Writers of guidance and teachers must not assume that what was meaningful for them is necessarily meaningful for their pupils. They should be attentive to the way religion and Catholicism in particular are portrayed in the media and seek to challenge or contextualise the portrayal. For instance, a case study based on Galileo would challenge the myth that the Church is anti-science.

- The same overall aim for RCRE should apply. All topics should help young people to know and understand the Christian message, and in doing so engage with and interpret it. If the topic does not shed light on the Christian message and help a young person to engage with it and relate it to life experience, then its place in the scheme of work should be questioned.

- The need to foster empathy and the imagination which encourage insight into the lived experience of religion applies to all topics. As was explained in this chapter, use should be made of art, literature, film, music and any art to foster these experiences and the insight they provide into the Christian message.

- The same skills apply to all topics. The principal skill is interpretation exemplified in the words of St Ignatius: "to consider, observe, and contemplate what persons are saying, and then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it". All topics should encourage this. The new approach would advocate the use of small-scale studies that can consider detail and encourage pupils to reflect on what the topic might mean from different perspectives.

- The cohering themes of the new approach should be present in all topics. The mystery of God (*deus semper maior*) and the mystery of humanity should be present, implicitly and at times explicitly, together with the need to relate any academic study of the Christian message to the experience of a young person and/or the experience of an adherent.

- The guidance on teaching and learning applies to all topics. The new approach encourages the active participation of learners and the creation of a 'safe space' for teachers and learners to enable both critical examination of the message, and any

other view that is expressed, and a willingness to learn from the message and other views.

What additional topics or content relating to the Christian message are taught should be decided by teachers and writers of guidance. There will be variations depending on the age of the pupils and local circumstances. Any additional topic should not be to the exclusion of the core content and as far as possible should be related to the core. For instance, use of Scripture and episodes from the life of Christ and from the earliest Church could be used to support the common humanity of all men and women, the human search for God (natural theology) and Christ's openness to Gentiles.[118] Examples of Christian life could include those who are committed to dialogue with others.[119]

[118] For the use of Scripture see John Stoer, 'Using Biblical Texts in Religious Education in Catholic Schools to Encourage Openness to Diversity and Foster Community Cohesion', in *Religious Education in Catholic Schools: Perspectives from Ireland and the UK*, ed. Sean Whittle (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019), 217-229.
[119] For suggestions on Catholic heroes of dialogue see Michael L Fitzgerald & John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll: Orbis books, 2006), chapter nineteen, Prophets of Dialogue, 229-238.

8. Chapter Eight: The application of the new approach to Catholic religious education to diversity within the Catholic community and in society

8.1. Introduction

Having outlined the new approach to Catholic religious education (RCRE) in chapter seven and indicated the content of the Christian message that should be taught given current social and ecclesial conditions, this chapter illustrates how the new approach can be applied to diversity both within the Catholic community and in wider society. It considers how to handle disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom, how other religions, non-religious viewpoints and Judaism should be taught.

8.2. Diversity within the Catholic community: disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom

8.2.1. Context

One of the indicators of diversity within the Catholic community is the evidence, presented in chapter three, that Catholics, in particular young Catholics, do not agree with Church teaching in areas such as abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriage.[1] Bullivant notes that Catholics do not live in a social vacuum but are affected by changing social attitudes;[2] and that "large numbers of even practising Catholics disagree with key areas of Church teaching, not least on a cluster of marriage, sex and family issues".[3] He suggests that Catholics now feel free to pick and choose what teaching they might accept.[4] In a school context, Casson proposes that most young people in Catholic schools "did not appear to be rejecting the Catholic tradition, but expressed strongly the view that they had a right to choose which aspects they consider necessary".[5]

Given this context, it is noteworthy that *This is Our Faith* (TIOF), and the *RE Curriculum Directory for England and Wales* (RECD) offer no specific advice to teachers of RCRE on how to handle disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom. Universal guidance proposes that the RCRE teacher should uphold Church teaching as this carefully worded statement indicates:

> The role of the religion teacher is of first importance; for what is asked for is not that one impart one's own doctrine, or that of some

[1] Woodhead, 'Endangered Species', 7.
[2] Bullivant, Contemporary Catholicism, 7.
[3] Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, 209.
[4] Ibid., 183.
[5] Casson, *Fragmented Catholicity*, 62.

> other teacher, but the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself … always taking care ... to be faithful to the genuine sources, and to the light of the Magisterium.[6]

In contrast, TIOF is rather blunt in stating that as Catholic RE "is confessional in nature … teachers … must propose Roman Catholic beliefs and values as objectively true and eminently relevant".[7] Yet, the evidence of chapter three, summarised above, would support Graham Rossiter's argument that whatever Church authorities might like to think, young people will ask questions and think for themselves.[8]

In responding to this issue, Graham McDonough sets out what he calls a "pedagogy of dissent". He argues that the Catholic Church has lost so much credibility that Catholic schools need to find a way of not only responding to dissent (his term) but using it as a means to re-engage young people.[9] This is challenged by Richard Rymarz who argues that what is needed is not a new pedagogy but high quality RCRE teaching which accepts that criticism of Church teaching will occur, that it should not be ruled out, but that there should always be a preferential option for Church teaching.[10] In Britain, John Sullivan and Richard Wilkin use the metaphor of "translation" as a possible model for how teachers might handle the disparity between the world of official Church guidance and that of young people.[11] This is the context for the question this section addresses: how would the new approach to RCRE, argued for in this thesis, handle disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom?

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[6] LC 59. See also GDC 74, CL 6. On his apostolic visit to the UK in 2010, Pope Benedict, in a speech to teachers, spoke of "the self-evident requirement that the content of … teaching should always be in conformity with Church doctrine". Pope Benedict XVI, Address to teachers and religious in Britain, 17 September 2010, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100917_mondo-educ.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

[7] TIOF 16

[8] Graham Rossiter, 'Reorienting the religious curriculum in Catholic Schools to address the needs of contemporary youth spirituality', *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 13 (1), 2011: 57-72, 10.1080/19422539.2011.540140 accessed on14 August 2019.

[9] Graham P McDonough, *Beyond Obedience and Abandonment: Towards a Theory of Dissent in Catholic Education* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 9-10.

[10] Richard Rymarz, 'Faithful dissent and religious education in Canadian Catholic schools: a response to McDonough', *International Studies in Catholic Education,* 4 (1), 2012: 82-91, https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2012.650493 accessed on 02 September 2019.

[11] John Sullivan, 'Catholic education as ongoing translation', *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 4 (2), 2012: 200-207, https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2012.708175 accessed on 02 September 2019. Richard Wilkin, 'Interpreting the tradition': a research report, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 6 (2), 2014: 164-177, https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2014.929805 accessed on 02 September 2019.

8.2.2. The new approach to RCRE applied to disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom

When the new approach to RCRE is applied to disagreement in the classroom another way of considering the matter emerges that is an alternative to a "pedagogy of dissent" and "translation". Dissent implies that assent is what is being sought. "Translation" that the pupil is a receiver of whatever message the teacher is trying to convey. The new approach, using Church guidance on inter-religious dialogue, does not require assent, dissent or translation. It does require engagement with and interpretation of the Christian message, and it sets out a way of approaching any disagreement and learning from it. In explaining how to use disagreement in the classroom to further learning, what follows complements the guidance on teaching and learning to support the new approach explained in the previous chapter (7.5.4). It is set out in four themes: creating a safe space for critical enquiry, dialogue as a guide to classroom practice, dialogue partners in the classroom, and teachers as "credible witnesses".

Creating a safe space for critical enquiry

The principles of dialogue provide helpful ground rules for discussion and disagreement. The teacher should not shy away from pupil expressions of disagreement with Church teaching and the first task is to understand the other person's viewpoint. In the classroom, the teacher is understandably in a privileged position and, at the same time, pupils must be able to express their views. The challenge for the teacher, in establishing the ground rules for the classroom, is to establish a "safe space", an atmosphere of mutual respect for difference with the humility to listen to and possibly learn from others.[12] That responsibility must fall on the pupils as much as the teacher, something that is not always easy to achieve. The "safe space" must enable all views and not just the Christian message to be open to critical enquiry.

Dialogue as a guide to classroom practice

Helpful guidance on dialogue that could be applied to classroom practice including creating a "safe space" is found in Church documents. *Dialogue and Proclamation* notes obstacles to dialogue which include "a polemical spirit" and intolerance.[13] *Dialogue and Mission* makes use of *Dignitatis humanae* to emphasise respect for liberty and for each individual person.[14] A helpful summary of the attitudes that should be the basis for the

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[12] Linden, 'From Freire to religious pluralism: exploring dialogue in the classroom', 236-237.
[13] DP 52.
[14] DM 18, 19. This relies heavily on DH 3, 4, 14.

teacher's approach in the classroom can be found in *Dialogue and Proclamation* when it lists the qualities that should characterise any proclamation or explanation of the Christian message: confidence; faithfulness and fidelity to teaching; humility and the recognition that Christians do not live up to the demands of the Gospel; respect for the presence of the Holy Spirit in others; dialogue to ensure that the hearer is not a passive receiver, and incultured (or adapted) so that the message is intelligible and responds to human aspirations.[15] In addition, educational guidance also stresses that teachers must be sincere, and "credible witnesses".[16]

Dialogue partners in the classroom

Practical matters such as the age and maturity of the pupils, the knowledge and skills of the teacher, and the resources available will affect classroom practice. These are important issues and best left to teachers, schools and RE departments to consider. For older pupils, an important question is who are the dialogue partners in the classroom? The obvious answer is the teacher and the pupils but, unlike the ideal dialogue partner who should be someone with "solid faith and spiritual maturity" (DTC 31), the convictions, religious or other, and the views of young people are often in a state of flux (see Erikson's comments on identity formation in young people).[17] An alternative way of looking at the question of the dialogue partner is to make use of the emphasis found in inter-religious dialogue on understanding religion as a "lived reality" (6.4.1). Using the topics of abortion, homosexuality and gender as exemplars, dialogue partners could include someone who has had an abortion or is in a gay relationship or is concerned about their gender identity.[18]

Teachers as "credible witnesses"

The new approach to RCRE seeks engagement with and interpretation of the Christian message and unless the message is taken seriously then there is little reason for pupils to engage with it. If the pupils need to take the message seriously then the teacher must model this. This is wholly consistent with the guidance on inter-religious dialogue which requires "firmness of religious conviction" as well as "readiness to understand people of other religious traditions without pretence, prejudice, or close-mindedness".[19] The document *Lay Catholics*, referred to earlier, makes it clear that RCRE is not about imparting one's own

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[15] DP 70.
[16] ETT Part III. See also LC 32-33; EIDC 47.
[17] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 235-236.
[18] This of course may apply to some pupils in the classroom.
[19] DTC 40. Referenced to ES 58-91; RM 56; DP 47-50.

doctrine but the teaching of Christ and that of the Magisterium.[20] But can a teacher make a distinction between the Christian message and Church teaching; and can they be "credible witnesses" if they do not agree with what they are teaching?

Before answering these questions, the legal context for RCRE in British schools needs to be considered. Teachers have a duty to assist parents in educating their children, and work with the school and the Church which appoints and supports them.[21] The Church does not establish Catholic schools to promote disagreement with its teaching, and parents do not send their children to any school to learn what the teacher thinks. Young people and their parents may well disagree with some aspects of Church teaching. They are free to do so but this freedom does not, in legal or contractual terms, automatically or necessarily apply to teachers.

The new approach to RCRE, proposed in this thesis, encourages the application of critical enquiry to the Christian message which means that disagreement will be voiced in the classroom. The extent to which that may happen will vary but the new approach requires that the Christian message should be clearly and confidently articulated. When teaching this message, it has been argued that the appropriate model of the Church for current conditions is that of a pilgrim on a journey (6.5.5 & 7.6.3). Like a pilgrim, the Church knows that renewal and reform are always needed and that this applies not just to the life of the Church but to how it expresses the truth it upholds.[22] In addition, not only can doctrine be better understood but not all teaching has the same authority. The basic categories of Church teaching range from, at its highest level, definitive dogma then definitive doctrine, non-definitive authoritative doctrine through to prudential admonitions and provisional applications of Church doctrine.[23] The first two categories are infallible and irrevocable statements of doctrine, but the last category, whilst it requires "serious attention and consideration" allows a Catholic to legitimately disagree.[24] An example of possible legitimate disagreement is provided by the American Bishops. In a statement on nuclear war, the *Challenge of Peace*, the Bishops "distinguished between binding moral principles and concrete applications about which a Catholic could disagree in good

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[20] LC 59.
[21] In England and Wales, most teachers in state funded Catholic schools are employed not by the local authority, as in Scotland, but by the governors of the school. In Scotland RCRE teachers must be approved by the Church.
[22] UR 6. An example mentioned earlier is the change in the way that the Church understands the doctrine that outside of the Church there is no salvation. The truth in this doctrine is not that only Christians can be saved but that the Church is essential for the salvation of all men and women.
[23] Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority*, 101-102.
[24] Richard R Gaillardetz, *By What Authority*? *A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 101.

faith".[25] The Bishops condemned *first use* of nuclear weapons and were clear that their application of specific moral principles required "serious attention and consideration" but that Catholics could legitimately disagree.[26] Given these gradations in the authority of Church teaching and the possibility of clarifying what a doctrine means, RCRE teachers must proceed with caution.

Pupils could be encouraged to understand, at an appropriate age, the different levels of authority of Church teaching but, in reality, young people will not be really interested in dogma and doctrine but in current moral and social issues. Whilst Catholics can legitimately disagree over the possession and use of nuclear weapons, because Church teaching allows scope for disagreement, a lack of clarity does not apply to issues such as abortion, gay relationships and euthanasia. Can a teacher of RCRE who has doubts about Church teaching in these or similar areas voice his or her concerns in the classroom? Can they be "credible witnesses" if they do not?

In Church guidance there would appear to be no room for disagreement being voiced though a distinction may be made between the internal withholding of assent and publicly disagreeing, dissenting.[27] Whilst public disagreement amongst theologians may help the Church to clarify its teaching, is it appropriate in school? A pastoral letter from the German Bishops (22 September 1967), written after the publication of *Humanae vitae*, provides some helpful guidance.[28] It argues that dissent from even provisional teaching is not appropriate in sermons or religious instruction though it accepts that the provisional nature of the teaching might in some circumstances be explained. Christians who think they know what the Church will eventually come to teach must examine themselves, their theological knowledge and their conscience and ask whether they know better than the Church. The pastoral letter accepts that in principle it is possible but "conceit and presumption will have to answer for their wilfulness before the judgement-seat of God".[29] That is a warning that would preclude disagreement with Church teaching and suggest that whilst the Christian message and a particular Church teaching may in principle be distinguished it would not be appropriate to do so in the classroom.

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[25] Ibid., 101. See US Bishops, Pastoral Letter: *The Challenge of Peace* (1983), http://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf accessed on 02 September 2019.
[26] Note this applies not to the possession of nuclear weapons but to first use. The Scottish Bishops opposition to the possession of nuclear weapons would also fit into this category.
[27] Gaillardetz, *By What Authority*?, 133.
[28] Karl Rahner, 'Magisterium' in *Encylopedia of Theology*, 877-878.
[29] Ibid., 878.

The new approach to RCRE advocated in this thesis assumes difference and disagreement in the classroom. It does not seek consensus or assent to Church teaching but seeks to help pupils interpret the Christian message for themselves. The outcome of the process of interpretation, encouraged by teachers, might well be that a young person disagrees with Church teaching. That is, however, very different to arguing that teachers should themselves articulate disagreement. A teacher may have doubts and it would be perfectly appropriate to say that X is a real problem for the Church because of …, but inappropriate to say that I disagree with the Church teaching. The new approach to RCRE requires listening and learning from others, even when there is disagreement. Church teaching must therefore be articulated faithfully by the teacher because if that does not happen then pupils will have a diminished opportunity for learning from the teaching. The new approach is not about reaching a consensus (false irenicism) or teaching a "pedagogy of dissent" or "translating" Church teaching to make it more acceptable to young people. It is about engaging with the Christian message, understood here as the Church teaching, and learning from the truth it seeks to uphold. When arguing that abortion and gay relationships are wrong, what truth is the Church upholding? This can lead into discussion about human life and its sanctity, about the Biblical understanding of male and female and the place of marriage in society and Christian tradition, that are outside of the scope of this thesis. But the principle is important. It is that RCRE teachers should seek to uphold Church teaching, so that pupils can understand it, engage with it and be challenged by it. In a similar way, the teacher will be challenged by the views of the pupils. A teacher becomes a "credible witness" through his or her classroom practice not by expressing a personal viewpoint. In this new approach, good practice requires that the Christian message (and Church teaching) is taken seriously and the pupils are encouraged to engage with and interpret it. From an educational point of view, the teacher's opinion is irrelevant.

8.2.3. Summary guide to handling disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom

If a young person is to engage with and interpret the Christian message in RCRE then they must be open to learning from the message. This has important implications for teaching especially when disagreement with Church teaching is voiced in the classroom. What follows is a summary guide for teachers though it is acknowledged that it is much easier to write the guidance than to practice it:

- Do not avoid or react negatively to disagreement but try to use it to encourage engagement with the Christian message.

- Work hard to create a safe space for yourself and for your pupils to express views and be open to critical enquiry.
- Be confident in expressing the Christian message. Avoid being polemical and acknowledge that Christians do not live up to the ideals of the message.
- When teaching a 'contentious' topic such as abortion assume that a dialogue partner in the classroom has had an abortion.
- Apply critical enquiry to all viewpoints including Church teaching.
- Be a "credible witness" to the Christian message as expressed in Church teaching to encourage pupils to engage with the message and interpret it.

8.3. Diversity in society: other religions

The new approach to RCRE argued for in this thesis, aims to help young people to know, understand, engage with and interpret other religions and non-religious ways of thinking in order to value and learn from them and their adherents, and to encourage work together for the common good (7.5.1). In seeking to further this aim, it is important that adherents or holders of a viewpoint should be able to recognise themselves in what is being taught. Therefore, whilst the Church believes that there is a religious dimension to all humanity, the language and integrity of those who hold non-religious views such as (existential) humanists must be respected. The use of religious language to describe their position should be used with caution. In order to uphold this principle, the religious and non-religious will be addressed separately.

8.3.1. How the Church understands other religions

Some background is needed on how the Church understands other religions (the theology of religions) in order to teach about them. This in turn has implications for understanding non-religious viewpoints. The main sources for this section are the same five documents introduced in chapter six (6.2.3). From that chapter it should be recalled that Judaism is not considered as an other religion by the Church and is addressed separately in section 8.5.

The five documents are clear that other religions should be valued, and that Christians should work with their adherents for the good of all. *Dialogue in Truth and Charity* uses the same descriptors as *Dialogue and Mission* to describe other religions: "true and good things" (OT 16), "precious religious and human things" (GS 92), "seeds of contemplation" (AG 18), "elements of grace and truth" (AG 9), "seeds of the word" (AG 11 & 15) and

"rays of truth that illuminate all people" (NA 2).[30] The documents of the Pontifical Council agree that Christians should work with the adherents of other religions for the good of all. *Dialogue and Mission* proposes the idea of Christians and the adherents of other religions "walk[ing] together toward truth and… work[ing] together in projects of common concern".[31] That Christians should work with the adherents of religions is also evident in the magisterium of recent Popes. Pope John Paul II, in his advocacy of dialogue, saw it as an important means for "establishing a sure basis for peace and warding off the dread spectre of those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history".[32] More recently, Pope Francis, writing about inter-religious dialogue, proposes that "[w]e can then join one another in taking up the duty of serving justice and peace, which should become a basic principle of all our exchanges".[33] In his encyclical, *Laudato si'* (2015), Pope Francis teaches that: "The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity".[34] Whilst there is little argument that Christians should work with the adherents of other religions, it is not so straightforward to understand the extent to which they can learn from other religions; how they might "walk together toward truth".[35] This is not an easy matter to address as it involves the nature of truth. Paul Murray helps to clarify the issue when he notes the change "from viewing truth purely in terms of cognitive understanding and conceptual articulation to viewing it also in performative terms of efficacy and fruitfulness".[36]

In terms of "efficacy and fruitfulness", Pope John Paul II is clear that "the firm belief of the followers of the non-Christian religions … can make Christians ashamed at being often themselves so disposed to doubt … and so prone to relax moral principles and open the way to ethical permissiveness".[37] In other words, Christians can certainly learn from the lives of the adherents of non-Christian religions. But can they learn also from the beliefs and doctrines of other religions? *Dialogue and Proclamation* affirms the definitive truth of Christ but notes that "the fullness of truth received in Jesus Christ does not give individual

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[30] DTC 19. DM 26. For an extended summary of the descriptors see DP 16-18. OT is *Optatam totius* (1965), the decree of Vatican II on priestly training, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[31] DM 13.
[32] Pope John Paul II, apostolic letter, *Novo millennio ineunte* (2001), 55, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[33] EG 250.
[34] LS 201.
[35] DM 13.
[36] Murray, 'Families of Receptive Theological Learning', 80.
[37] RH 6.

Christians the guarantee that they have grasped that truth fully. In the last analysis truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed".[38] *Dialogue and Mission* explains that because Christian witness is imperfect and that "we bear this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Co 4:7), the truth of Christ may be obscured.[39] In these two documents how Christians live and what they believe are held together; "cognitive understanding" and "efficacy" are distinguished but not separated. In contrast, *Dialogue in Truth and Charity* is more concerned with "cognitive understanding and conceptual articulation", with dialogue understood as a means of acquiring truth.[40] Here the emphasis is on "the truth definitively revealed by the Lord";[41] that "Christians know that all religious truth is in Christ".[42]

This short digression on the nature of truth sounds more complex than it is. In terms of application to RCRE and teaching the Christian message and other religions, teachers should explain that on the one hand, Christians know that "the fullness of truth [is] received in Jesus Christ";[43] that "the truth [is] definitively revealed by the Lord"; and that on the other hand, that Christians do not "possess the truth in a perfect and total way but can walk with others towards that goal".[44] On that journey, Christians can learn from the adherents of other religions whose lives are enriched by their religion. In effect this is a restatement of the two cohering themes of the new approach: that God is always greater than our understanding (*deus semper maior*), and the need to hold together religious teaching and the experience and life of an adherent.

Henri de Lubac sums this up well and adds another dimension, the eschatological, to the understanding of truth:

> We do not process it (Truth): it possesses us. We do not measure it: we are measured by it. We seek to penetrate into its understanding and we do in fact reach it: the mystery is incomprehensible, it is not unintelligible. But the more we reach, the more we sense at the same time that this truth surpasses us.[45]

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[38] DP 49. A similar phrase is used by Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia, (Rome, 21 December, 2012), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia.html accessed on . on 02 September 2019.
[39] DM 13.
[40] It should be borne in mind that the purpose of this document is to counter understandings that threaten to "annul the richness of religious identities and to generate a kind of relativism". DTC 5.
[41] DTC 15. Referenced to DI 22.
[42] DTC 51.
[43] DP 49.
[44] DM 21.
[45] de Lubac, *Theology in History,* 265. Chapter titled, 'The Development of Dogma', first published in 1948.

So far, the implications for RCRE are that other religions should be valued, their adherents can be excellent examples to Christians, who should consider their imperfection in how they lead their lives. In addition, Christians should work with the adherents of other religions in "protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity".[46] At the same time, whilst RCRE should value other religions and their adherents it must not become consciously or unconsciously relativistic. It must be clear that "the fullness of truth [is] received in Jesus Christ".[47]

What has not been addressed so far is the theological question: what is the "function of non-Christian religions in collective and individual Salvation History"?[48] In general terms, there are two ways of addressing this question in Catholic theology. The first, understands other religions as examples of natural theology, as products of reason and reflection in the human search for God and not supernatural in origin like Judaism and Christianity, which are the result of God's revelation. In this understanding, the function of other religions it to provide ways through which people can find salvation. The second, that whilst the salvation of all men and women is only possible through Christ, that other religions share in some way, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in God's revelation to humanity. In this understanding, the function of other religions could be considered as ways of salvation, in themselves, for their adherents. The debate between these two views has been fierce amongst Catholic theologians and has led a leading scholar, Catherine Cornille, to propose a moratorium on the matter.[49] The International Theological Commission, in its statement on world religions published before *Dominus Iesus,* understands it to be an open question.[50] In a clarification published after *Dominus Iesus*, the Commission cautiously restates its position.[51] Even *Dominus Iesus* keeps open both possibilities.[52] Accepting that this remains an open question;[53] the two ways of understanding other religions are worth considering further because they contain ideas that are helpful for RCRE.

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[46] LS 201.
[47] DP 49.
[48] Becker, 'Trends in German writing on theology of religions', 322.
[49] Catherine Cornille, 'Soteriological Agnosticism & the Future of Catholic Theology of Interreligious Dialogue', in *The Past, Present and Future of Theologies of Interreligious Dialogue*, eds. Terence Merrigan & John Friday (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 201-215.
[50] *Christianity and the World Religions* (1997), 81.
[51] *Christianity and the World Religions: Presentation of the Document*, (2012), paragraphs not numbered, see Third Part: Some Consequences for a Christian Theology of Religion, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20120308_ladaria_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.
[52] DI 8. This references two key texts on either side of the argument: EN 53 & RM 55-56. Francis Sullivan SJ points out that a similar tension is present in the *Notification* on Dupuis, Sullivan, 'Vatican II and the Postconciliar Magisterium on the Salvation the Salvation of the Adherents of Other Religions', 93-94.
[53] Pope John Paul II expressed his understanding that "[t]here remain many questions which we have to develop and articulate more clearly. How does God work in the lives of people of different religions? How

The natural theology argument is clearly expressed by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi*. Here the Pope explains that:

> The Church respects and esteems these non Christian religions because they are the living expression of the soul of vast groups of people. They possess an impressive patrimony of deeply religious texts. They are all impregnated with innumerable 'seeds of the Word' and can constitute a true 'preparation for the Gospel' ... [But] [o]ur religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven".[54]

A positive aspect of this argument is that it does not set up a special category for other religions as distinct from other searches for meaning and truth. This enables, for instance, Pope Benedict XVI to invite humanists to Assisi on the 25th anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Peace (2011) and propose that:

> These people [humanists] are seeking truth, they are seeking the true God, whose image is frequently concealed in the religions because of the way in which they are often practised…[A]ll their struggling and questioning is in part an appeal to us believers, to all believers to purify their faith, so that God, the true God, becomes accessible. [55]

The strenght of a natural theology approach to other religions is that it opens up possibilities for wider dialogue and learning. It suggests an "open Catholicism", which seeks to integrate other "partial catholicities".[56] Support for this can be found in both Vatican I and Vatican II. From the former there is the argument that the "human arts and studies" should be promoted by the Church for "she [the Church] is neither ignorant nor

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does his saving activity in Jesus Christ effectively extend to those who have not professed faith in him?". Address to the then Secretariat for Non-Christians, 28 April 1987, 6, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19870428_secretariat-nonchristians.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

[54] EN 53. Reference to 'preparation for the Gospel' (*praeparatio evangelica*) can be found in LG 2, 9 & 16 and AG 3. The idea has its origins in Eusebius of Caeserea. Joseph Carola argues that Eusebius used 'preparation for the Gospel' solely in terms of God's revelation to the Jewish people in the Old Testament. He notes that in Vatican II the idea is used to describe "whatever good or truth" that is found amongst those "who have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God." (LG 16). Once again maintaining a clear distinction between the natural and the supernatural, Carola suggests that this refers to natural religion only. (Carola, Appendix: Vatican II's Use of Patristic, 143-147).

[55] Jason Welle, 'The Evolution of the Assisi Gathering: To Humanism and Beyond', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48:3 (2013), 382, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=EAIM&sw=w&u=glasuni&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA349306424&asid=64d108db332c682e2db1476fdb17c2be accessed on 02 September 2019.

[56] Avery Dulles SJ, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 178.

contemptuous of the advantages which derive from this source for human life, rather she acknowledges that those things … if they are properly used, lead to God by the help of his grace".[57] From Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes* explains that "the Church herself knows how richly she has profited by the history and development of humanity" and it identifies science, culture, philosophy, social science, literature and the arts as opening up new roads to truth and new ways of explaining the message of Christ.[58] In this way, both the religious and the non-religious have the potential, as discerned by the Church (RM 29), to be both a preparation for the Gospel and a way of helping the Church to proclaim Christ.

An argument for understanding other religions as having a supernatural origin can be traced to Karl Rahner and a lecture he gave in 1961, subsequently published in English in 1966.[59] Gerald O'Collins uses Rahner to argue that:

> if human beings, given their social nature and radical solidarity with each other, are going to 'have a positive, saving relationship to God, they are going to have it within *that religion*' which is at their disposal. Indeed, Rahner maintained that they have 'the right and indeed the duty' to live their 'relationship to God within the religious and social realities' offered by their 'particular, historical situation'.[60]

Dialogue and Proclamation suggests this understanding when it states that "it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions … that the members of other religions respond positively to God's invitation and receive salvation in Jesus Christ".[61] Those who propose this argument seek support from Pope John Paul II and his teaching on the Holy Spirit. In *Redemptoris missio* the Pope writes that "The Second Vatican Council recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person"; its "presence and activity affect not only the individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions".[62] O'Collins describes this acknowledgement of the work of the Spirit in individuals and in peoples, cultures and *religions* as "momentous statements".[63] The same encyclical also states that "[n]o one…can enter into communion with God

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[57] Vatican I, First dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, *De fide* (1870), 4:11, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum20.htm accessed on 02 September 2019.
[58] GS 44. See also GS 62.
[59] Karl Rahner, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', in *Theological Investigations Vol V*, trans. Karl-H Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 115-134.
[60] O'Collins, *Other Religions*, 57, referenced to Rahner, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', 128 & 131.
[61] DP 29.
[62] RM 28. See also DViv 53.
[63] O'Collins, *Other Religions*, 176.

except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit" but does not exclude "participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees" which must always be related to Christ.[64] What becomes apparent, for those who emphasise the active presence of the Holy Spirit in other religions and their adherents, is that this understanding leads to a valuing of the religious experience of others and their search for holiness.[65] William R. Burrows, writing about Jacques Dupuis, explains the impact on his religious and theological outlook of "having experienced the power of Indian religions to create deep, holy, sincere, richly endowed human beings".[66]

The tension between these two approaches supports Ashlee Kirk's judgement that "the magisterium has no single, straightforward theology of religions".[67] At the same time, whilst the two ways of understanding other religions are unlikely, in themselves, to have a place in an RCRE programme other than in senior years, their insights are relevant to how the Christian message and other religions are presented. As *Gaudium et spes* explains science, culture, philosophy, social science, literature and the arts can offer new roads to truth and new ways of explaining the message of Christ.[68] The valuing of the religious experience of others, the search of their adherents for holiness, and appreciation of their "impressive patrimony of deeply religious texts" (EN 53) can help young people to value religion, and to engage with and interpret its message.

8.3.2. Teaching and learning about other religions

In the introduction to this section it was stated that people who hold religious (and non-religious views) must be able to recognise themselves in what is being taught. In both RE and RCRE this means that learning outcomes must focus on beliefs, rituals and texts, *and* how they relate to life experience, to "lived reality". The assumption is that all religions help adherents to make sense of and find meaning in their experience, which includes coping with the "exigencies of everyday life".[69] For some adherents, searching for what is true, what makes sense, will be part of that experience, which may include also a call to holiness and the discipline required to respond to that call.

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[64] RM 5. This phrase, "participated forms of mediation" occurs only once in magisterial documents. Morali argues that this "hapax legomenon" has been misused and that Pope John Paul II never intended any suggestion of theological pluralism, however limited. Morali, 'Salvation, Religions and Dialogue', 137.
[65] For examples see: Nicholl, *Holiness;* Clooney, *Hindu Wisdom for All God's Children*; Cornille, *Many Mansions.*
[66] William R. Burrows, "The Man, the Message, The Controversy" in *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition: Two Essays by Jacques Dupuis on Dominus Iesus and the Roman Investigation of His Work*, into & ed. William R. Burrows (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 18, (1-25).
[67] Kirk, 'Between Novitas and Traditio?', 158.
[68] GS 44.
[69] Barnes, *Interreligious Learning,* 7.

Teachers, when trying to find a way of holding together religious teaching and life experience (the second cohering theme of the new approach), should balance learning about the 'big picture' of a religion, with the small-scale and particular. For instance, when learning about Islam pupils should know about the Five Pillars and they should also engage with and have opportunities to interpret some of the *Sūras* of the *Qur'ân* or, for instance, the reflections of a Muslim who is fasting during *Ramadān*. In the same way that both Christian and non-Christian young people are more likely to engage with the small-scale of the Christian message (a parable or miracle of Jesus) the same applies to the study of other religions.

Related to this emphasis on experience and the need to engage with teachings, it is important to avoid portraying other religions as monolithic and unchanging. For instance, Francis Clooney suggests that Hinduism might be more accurately and respectfully described as Hinduisms, and he notes the impact on its development and its adherents of other religions as well as economic and social change.[70] Whilst the search for holiness can be found in the religions of the world, religion must not be idealised or portrayed only through the perspective of "founders, prophets, saints and mystics";[71] for there is no such thing as a "pure religion".[72] Whilst RCRE teachers *must* avoid pejorative and inaccurate statements about other religions and their adherents, this does not mean that difficult questions cannot be asked. Critical enquiry should be applied not just to the Christian message but to the message of all religions. Questions should be asked, depending on available time, about the historical basis of a religion; the integrity of its founders, texts and teachings; and the mix of authentic and inauthentic in the religion and how it is lived. The more general critique of religion by Marxists and humanists and the role of religion in the world's troubles should be taken seriously.[73] This could include the questions such as attitudes to women; to children and young people; the poor; and adherents of other religions.

When teaching about other religions, it is important to draw attention to the way that the religious dimension of humanity is manifest in features common to all religions, such as rites of passage and codes of behaviour. At the same time, it would be wrong to fail to identify the beliefs distinctive of a religion and religions that can be grouped together such

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[70] Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 73.
[71] Cornille, 'The Eleven Theses of F. De Graeve', 186.
[72] Tracy, *Dialogue with Others*, 10.
[73] Knitter, 'Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action', 139.

as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, or Jainism and Buddhism.[74] For it is the differences or distinctions that will help clarify the core teaching of a religion. When identifying differences and "similarities in difference", to use Tracy's term, care must be taken to avoid relativism, the explicit or implicit judgement that "all religions are equal and valid paths to one divine reality".[75] It can be argued that this position, which is commonly known as pluralism, implies that all religions are false.[76] Teachers should assume that all men and women seek truth and that adherents of a religion should uphold the distinctiveness and uniqueness of their religion and its efficacy. Teachers must also make clear that from a Christian perspective the adherents of other religions and the religions themselves must be valued and respected; that learning about other religions can help to break down barriers based on prejudice and intolerance, and encourage work together for the common good.[77] It can also help Christians to understand the central beliefs of their own religion better, and inspire them through the life and witness of adherents of other religions.[78]

Whilst it is right that teachers of RCRE should uphold the distinctiveness of religions and avoid relativism, this does not mean that other religions can be understood as a substitute for Christ and his message. For Christians know that "the fullness of truth [is] received in Jesus Christ".[79] That does not mean that Christians have a monopoly on Christ and His Spirit which "blows where it chooses" (Jn 3: 8). Neither does it mean that Christians are better people because they are Christians or, to use Christian language, that at the final judgement they have a better chance of salvation. For, as *Lumen gentium* explains, if Christians fail to respond to the gift of faith (grace) they have been given in "thought, word and deed, not only shall they not be saved but they will be the more severely judged".[80]

Which other religions are taught in school is often determined by the numbers of adherents in a particular country. This makes sense in terms of helping social cohesion but what is seldom considered in the list of religions are what can be described as 'traditional

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[74] RC Zaehner's use of the term "concordant discord" as a collective term to describe the religions of the world, as opposed to "discordant concord", emphasises the distinctiveness of the religions. Zaehner, *Concordant Discourse,* 15.
[75] D'Costa, 'Theology of Religion', 627.
[76] RC Zaehner, 'Conclusion' in *The Concise Encylopedia of Living Faiths* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 409.
[77] The joint statement in 2019 between Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar on encouraging world peace and living together is a helpful example. https://www.pcinterreligious.org/apostolic-journey-united-arab-emirates-2019 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[78] DP 50.
[79] DP 49.
[80] LG 14.

religion'.[81] The great benefit of reference to these groups, and their presence in all the continents of the world, is that it draws attention to the religious dimension of humanity. They are examples of the search for meaning in life and attempts to answer fundamental or limit questions.

8.3.3. Summary guide to teaching and learning about other religions

To encourage young people to know, understand, engage with and interpret other religions in order to value and learn from them and their adherents, and to encourage work together for the common good, the following points are a summary guide for lessons:

- Adherents of other religions must be able to recognise themselves in what is being taught.
- A search for meaning and holiness are features common to religion.
- Religious teachings and texts should be related to life experience.
- Pupils need to know the central teachings of a religion but engagement and interpretation are more likely to occur in small scale and specific study of texts and experiences.
- Religions must not be portrayed as monolithic or unchanging; nor be idealised or portrayed as a 'pure religion'.
- Critical enquiry should be applied to the study of all religions, which means that difficult questions can and must be asked.
- The distinctive teachings of a religion must be emphasised.
- The idea that all religions are equally valid paths to divine reality (relativism and theological pluralism) diminishes the uniqueness of all religions and implies that all are false.
- Christians should respect and value other religions and their adherents and be encouraged to learn from them and work with them for the common good.

8.4. Diversity in society: non-religious viewpoints

8.4.1. How the Church understands non-religious viewpoints

Pope Benedict XVI's address to the humanists he invited to Assisi on the 25th anniversary of the World Day of Payer for Peace shows that the Church is not just willing but keen to

[81] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Celebrating Mercy with Believers of Other Religions* (2016), devotes a section to mercy in traditional religion, 41-46. To access *Celebrating Mercy* go to https://www.pcinterreligious.org/pcid-documents accessed on 02 September 2019.

engage in dialogue with atheism and humanism.[82] But before proceeding further it is helpful to define terms and get some sense of the numbers of people who hold non-religious viewpoints.

Stephen Bullivant points out, "contemporary atheism is demonstrably a vast, worldwide phenomenon".[83] He estimates that, in a global context, there are between 500 and 750 million "atheists, agnostics, and non-believers in God".[84] That would mean that "there are approximately fifty eight times as many atheists as there are Mormons, forty one times as many atheists as there are Sikhs, and twice as many atheists as there are Buddhists".[85] This is clearly not a group that should be ignored. Neither is it a group that has a single understanding of what it is to be an atheist and, rather like most religions, it contains a spectrum of views. Atheism can be understood as an "umbrella concept, uniting a wide (but coherent) set of positions" which can be summed up as "an absence of belief in the existence of a God or gods".[86] It should be distinguished from agnosticism which in turn can be more broadly divided into strong or weak agnosticism. The latter would include "those who are undecided or uncommitted to any theory or belief pertaining to God(s) or higher powers".[87] Humanism is a term that has an even wider application which does not of itself rule out belief in God. In this thesis, the term refers to existential humanism, "which lays particular emphasis on human achievement and flourishing as an existential value and source of meaning".[88] This form of humanism is within an atheistic tradition usually espoused by what can be described as organised humanism.[89] In addition, the term no religion, would be an appropriate way of describing the spectrum of views defined above, but would also include many who simply have no formal religion but are not necessarily atheist or agnostic.

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[82] Welle, 'The Evolution of the Assisi Gathering', 382.
[83] Stephen Bullivant, *The Salvation of Atheists and Catholic Dogmatic Theology* (Oxford; Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012), http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199652563.001.0001/acprof-9780199652563 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[84] Ibid., 13.
[85] Ibid., 13. Bullivant makes uses of a study by Phil Zuckerman, 'Atheism: Contemporary Numbers and Patterns', in Michael Martin (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 55 (47–65).
[86] Stephen Bullivant, 'Defining Atheism' in *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, eds, Stephen Bullivant & Michael Ruse, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199644650.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199644650 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[87] Stephen Bullivant and Lois Lee, eds, 'Agnostic' in *A Dictionary of Atheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191816819.001.0001/acref-9780191816819 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[88] Bullivant and Lee, *A Dictionary of Atheism*, 'Humanism'.
[89] Ibid.

It is difficult to know how many atheists and agnostics there are in Britain though, as chapter three indicated there are considerable numbers who say they have no religion. The British Social Attitudes survey 36 (2019) estimates that they represent 52 per cent of the population of England, Wales and Scotland (3.2.2).[90] No religion is over represented amongst young people and, as mentioned before, ScotCen data (July 2017) indicates that 74 per cent of all 18-34 year olds in Scotland say they have no religion.[91] Given these numbers and the encouragement of Pope Benedict, RCRE should not ignore non-religious viewpoints.

In broad terms, the Church understands non-religious searches for meaning and truth as examples of natural theology, and the Church's approach to dialogue with atheists and humanism mirrors that of dialogue with the adherents of other religions. Atheism, atheists and agnostics are addressed specifically at Vatican II:

> Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel.[92]

In a commentary, written shortly after the close of the Council in 1965, Peter Hebblethwaite highlights the key points of the Church's approach to atheism.[93] He traces the origins of the Church's understanding to Pope John XXIII and his encyclical *Pacem in terris* (1963), and *Ecclesiam suam* (1964) of Pope Paul VI. The former addresses "all men of goodwill" and encourages co-operation. It stresses that "the person who errs is always and above all a human being and he retains in every case dignity as a human person".[94] *Ecclesiam suam* takes the matter a step further and proposes dialogue.[95] In trying to engage with atheism, the Council fathers, according to Hebblethwaite, had three aims: atheists must be able to recognise themselves in the description, they must explain that the Church regards atheism as wrong because it separates humanity from its origin and end, and

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[90] BSA 36 (2019), 21(Table 1).
[91] ScotCen, 'Scots with no religion at record level'.
[92] LG 16. See also GS 19-21.
[93] Peter Hebblethwaite, *The Council Fathers and Atheism: The Interventions at the Fourth Session of Vatican Council II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966).
[94] Pope John XXIII, Encyclical letter, *Pacem in terris* (1963), 158, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html accessed on 02 September 2019. The translation from this website reads as follows: "A man who has fallen into error does not cease to be a man. He never forfeits his personal dignity; and that is something that must always be taken into account".
[95] Hebblethwaite, *The Council Fathers and Atheism,* 19/20.

atheists must know they are loved by the Church.[96] Christians are encouraged to work with atheists and *Gaudium et spes* exhorts all people, believers and unbelievers, to work together "for the rightful betterment of this world in which all alike live".[97]

Whilst the Church suggests that dialogue with atheism and humanism should follow the same principles as that with religion, if atheists and humanists are to recognise themselves in the description, it should not be assumed that atheism is a form of religion.[98] It is not helpful to label atheists, agnostics and humanists as religious on the assumption that men and women are "religious being[s]".[99] Neither should it be assumed that people are atheists because they have only seen a caricature of the Christian God.[100] In addition, whilst inter-religious dialogue, to varying degrees, is a feature of the life of the Church, the same cannot be said of dialogue with atheism and humanism. Other religions have spokespersons who are often willing to engage in dialogue but it is not always apparent that atheists or humanists have any desire to be involved with the Church. That was not the case in the 1960s and Peter Hebblethwaite notes a number of meetings that took place between the Church and humanists and communists.[101] Today, possible dialogue partners can be more ready to engage in ridicule of anyone who might hold a religious belief. Stephen Bullivant notes a number of such comments including one example of 'religious information' given by Sam Harris, a so-called new atheist: "The pope says that Jesus was born of a virgin and resurrected bodily after death. He is the Son of God, who created the universe in six days. If you believe this, you will go to heaven after death; if you don't you will go to hell, where you will suffer for eternity".[102] The problem is compounded by the reality there are no spokespersons for the many who have no religion but are not atheists or agnostics.

Given current "social and ecclesial conditions", RCRE cannot ignore those who say they have no religion or hold a non-religious viewpoint. If it does so, it undermines religion indirectly through implying that it cannot face the challenge of the non-religious; it does not expose non-religious viewpoints to critical enquiry; and does not take advantage of the possibilities for exploring the dimensions of no religion, from a Christian perspective, and

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[96] Ibid., 52.
[97] GS 21.
[98] RC Zaehner includes 'Dialectical Materialism' in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths,* ed. RC Zaehner (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1971), 393-407.
[99] CCC 28.
[100] For an excellent discussion of this matter see Bullivant, *The Salvation of Atheists,* 28-41.
[101] Hebblethwaite, *The Council Fathers and Atheism*, 66-68.
[102] Bullivant, *The Salvation of Atheists,* 12. Reference is to Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 74.

the insights it provides into religion and what it is to be religious. Pupils, at an appropriate age, should therefore learn about atheism, agnosticism, humanism and no religion; they should know that the Church wants to dialogue and co-operate with atheists and humanists but that mutual respect is required. Such learning could include the critique that they present of religion as well as false information about religion in the media and other sources.

8.4.2. Teaching and learning about non-religious viewpoints

The starting point for teaching about non-religious viewpoints is that holders must be able to recognise themselves in what is being taught. In a similar way to religion, humanism should not be taught as an abstract concept but should be related to life experience, and the search for truth and meaning. Whilst humanists may search for meaning and lead disciplined lives, it would be wrong, however, to assign to them religious terminology, such as holiness, that they would not recognise; and non-religious viewpoints should not be portrayed as monolithic or unchanging. There is a wide range of views within and between atheism and agnosticism, and both must be distinguished from no religion. Whilst significant proportions of the British population identify themselves as having no religion that does not mean that they are atheists or even agnostics. Woodhead and Davie present coherent arguments to show that attendance and affiliation to a particular religion does not define religion or what it is to be religious, with Woodhead identifying "new forms of reverence, ritualization and excoriation" beyond 'formal' religion.[103] The study of no religion in RCRE can present further evidence for a religious dimension to humanity and could lead to questions such as why so many former Christians no longer affiliate. The problem in studying no religion is that it is all "lived reality" and there are no teachings, texts or formalised rituals to examine. In a similar way to religion, however, organised humanism has formal rituals to mark rites of passage such as funerals, weddings and namings, and many people can and do avail themselves of these ceremonies.[104]

Existential humanism also has texts that can be studied and are a good source for knowledge, understanding, engagement and interpretation. Like religion, humanism must not be idealised, or be exempt from critical enquiry. For instance, the Amsterdam Declaration (first promulgated in 1952 and updated in 2002) is a statement of the

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[103] Woodhead, 'Introduction', 24.
[104] https://humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/ accessed on 02 September 2019.

fundamentals of humanism.[105] It contains seven statements about humanism most of which could be supported by Christians such as the valuing of "artistic creativity and imagination" (no. 6). In defining itself, however, in distinction to what it describes as "dogmatic religions" it not only makes dogmatic statements but upholds an erroneous understanding of religion.[106] Critical enquiry applied to humanism should therefore include the assumptions and attitudes of humanists to religion and its adherents, and areas such as the role of atheistic regimes in the world's troubles.

When teaching non-religious viewpoints, teachers must also make clear that Christians can and should learn from humanism.[107] They should value all people, regardless of religion or no religion, and seek to work with them for the common good. Pope Francis considers as "precious allies" those "who do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition, yet sincerely seek the truth" and are willing to defend "human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation".[108]

8.4.3. Summary guide to teaching and learning about non-religious viewpoints

To encourage young people to know, understand, engage with and interpret non-religious viewpoints in order to value and learn from them and their holders, and to encourage work together for the common good, the following points are a summary guide for lessons:

- Holders of non-religious viewpoints must be able to recognise themselves in what is being taught.
- Atheism, agnosticism, humanism and no religion should be defined and differentiated.
- A search for meaning and truth can be found amongst those who are non-religious.
- Non-religious 'beliefs' (fundamentals) and texts should be related to life experience but care should be taken to avoid using religious language to describe atheism and existential humanism though not necessarily no religion.

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[105] https://humanists.international/what-is-humanism/the-amsterdam-declaration/ accessed on 02 September 2019. The term "fundamentals" and not "beliefs" is used.
[106] Dogmatic statements include: "Humanists believe that morality is an intrinsic part of human nature" (no. 1). Erroneous statements about religion include: "The world's major religions claim to be based on revelations fixed for all time" (no. 5).
[107] GS 44.
[108] EG 257.

- Non-religious viewpoints must not be portrayed as monolithic or unchanging; nor be idealised.
- Critical enquiry should be applied to the study of all non-religious viewpoints which means that difficult questions can and must be asked.
- Christians should be encouraged to work with all who "sincerely seek the truth" and are willing to defend "human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation".

8.5. Diversity in society: Judaism

8.5.1. How the Church understands Judaism

When teaching about Judaism in Catholic religious education, the general principles for teaching about other religions apply. There are, however, additional factors, specific to Judaism, that need to be considered. These fall into two broad categories. First, the Christian message cannot be taught without reference to Judaism. Jesus was Jewish and Christianity is related to Judaism. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that Judaism does not need to be related to Christianity. Second, from the Church's perspective, Judaism is not an other religion, it is the result of God's revelation to humankind, and the Jewish people should be considered as "our 'elder brothers' (Saint Pope John Paul II), our 'fathers in faith' (Benedict XVI)".[109] How that revelation, expressed in the history of the Jewish people, in the Old Testament and in the covenant between God and Israel, relates to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ needs to be considered. Both of these factors have implications for how the Christian message and Judaism are taught in RCRE.

8.5.2. Christianity and its Jewish roots

The Church was founded by Jesus who was a pious Jew, his first disciples were Jewish, and the four evangelists were also Jews.[110] Jesus' teaching should be understood within the context of the living tradition of the Judaism of his time and not in opposition to this

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[109] Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable (Rom 11:29): A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of 'Nosta Aetate' (No. 4*) (2015), 14, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20151210_ebraismo-nostra-aetate_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

[110] For an excellent summary of the Jewish roots of Christianity see: Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the correct way to present Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church* (1985), Part III, 1-9, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820306_jews-judaism_en.html accessed on 02 September 2019.

tradition.[111] The reality of the Jewish roots of Christianity become apparent when considering the Our Father (Mt 6:9-15) and the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12), both of which would be considered distinctive of Christianity. Yet, the Catholic Biblical scholar, Gerhard Lohfink notes that every petition in the Our Father is rooted in Israel's theology and that in the Sermon on the Mount "[t]here is not a single statement that does not have an Old Testament background". [112] The liturgy of the Church, in particular the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, also has its roots in Judaism as does the Christian celebration of Easter which is linked to the Passover.[113]

When explaining the Jewish roots of Christianity teachers of RCRE must be careful not to caricature Judaism. This can happen through an over emphasis on some of the negative judgements on the Pharisees that can be found in the Gospels (Mk 2:1-11; 3:6 etc.), and the assumption that the Judaism of today is the same as that of 2,000 years ago. Jesus shared some of the doctrines of the Pharisees such as the resurrection of the body; their forms of piety, like alms-giving, prayer, fasting; their liturgical practice of addressing God as Father; and the priority of the commandment to love God and our neighbour (Mk 12:28-34).[114] Teachers should also be conscious that the Gospels were written and edited at a time of conflict between the earliest Church and the Jewish community and this context may have influenced how the Jews are portrayed.[115] Clearly there were conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees but the setting up of a binary and simplistic choice between Jesus and the spirit of the law, presented as good, and the Pharisees and their concern for the letter of the law, presented as bad (for instance, on keeping the Sabbath law, Mk 2: 23-28) should be avoided. Care must also be taken not to transfer the portrayal of Jews in the Gospel to the present day or the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees to relations between Jews and Christians today. It can be easy to do this for even *Nostra aetate*, important though it is as a catalyst for the change in relations between Christians and Jews, fails to mention "the dynamic development of Judaism after biblical times".[116]

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[111] *The Gifts and the Calling of God,* 14.
[112] Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012), 187.
[113] *Notes on the correct way to present Jews and Judaism*, Part V, 1-2.
[114] Ibid., Part III, 6. Lohfink proposes that Jesus took from the Old Testament, Lv 19:18 (love your neighbour) and joined it to Dt 6:5 (love God) and gave them equal weight as the centre of the Torah. Lohfink, *No Irrelevant Jesus*, 6.
[115] Ibid., Part IV, 1A.
[116] David M Neuhaus, 'Engaging the Jewish people: Forty Years since Nostra Aetate" in *Catholic Engagement*, 402.

8.5.3. Judaism and the revelation of God in Jesus Christ

Through Abraham God choose the people of Israel, set them apart and gradually revealed Himself to them in and through their history.[117] The story of Israel, like that of the Church, is one of both faithfulness and unfaithfulness of the people to God but throughout God's love remains constant. It is through those who remain faithful that his plan of salvation is realised.[118] The coming of the Church (the people of God) does not mean that Israel ceases to be God's people.[119] In a similar way, the Torah is not revoked by Christ. (For a Jew, the Torah is the way to a "right relationship with God";[120] for Christians, that way is Jesus Christ). As Lohfink explains, "Jesus does not abrogate the Torah or abolish it; he does not replace it with a new Torah; he interprets it".[121] As a result, the Church cannot give up any part of the Torah but "it must read and live the Torah in the spirit of Jesus".[122] Given this, how should teachers present the Torah and the remainder of the Old Testament in RCRE?

Catholic teaching on the relationship between the Old and New Testaments has generally started with the understanding that the Old is fulfilled by the New and by Christ.[123] Any reading of the Old is carried out in the light of the New. In the years following Vatican II the emphasis began to shift to understanding the Old Testament as a Jewish as well as a Christian text. Early evidence of this shift in thinking can be found in the records of a conference held at the University of Notre Dame in March 1966. In a discussion about *Dei verbum* (chapter four) on the Old Testament, Raymond Brown, who was to become a well-known Catholic Biblical scholar, questions its emphasis on fulfilment and proposes that the Old Testament should be studied in itself and not always as prefiguring Christ.[124]

The 1985 guidance from the Commission for Religious Relations, *Notes on the correct way to present Jews and Judaism*, acknowledges the greatness of the spiritual patrimony of Judaism;[125] stresses the unity of biblical revelation in the Old and New Testaments with no

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[117] *The Gifts and the Calling of God,* 21.
[118] Ibid., 22.
[119] Ibid., 23.
[120] Ibid., 24.
[121] Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 212.
[122] Ibid., 215.
[123] DV 16. Adam Gregerman, a Jewish scholar, tries to look at the matter from a Catholic perspective and considers how both covenants could remain valid. See Adam Gregerman, 'Superiority without Supersessionism: Walter Kasper, The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable, and God's Covenant with the Jews', *Theological Studies*, 79(1), 2018: 36-59, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0040563917744652 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[124] Raymond Brown, 'Questions and Answers on Dei verbum' in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H Miller CSC (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1966), 94.
[125] *Notes on the correct way to present Jews and Judaism*, preliminary considerations.

sense of rupture between the two;[126] and indicates that the Old Testament should be presented as concerning both the Jews and "us personally".[127] It continues by stating that it is possible to distinguish between Christian and Jewish reading of the Old Testament but notes that Christians can profit from the Jewish tradition of reading.[128] The 2015 statement from the Commission, *The Gifts and the Calling of God*, re-iterates and develops the relationship between Judaism and Christianity further. With specific regard to Biblical texts, it states that the New Testament does not replace the Old but gives it a "new dimension of meaning".[129] On a much more everyday and pastoral level, a similar message can be found in a commonly used Catholic missal: "Before rushing to see how the first reading (from the Old Testament) is fulfilled in the Gospel, it is advisable to try to find out what the first reading meant in its own day. A second step can then be to see how both readings enlighten each other".[130]

A detailed presentation on how the Old Testament might be used in RCRE is beyond the scope of this brief guidance but in terms of relating Judaism and the Christian message, it should be noted that the most frequently quoted Old Testament passages in the New Testament are from the Torah (35 per cent of all direct quotes), Psalms (24 per cent), Isaiah (22.5 per cent), and the Twelve Minor Prophets, the Book of the Twelve (8.5 per cent).[131] In his analysis, Lohfink identifies the Shema (Dt 6:4-9); Isaiah's proclamation which begins, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace; who brings good news" (Is 52:7-9); and the eschatological call to the nations, "And the LORD will become King over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one" (Zech 14:9) as central to understanding Jesus.[132] In a comment on the importance of the psalms, Gerald O'Collins notes that "over the centuries, Catholics have learned more of God from using the psalms than from studying the teaching of the general councils of the Church".[133]

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[126] Ibid., Ch II, 1 & 4.
[127] Ibid., Ch II, 2.
[128] Ibid., Ch II, 6.
[129] *The Gifts and the Calling of God,* 27. It also notes the comments of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger that Christians can learn from 2,000 years of Jewish exegesis (Ibid., 44).
[130] *St Paul's Missal* (London: Pauline Books & Media, 2014), 96. For a helpful example on reading the Shema and the Our Father together, as well as the Muslim al-Fatiha, see John Dupuche, Fred Morgan, Fatih Tuncer, 'Three Prayers in Dialogue: The Shema, the Lord's Prayer, and al-Fatiha', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 52 (4,) Fall 2017: 587-609, https://doi.org/10.1353/ecu.2017.0054 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[131] Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 167.
[132] Ibid., 167-175.
[133] Gerald O'Collins SJ, *Catholicism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59.

No matter how much the Old Testament is valued, from both a Jewish and Christian perspective, the Christian doctrine that all men and women are saved through Christ remains problematic: for "there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Ac 4: 12). The 2015 statement, *The Gifts and the Calling of God*, identifies the "highly complex theological problem" of holding together one universal plan of salvation focused on Christ with the belief that God's covenant with the Jews has never been revoked.[134] The statement rules out organised missionary efforts to convert Jews;[135] and, as there cannot be two ways of salvation, it leaves the problem in tension; in the mystery of God's work; that he will bring about the hour when all people will be united and call on "God with one voice".[136]

It was mentioned earlier that whilst Christianity is rooted in Judaism, the reverse relationship does/need not apply. Given, the history of poor relations between Christians and Jews, with Christian persecution of the Jews over centuries and Nazi persecution in Europe (the Shoah) it is unsurprising that Jews were/are suspicious of Christians. The genesis of *Nostra aetate* should be understood as a conscious effort to put the relationship between Jews and Christians right, and to condemn any form of discrimination or persecution.[137] What is interesting is that, in light of the 2015 statement, *The Gifts and the Calling of God*, a document was issued by Orthodox Jews that recognises Christianity as part of God's plan of salvation and suggests the possibility of a common mission.[138] This offers great hope for the future relations between Christians and Jews, and adds support to Lohfink's view that "the church, after causing infinite suffering to Jews over centuries with its theology of Israel, has finally come to the point of revising its relationship with Judaism. This revision will profoundly change the church's life".[139]

8.5.4. Summary guide to teaching and learning about Judaism

In addition to the guidance on teaching other religions, the following is specific to Judaism. To encourage young people to know, understand, engage with and interpret

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[134] *The Gifts and the Calling of God*, 37.
[135] Ibid., 40-42. Gavin D'Costa argues that it is a pragmatic stance not a theological one, and in turn his argument is contested. See, Marianne Moyaert, 'Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims', *Louvain Studies* 40 (3), 2017: 237-248, 10.2143/LS.40.3.3245489 accessed on 02 September 2019; and Gavin D'Costa, 'A Response to the Essays', *Louvain Studies* 40 (3), 2017: 303-322, 10.2143/LS.40.3.3245494 accessed on 02 September 2019.
[136] Ibid., 37. Referenced to NA 4.
[137] *The Gifts and the Calling of God*, 1-2. See NA 4.
[138] The Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity, *To Do the Will of our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians*, 3 December 2015, http://cjcuc.org/2015/12/03/orthodox-rabbinic-statement-on-christianity/ accessed on 02 September 2019.
[139] Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth,* 14-15.

Judaism in order to value and learn from it and from people who are Jewish, and to encourage work together for the common good, the following points are for lesson:

- Judaism is not an other religion; it is the result of God's revelation to humankind expressed in the history of the Jewish people, in the Old Testament and in the enduring covenant between God and Israel.
- The Jewish roots of Christianity should be acknowledged: in Jesus, his disciples, the evangelists; in texts such as the Our Father and the Beatitudes; and the liturgy.
- Do not caricature the Judaism of Jesus's time through the Gospel portrayal of the Pharisees, and do not transfer the Judaism of 2,000 years ago to today.
- The story of Israel (and the Church) is one of faithfulness and unfaithfulness of the people to God but throughout God remains faithful.
- The Torah, central to Judaism as Christ is to Christianity, is not abrogated but interpreted by Christ.
- When teaching the Old Testament, consider the text from both a Jewish and Christian point of view, and "how both readings enlighten each other".
- Make extensive use of the Old Testament to gain insight into Judaism, Jesus and the Christian message.
- Acknowledge the problem, the mystery, of holding in tension the belief that the salvation of all humanity is through Christ but that God's covenant with the Jews has never been revoked.
- Recognise the long and dreadful persecution of the Jews, often by Christians, and the great hope for future relations between Jews and Christians; that "the LORD will become King over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one" (Zech 14:9).

8.6. Conclusion

This chapter has tried to show how the new approach to RCRE developed in this thesis can be applied to the diversity that is found within the Catholic community and in wider society. It has used the new approach to offer guidance to teachers on how to handle disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom, and teach Judaism, other religions and non-religious viewpoints. The thread that runs through all four sections of this chapter is that young people should be encouraged to engage with and interpret the Christian message, and the message of Judaism, other religions, and non-religious viewpoints. For

this to be possible pupils must have knowledge of the messages, be able to relate them to life experience, and have an open attitude to learning from them. If that happens then interpretation becomes a possibility, and they might be able "to consider, observe, and contemplate what persons are saying, and then to reflect … and draw some fruit".[140]

In RCRE the majority of curriculum time will be devoted to the Christian message. Teaching about Judaism is a taken-for-granted assumption as Christianity is rooted in Judaism, and because it is the result of God's revelation to humanity. The same understanding does not apply to Islam or any other religion.[141] That said, other religions and non-religious viewpoints are, in themselves, worthy of study and, depending on local circumstances, dioceses and schools will have to decide how much time to allocate to studying them.

The new approach, argued for in this thesis, proposes that the Christian message will be more credible if RCRE acknowledges the diversity that is both "around us" and "within us". As the vast majority of people in the world are adherents of a religion, the study of other religions should reinforce the standing of religion and of being religious. It should encourage exploration of the religious dimension of humanity which can encompass those who say they have no religion but are not atheists. The study of other religions and non-religious viewpoints enables critical enquiry to be applied to these religions and viewpoints in the same way that it should be applied to the Christian message. Understanding the differences and "similarities-in-difference" between the Christian message and that of other religions and non-religious viewpoints can also help to clarify both what is distinctive in Christianity and possibilities for learning from others. Finally, learning about other religions and non-religious viewpoints can be a means of encouraging young people to work with all people of good will for the good of all.

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[140] *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, n115, see Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 142.
[141] Jacques Dupuis notes that even though Jews, Christians and Muslims are linked through Abraham, the Church does not say that Christians share their faith with Muslims. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions,* 246. See NA 3.

END OF PART THREE

9. Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1. A contribution to an ongoing discussion.

This thesis seeks to make a contribution to the ongoing discussion about what Catholic religious education (RCRE) should look like. It does not propose a radical alternative as it is firmly rooted in the Church's guidance and the Catholic theological tradition. One of the principles, clearly articulated in the guidance, is that the subject cannot be taught in "the same way everywhere" because of the extremely diverse situation of Catholic schools across the world.[1] In developing this new approach account has been taken of the social and ecclesial conditions in Britain; and the systems of education in England and Wales, and Scotland.

The new approach is best summed up through its overall aim: RCRE aims to help young people in Catholic schools to know and understand the Christian message, and in doing so engage with and interpret it. For this aim to be achieved young people will need to have the right attitude to learning, and demonstrate what Cornille calls "epistemic hospitality"; they will need to have acquired sufficient knowledge and understanding of the Christian message and be able to apply, as appropriate to age and ability, the skills of critical enquiry to the message. To engage with and draw meaning from the Christian message, to interpret it, they will need to relate the message to their own experience. Stimulation of the imagination and of feelings of empathy will encourage this to happen. The new approach should encourage teachers to help the young people in their care "to consider, observe, and contemplate what persons are saying, and then to reflect … and draw some fruit".[2]

In contrast to the current guidance for England and Wales (RECD), and Scotland (TIOF), the new approach moves the focus away from teaching and learning about the Catholic faith to the Christian message. Whilst there is considerable overlap between the two descriptors, the term, the Christian message, implies less focus on the Church and a sharpening of focus on Christ, and that, as a message, it is open to a response. In RCRE, the nature of the response will vary and is not in any way dependent on having Christian faith or belief in any religion.

In contrast to TIOF, the new approach is educational and not catechetical. That said, it supports the aims of TIOF of encouraging faith development and a search for meaning. It does so, however, from an educational and not a catechetical perspective. It argues that the

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[1] ETT Part III, 1h.
[2] *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, n115, see Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 142.

study of the Christian message, and that of any religion, must involve a relationship to experience and include how its adherents search for and find meaning in life. If that element is missing then something crucial is absent from the subject. To understand the experience of others we have to relate it, in some way, to our own experience, what Tracy calls the "analogical imagination". This relationship to experience and its potential for or "orientation to" faith development is not therefore a spin-off or incidental but is central to the subject.

The RECD has an educational rather than a catechetical approach to RCRE but its understanding of the subject is very different to the new approach. As it is in the process of being revised, not replaced, its underlying philosophy is best expressed through the current adviser to the English and Welsh bishops. He describes the purpose of RCRE as "theological literacy" (knowledge and understanding of the Catholic theological tradition) with a deepening of faith a spin-off and "incidental to its core purpose".[3] It should be evident that the new approach set out in this thesis has a very different vision for the subject.

In the analysis of TIOF and the RECD, carried out in chapter four, a criticism that was made of both sets of guidance is that they have too much content. As a result, despite the best of intentions, any sense of a Christocentric focus is lost and it is difficult for teachers to appreciate what is essential for young people to know. To help focus on the essential content and given the level of diversity that is found in British society, the new approach made use of a Catholic theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue as a filter or guide to what a young person needs to know to engage with the Christian message. This analysis proposed that there should be more emphasis on the Trinity and set out particular ideas as to how the Father, Son and Spirit should be taught. Perhaps the most radical proposal regarding content is how the Church is taught as the new approach places emphasis on the Church as a "pilgrim Church";[4] in constant need of "renewal and reform".[5]

In terms of diversity within the Church, the new approach, in contrast to both TIOF and the RECD, offers guidance to the RCRE teacher as to how to handle disagreement with Church teaching in the classroom. It encourages the teacher to ensure that Church teaching is faithfully and confidently articulated, gives pupils the opportunity to engage with it, and

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[3] Robinson, 'Finding purpose in religious education', S3.
[4] LG 48-51.
[5] UR 6.

at the same time, for critical enquiry to be applied to it and any other view that is expressed. In terms of diversity in society, the new approach has a different way of understanding Judaism, other religions and non-religious viewpoints to TIOF and the RECD.

In terms of Judaism, it acknowledges both its distinctiveness and, from a Christian point of view, the necessity of relating Christ and Christianity to his and its Jewish roots. Following Church teaching it places Judaism in a completely different category to other religions. The implications of this are that Judaism should be taught both as a distinct religion, in its own right, and as way of helping to understand the Christian message.

When teaching other religions, the new approach emphasises the two cohering themes that are integral to the new approach. The first theme is that God is always greater than our understanding. Other religions and their search for God and for truth provide insight into this mystery of God and humanity. This offers an excellent basis for studying the message of any religion and makes the point that "the religious dimension … is an integral part of the [human] person".[6] The second theme is the need to hold together religious teachings with the experience of being an adherent, what the practitioners of inter-religious dialogue call "lived reality". This is fundamental to understanding the religious dimension and applies to the study of the message of any religion. RCRE teachers must ensure that when pupils learn about other religions, they study more than teachings and rituals, and consider how they relate to the lives of and experience of adherents. At the same time, these two cohering themes must not detract from the distinctiveness of a religion.

TIOF or the RECD do not address non-religious viewpoints. Given the numbers in Britain who describe themselves as having no religion and the reality of atheism as a world-wide phenomenon, the argument is made in this thesis that this is a serious mistake. Ignoring no religion diminishes the credibility of the Christian message and runs counter to the Church attempts to reach out to humanists. It denies the opportunity to show that the Church can and does learn from non-religious searches for truth and meaning, and it prevents critical enquiry being applied to non-religious viewpoints.

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[6] Benedict XVI, *Address* (2009).

9.2. From Theory to Practice

The proposers of any ideas for teaching and learning cannot ignore the reality of the classroom. What may appear to be a great idea on paper or at a meeting must be tested in that context. When this happens ideas and practice will be modified and sometimes what may appear to be a good idea is abandoned. The *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* expresses this need for realism when it notes:

> the very real difficulties … of all those involved in education: the resistance of students and their discipline problems, the struggle to meet a host of conflicting demands …, the lack of time for reflection, the discouragement and disillusions that seem inherent in the work of education.[7]

The necessity to take classroom practice into account highlights both the limitations of this thesis and possible areas for further research. This thesis is by design theoretical. It sets out a framework for building a programme of RCRE and though it makes reference to teaching methods (7.5.4) it does not provide outline schemes of work or lesson plans. If the ideas contained in this thesis are to be taken forward this limitation needs to be addressed. Further research would enhance the development of these ideas into classroom practice. Given the importance of teachers in implementing any approach it would be very important to know who is teaching RCRE in England and Wales, and Scotland, their qualifications and experience, and their attitudes to the subject and to the Church. More information is needed on the young people in Catholic schools and how they receive RCRE. This applies to those who affiliate as Catholics, other Christians, those of other religions and of no religion. The research could explore how they understand Christ, what image they have of him, what role models appeal, and how the Church is perceived.

One of the factors that can cause discouragement for teachers is constant change in examination specifications and course guidance. Anyone who argues for a new approach to teaching a subject must be realistic and accept that change, if it happens, comes gradually. Teachers should not be taken-for-granted and dictated to. They need to be convinced that change will be beneficial, and they need to be involved in how the ideas are developed in theory and in practice.

In the first instance, bishops, and national and diocesan advisers for RCRE need to be persuaded that a new approach has value. This may mean that only some elements of what

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[7] *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986), 17.

is being proposed are taken forward. This might include, for instance, an emphasis on experience and the imagination or the need to reduce the content of RCRE. Once a decision has been made and before any further action is taken, teachers must be involved and consulted. This will require CPD (training) and the first task must be to ensure that the approach or the selected elements of it are understood. Part of the process of understanding will be converting ideas into schemes and resources. It is relatively easy to map out a scheme or programme, much harder to develop resources that relate content to experience, encourage empathy and use of the imagination, and lead to engagement and interpretation. These resources must take various forms and make use of a variety of media. Their quality will depend on the expertise and imagination of teachers and those who work with them. This last group is crucial and should include people with expertise in film making, journalism, the arts and social media, as well as educationists and theologians.

Many teachers of RCRE are non-specialists and schools are busy places. In addition, the recruitment of teachers of RCRE is challenging. Dioceses need to invest in RCRE teachers, and the development of resources, and appreciate that the work that they do is an essential element of the mission of the Church. Considerable sums of money are spent on the training of seminarians who will be in regular contact with very few young people in the course of their ministry. In contrast, on a daily basis, an RCRE teacher will meet hundreds. Teachers need time, support and help to develop good resources if they are going to encourage young people to engage with the Christian message. When developing resources, the need for adaptation for age and maturity, and social and ecclesial conditions is assumed. Whilst the latter might suggest resources must be contemporary to be relevant that need not be the case. Central to any "classic" is that it is timeless as it speaks to the human condition. A "classic" can be contemporary but it would be a huge mistake not to make use of the literature, painting, music and other art forms that can be found in both the national and international sources.[8] Much will depend on the interests of the teachers involved and those who help them.

With regard to course content, amongst the first decisions that teachers and writers of any programme will need to make is what is essential and what can be left out. There is simply too much content in existing schemes which means that not only is a Christocentric focus lost but there is a danger that what is essential is lost amongst what is extraneous. The guiding principle in deciding what to include and what to leave out could be the following

[8] Making use of local sources is important as it relates a specific culture to the Christian message.

question. Will this topic or set of learning outcomes help a young person to understand, engage with and interpret the Christian message? If the answer is no, or not easily, then it should go. The expression that "less is more" applies to RCRE and its content as effectively as it does to interior design. Likewise, the quality of RCRE teaching is more important than its quantity.

The primary focus of the new approach argued for in this thesis is on teaching the Christian message. How much time should be given in RCRE to teaching Judaism, other religions and non-religious viewpoints, and which religions and viewpoints should be taught, has not been considered. In light of the new approach it would be a mistake to understand the teaching of Judaism, and other religions and non-religious viewpoints as a discrete exercise. Christianity has a special relationship to Judaism which should permeate the teaching of the Christian message. The Church believes that human beings are by nature religious and the various religions of the world are an expression of that nature. Related to this, natural theology can lead to belief in God and help to clarify the Christian message. As a result, teaching of the Christian message can be enhanced through understanding other religions and non-religious viewpoints. Once this has been clarified, and the impact on teaching the Christian message considered, then decisions need to be made about what religions should be taught and the amount of time that should be allocated. It is assumed that teaching about Judaism is taken-for-granted.

At an inter-religious meeting in the United Arab Emirates in 2019, Pope Francis emphasised the importance of education in helping and encouraging young people to know their brothers and sisters who belong to different religions.[9] Given this emphasis, a good case can made that in current circumstances more time and emphasis should be given to other religions and non-religious viewpoints than is currently found in TIOF and the RECD. Good resources will also be required and in the same way that experts in the arts can help to prepare material for teaching the Christian message, it is vital that Jews, adherents of other religions and holders of non-religious viewpoints are involved. Their availability and willingness to help may influence which religions and which viewpoints are taught.

[9] Pope Francis, Address at an inter-religious meeting in the United Arab Emirates (2019), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/february/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_emiratiarabi-incontrointerreligioso.html#_ftnref7 accessed on 02 September 2019.

9.3. Concluding note

In broad terms, the argument in this thesis is that the guidance that underpins RCRE in England and Wales, and Scotland needs to change. Good guidance can encourage good practice. It can support teachers in their efforts to help young people engage with and interpret the Christian message as an academic subject and as a source of meaning for their lives. Teachers of RCRE, however, cannot work in isolation.

In chapter three, use was made of Charles Taylor's comment that the "religious life or practice that I become part of must not only be my choice, but it must speak to me, it must make sense in terms of my spiritual development as I understand it".[10] If the Church in Britain wants young people to engage with it and with the Christian message, what it offers must mean something to them. This should lead the Church in Britain and its members to re-consider how they witness to Christ and his message. The Catholic schools of England and Wales, and Scotland can play a crucial role in this task as these schools are the only places where the Church has regular contact with young people. This would suggest that there should be a major shift of human and financial resources towards Catholic schools and more specifically teaching and learning about the Christian message in RCRE and living it in the wider life of the school. This will not happen unless there is "a monumental change of attitude, orientation and practice".[11] Developing a new approach to Catholic religious education is a good starting point for this enterprise.

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[10] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 486.
[11] Carvalho & Jamison, *Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 34.

Glossary

Academic rigour. In RCRE this means avoiding offering "pre-cast conclusions" (*The Catholic School* 27); and encouraging young people to use their knowledge to analyse, evaluate, interpret and draw meaning. To be able to do this, pupils have to know something, they need to be disposed or motivated to reflect on their knowledge and be guided as to how to do so. Academic rigour and critical enquiry are essential elements of engaging with and interpreting the Christian message in RCRE.

Affective. The emotional response to an experience and/or to the content of what is being studied which means that it can, at times, be related to the **cognitive**.

Attitude. A "disposition", "manner of acting" or "mode of regarding" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary,* 129).

"Classic", the. A term used by David Tracy. The "classic" which can include "[t]exts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons" contains "an excess and permanence of meaning, yet always resists definitive interpretation" (Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 12).

Cognitive. Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of data. For certain types of knowledge this may require being related to the **affective.**

Common human experience. Experience that is common to humanity, for instance: guilt, remorse, regret, responsibility, joy, a sense of finitude and mortality, principles of order, fundamental trust, wonder.

Conversion (of heart). In this thesis, conversion does not refer to change of religion but to the possibility of being changed or affected by academic study which can lead to conversion of heart.

Critical enquiry. See **academic rigour**.

Diversity. In this thesis it refers to the variety of religions and non-religious viewpoints that are found in Britain, and to different views that are found within the Catholic community. As used in this thesis, this term has a similar meaning to **plural, plurality and pluralism**.

Empathy. Feeling for others or putting oneself in the place of others, necessary for understanding what it is to be religious.

Epistemic hospitality. A term used by Catherine Cornille. It refers to the recognition that helpful ways of understanding one's own religion, or insights into how it can be lived, might be found outside of your own tradition (Cornille, *The im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, 194 -196). In this thesis it is extended to the need for pupils to be open to

learning from the Christian message and the message of all other religions and non-religious viewpoints.

Experience. This term is usually undefined in educational programmes. In this thesis it refers to learning outcomes that emphasise the **affective**, rather than the **cognitive**, though both the cognitive and the affective can be related.

Fides qua and fides quae. These two terms are used to describe the relationship between a Christian's personal faith (experience) and the content of faith (knowledge). *Fides qua* refers to personal faith, the faith by which one believes, and *fides quae* to the content of faith, the faith which one believes.

Humanism. In this thesis, the term refers to existential humanism, "which lays particular emphasis on human achievement and flourishing as an existential value and source of meaning" (Bullivant and Lee, *A Dictionary of Atheism*, 'Humanism').

Indoctrination. "A teacher indoctrinates students in respect of P (some proposition or set of propositions) by teaching students P without at the same time providing them with the 'critical apparatus' necessary to enable them rationally to appraise P" (Michael Leahy, 'Indoctrination, evangelisation, catechesis and religious education', 432).

Inter-religious dialogue. Loosely described as all relations between religions, on an individual and community basis, which leads to "mutual understanding and enrichment", including witness, working together for the good of all, and theological discussion (*Dialogue and Proclamation*, 9).

Modernity. In this thesis the key features of modernity are understood to mean less reliance on "culture and tradition" and the rise of an individualism that emphasises "human rights, human agency, equality and respect" (Nicola Madge et al, *Youth on Religion*, 8).

Other religions. The term is rooted in an anthropology that holds that all men and women are essentially religious and that this religiosity and the human search for God is expressed in different ways. It is not limited to the major religions of the world and is inclusive of traditional or tribal religions. Judaism is not considered by the Catholic Church as an other religion because it is the result of God's revelation to humanity.

Personal agency. With regard to young people, it means that they "are active participants in the process of their own socialisation" (Madge et al, *Youth on Religion,* 211).

Plural, Plurality, Pluralism. See **diversity**. In addition, pluralism can be used to describe a theological position within the **theology of religions** which holds that all religions are equal paths to ultimate reality. Context will always make the usage clear.

Rational autonomy. Use of the term is complex and contested. Gerald Grace argues that "there has not been, and in human society, cannot be, a school or educational experience which is entirely autonomous, objective, neutral and ideologically free" (Grace, *Faith,*

Mission and Challenge in Catholic Education, 26). The term rational autonomy is related to **academic rigour** and **critical enquiry**, and the exercise of **personal agency**. It could be considered as a "modest counterweight to the power of home and culture", and as upholding the young person's "right to opt out of one's parents' or community's way of life" (Autonomy' in McCulloch & Crook*, The Routledge International Encylopedia of Education,* 44).

Reflexive identity formation: the recognition by the individual of difference and plurality, and the change that comes through this recognition.

"Relatively adequate". A term used by David Tracy. It refers to a necessary early stage in the process of interpretation of a **"classic"**. The criteria for "relative adequacy" include doing justice to alternative readings, being faithful to the vitality of the "classic", and open to various forms of critical analysis (Tracy, *Analogical Imagination* 121-122). It is relative because no one interpretation of any "classic" will ever be *the* interpretation, you will never have "absolute certainty" in interpretation.

Sectarianism. In this thesis the term is used in a Scottish context. It refers to "beliefs that lead to prejudice, discrimination, malice and ill-will towards members, or presumed members, of a religious denomination". https://nilbymouth.org/what-is-sectarianism/ accessed on 02 September 2019.

Secularisation. The decline in the social significance of religion.

Social and ecclesial conditions. Significant aspects or features of contemporary life in society and in the Church, how they relate and, in the context of this thesis, their implications for the mission of the Church.

Social cohesion. This is a complex and contested term. In this thesis it is understood as building "relationships between groups from disparate cultural, racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds" (Madge et al, *Youth on Religion*, 198).

Theology of religions. In this thesis it means a Catholic theology of religions which can be summarised as the Church's teaching on other religions. Defined more precisely, it is the "theology of the function of non-Christian religions in collective and individual Salvation History" (Becker, 'Trends in German writing on theology of religions', 322).

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