Religious literacy: a way forward for Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland?

John Dunlop

(M.A. Hons.)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Philosophy

School of Education

College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

January 2024

ABSTRACT

This thesis is written to address the context of Religious Education in Catholic state schools in Scotland. The thesis aims to critically examine the Religious Education curriculum (RERC) in light of a particular lens- religious literacy. The thesis contextualises *RERC* within two frameworks: (1) the religious landscape of contemporary Scotland; and (2) contemporary models of religious literacy.

The research in this thesis is carried out by a critical examination of the literature on several key relevant issues: religious literacy; religious demographics; sociology of religion in contemporary Britain; pedagogical approaches to Religious Education; Curriculum for Excellence; the Scottish education system; and the Catholic Church's philosophy of education.

The thesis utilises the literature to answer the main research question: is religious literacy a way forward for Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland? There will be three potential mandates evaluated to answer this question: sociological, educational and ecclesial. The thesis aims to be an academic contribution to the debate and discussion on the national *RERC* curriculum in Scotland.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful for the support that my supervisor Professor Stephen McKinney has given me. He has accompanied me on this academic and professional journey over the past two years, and his guidance, advice and encouragement has helped me to produce this piece of work. Professor McKinney has supported me to develop my academic capabilities since my undergraduate experience at the University of Glasgow, and I will always be thankful for this.

I am also thankful to the wider St Andrew's Foundation for Catholic Teacher Education at the University of Glasgow's School of Education. The Foundation's annual programme of academic events has contributed to my awareness and critical engagement with key issues in Scottish education, with a relevant focus towards Catholic state schools.

I am grateful to my teaching colleagues. They have respected this academic endeavour and provided words of encouragement towards its successful conclusion.

A special thanks to my pupils (past and present), who have given me the motivation to contribute to the academic debate on the future of Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland. They continue to inspire me on a daily basis.

Thank you to my family, particularly my parents, Angela and John. They have given me a lot of support over the past two years, and have respected this time where I combined full-time work and part-time study. They offer me continuous encouragement.

A final word of gratitude to my wife-to-be, Emma. She has encouraged me at every stage throughout this thesis and continues to do so. I am immensely thankful for the support she gives me.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

JOHN DUNLOP
JANUARY 2024

ABBREVIATIONS

APPG: All Party Parliamentary Group

ATQ: Additional Teaching Qualification

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BCoS: Bishops' Conference of Scotland

BGE: Broad General Education

BSA: British Social Attitudes

CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church

CfE: Curriculum for Excellence

CoRE: Commission on Religious Education

CREDL: Certificate in Religious Education by Distance Learning

CTC: Catholic Teacher's Certificate

DYW: Developing the Young Workforce

EO: Experiences and Outcomes

GS: Gaudium et spes ('Joy and Hope')- the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

HEFCE: Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEI: Higher Education Institution

LAC: Literacy Across the Curriculum

NQ: National Qualification

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OWR: Other World Religions

PP: Principles and Practice

RBV: Religion, Beliefs and Values award

RE: Religious Education

RERC: Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools [in Scotland]

RME: Religious and Moral Education

RMPS: Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

RW: Religion and Worldviews

SCES: Scottish Catholic Education Service

SP: Senior Phase

SQA: Scottish Qualifications Authority

TIOF: This is Our Faith

TIOF SP: This is Our Faith: Senior Phase

USCCB: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Vatican II: Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican

YouCat: Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church

INTRODUCTION

Context

This is Our Faith (TIOF) is the compulsory Religious Education curriculum for all Roman Catholic state schools in Scotland (RERC). The Broad General Education (BGE) curriculum for primary 1- secondary 3 was published in 2011, and the Senior Phase (SP) edition *This is Our Faith: Senior Phase* (TIOF SP) for secondary 4- secondary 6 was published in 2015. Religious Education departments in Scottish Catholic state schools have a statutory duty to follow this curriculum, which is in line with the national *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) framework.

This thesis is therefore written to address a particular context- *RERC* in Scotland. The thesis will critically examine *RERC* using a particular paradigm: religious literacy.

Rationale

Academic perspectives on *RERC* and *TIOF* are limited. Coll and Reilly (2020) highlight that 'very little has been written about *TIOF*, perhaps owing to a lack of opportunity for scholarly discourse on matters pertaining to Catholic Education in Scotland.' The authors recognised this gap and established an online blog, *The Cloisters* forum. The aim of this initiative was to generate 'dialogue on matters relating to Catholic Education.' (Ibid) Despite this innovative move, and many publications later, little has been mentioned about *TIOF* specifically. There remains a need for more academic engagement which focuses on *RERC* in Scotland.

The dialogue from *Open House* between Coll and Reilly (2020) and Stoer (2020a) was the opening of brief discussion on the *TIOF* curriculum. Stoer (2020a) argued that 'a fundamental review of Scotland's programme of Catholic religious education for young people is long overdue.' Coll and Reilly (2020) explained that 'Stoer has started a welcome conversation about how it [TIOF] is presented and taught in Catholic Schools in Scotland. We hope that

conversation continues.' This research aims to be a contribution to the debate on the national *RERC* curriculum.

Biesta et al.'s research project, *Religious literacy: a way forward for religious education?* (2019) provided the catalyst for the attention that this thesis gives to religious literacy. Their project sought to answer the question as to whether or not religious literacy can be a way forward for Religious Education (RE). (Ibid, 214) The research carried out in this thesis, then, will address this question from the context of *RERC* in Scotland.

Finally, in Franchi's (2013, 479) study of *TIOF*, he concluded that the curriculum is a 'significant contribution to the future direction of the debate' on Religious Education in Catholic schools globally. He proposed that *TIOF* is 'of value to all with an interest in religious education and religious literacy more broadly.' The thesis therefore aims to critically examine both domains (R.E and religious literacy) to answer the thesis question.

Aims

The thesis aims to understand what religious literacy is, and critically examine if religious literacy is a way forward for Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland.

The thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is religious literacy?
2. Is religious literacy important in contemporary Britain?
3. Is religious literacy promoted in Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland (RERC)?
4. Is religious literacy a way forward for RERC in Scotland?

The answers to these questions will be achieved by examining a number of key themes through a review of the relevant literature. The key themes are (1) the contextual nature of religious

literacy; (2) secularisation and religious diversity in contemporary Britain; (3) the sociological mandate for religious literacy; and (4) the potential for religious literacy in RERC.

Methodology

Each research question will be answered by an examination of the relevant literature in each area.

Question 1 will be addressed by using the work of Andrew Wright (1993) and (1996) as a starting point to form a working definition of religious literacy in chapter 1. Religious literacy in this thesis will be considered as a 'framework'- one which captures a broad range of knowledge, skills and capabilities. Question 1 will also be answered by examining more recent academic perspectives on what religious literacy is. This will be supplemented by the *All Party Parliamentary Group's* report on religious literacy in Britain (2015) to gain an understanding of religious literacy's link to public policy. The thesis will distil the wide array of views on religious literacy to propose five contemporary models. Chapter 4 will present different ways in which religious literacy in R.E has been defined, promoted or advocated in the academy.

Question 2 will be addressed by an examination of the global, British and Scottish 'religious landscape' data in chapter 2. Social surveys, *PEW* research centre findings, and British and Scottish national census data will be presented. The data will highlight the growing secularisation in the West, combined with an increase in religious diversity. The implications for religious literacy are then analysed. Chapter 3 will then explore a primarily sociological rationale for promoting religious literacy.

Question 3 will be addressed in chapter 6 through a critical examination of the relevant *CfE* and *RERC* curricular documents for evidence of religious literacy. Key examples will be provided from the curriculum to draw attention to areas of religious literacy that are present, as well as aspects that are absent.

Finally, question 4 will be addressed in chapter 7. Two further mandates will be evaluated for promoting religious literacy in *RERC*: educational and ecclesial. Chapter 7 will explore the

educational mandate first, by presenting the current context of the Scottish education's *It's our future* report (2023) on assessments and other relevant curricular material. The ecclesial mandate will be explored through an examination of the Congregation for Catholic Education's documents. The Church's philosophy of education will be examined to discern if this is coherent with religious literacy. The thesis will conclude by discerning if religious literacy is a way forward for Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland. (RERC)

The thesis will begin by addressing the first research question: what is religious literacy?

CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS RELIGIOUS LITERACY?

Introduction

'Religious literacy' is an 'imprecise term' (Smalley, 2018, 58) because there is 'no simple definition.' (Ibid, 60) It is therefore a 'flexible term, the substance of which is contingent upon circumstance and setting.' (Parker, 2020, 130) Recently, religious literacy has become increasingly common in public debate, but it remains a 'highly contested term.' (APPG, 2015, 6)

This chapter will explain what religious literacy means, whilst being mindful of these immediate tensions. The chapter will also examine the contexts of religious literacy and interpret the different lenses through which religious literacy can be understood.

To begin, the term 'literacy' can be problematic. Biesta et al. (2019, 5) draw attention to the view that:

> 'In recent decades 'literacy' has become a central concept in educational discourse, influencing both policy initiatives and daily practices in education. Literacy is a complex concept which overlaps with a cluster of others, including 'literature,' illiteracy, non- literary, non-literate. 'Literacy' is also a ubiquitous concept. It is something which cannot be easily pigeonholed into a couple of distinct domains (relating to education).'

The complexity of 'literacy' should therefore be noted, as there are competing sociological, educational and political perspectives of what this is. Similarly, 'religion' is a concept that can be explained in different ways and interpreted through different lenses. Religion can be viewed differently by members of a tradition and outsiders (Moore, 2015, 29), educational curriculum writers (Conroy, 2015, 170) and policy makers (Francis and van Eck Duymaer van Twist, 2015, 113), among others. A critical evaluation of these different interpretations lies beyond the focus of this research. Instead, the emphasis will be on 'religious literacy', a concept that is engaged with by scholars and in public policy.

Dinham and Francis (2015, 257) outline the difficulty in finding one single description, and describe religious literacy as:

> '…a stretchy, fluid concept that is variously configured and applied in terms of the context in which it happens… Religious literacy is necessarily a non-didactic idea that must be adapted as appropriate to the specific environment.'

How experts in various fields or disciplines describe and critically engage with religious literacy is therefore relative to their varying purposes. These include Higher Education (Ford and Higton, 2015), (Moore, 2015), (Jones, 2015) and (Walters, 2022); equalities, law and human rights (Catto and Perfect, 2015), (Amarasingam et al., 2021) and (Hoogstra and Fretwell Wilson, 2022); social work (Crisp, 2015); the media (Wakelin and Spencer, 2015), (Mason, 2021) and (Good, 2022); radicalisation and extremism (Francis and van Eck Duymaer van twist, 2015); chaplaincy (Clines and Gilliat-Ray, 2015) and (Cadge et al., 2022); business (Grim and Lambert, 2021) and (Grim and Johnson, 2022); healthcare (Chan and Sitek, 2021); welfare (Dinham, 2015) and (Langston Bombino and Carlston Theis, 2022); social media (Henry, 2021); diplomacy (Sedaca, 2022); development and humanitarian relief (Marshall, 2022) and Initial Teacher Education (Soules and Jafralie, 2021).

The context for this research will be religious literacy in school education, particularly Religious Education.

The task of finding a working definition for religious literacy will now be undertaken.

1.1 Definition of religious literacy

The academic focus on religious literacy is situated primarily in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. (Chan et al., 2019, 255) The analysis of religious literacy that follows will therefore be predominantly from these geographical and cultural contexts.

Religious literacy is a 'relatively new' term. (Biesta et al., 2019, 18) Consequently, there is a growing contemporary focus on religious literacy in academia, policy (particularly religious discrimination and extremism) and practice:

> '… prior to the publication of Wright's *Religious education in the Secondary school: Prospects for Religious literacy* (1993) it is difficult to find any examples of advocates of religious education using or referring to it.' (Ibid)

This highlights the origins of the discourse on religious literacy and R.E. This concept has since been part of academic discourse over the last three decades, although most of the literature on religious literacy has been written over the last ten years.

There are different perspectives on what religious literacy is in school-based religious education. Wright (1993) provides a succinct definition. Many thinkers who address the issue of religious literacy reference his definition.[1] Wright (1993, 73) defined religious literacy as:

> '…an ability to reflect, communicate, and act in an informed, intelligent, and sensitive manner toward the phenomenon of religion.'

Moreover, three years after this book was published, Wright (1996, 175) slightly adapted his definition. This adaptation helps to further explain what religious literacy is. The author's own emphasis is in italics:

> 'The mark of the religiously educated child within such an approach would be his or her ability to think, act and communicate with insight and intelligence in *the light of that diversity of religious truth claims that are the mark of our contemporary culture*.'

The following description (below) will therefore be taken as the working definition of religious literacy for this study. This working definition draws upon Wright's (1993) *and* (1996) explanations:

> 'Religious literacy is the ability to reflect, communicate, and act in an informed, intelligent, and sensitive manner towards the phenomenon of religion and the diversity of religious truth claims that are the mark of our contemporary culture.'

This working definition will be the lens through which contemporary models of religious literacy will be considered. This definition will form part of the critical analysis.

[1] See Biesta et al. (2019), APPG (2015), Smalley (2018), Orchard (2020), Robinson (2011), Conroy (2015), Dinham and Baker (2019), and Barnes (2001).

Although religious literacy is a contested term, it is possible to find common approaches to understand and explain it. Dinham and Francis (2015, 258) propose that religious literacy is a 'framework.' The working definition presented above will act as a framework for understanding contemporary models of religious literacy.

The five models that follow are religious literacy and religion, religious literacy and cultural studies; religious literacy as a process; religious literacy and religious diversity; and religious literacy and the secular. Our working definition and contemporary models will be the lenses through which the Scottish Religious Education in Roman Catholic schools (RERC) curriculum will be examined.

1.2 Contemporary models of religious literacy

1.2.1 Religious literacy and religion

The first model of religious literacy prioritises knowledge of the *phenomenon of religion*. There are four important texts which focus on religious literacy and religion: Prothero (2007), Prothero and Kerby (2015), Jones (2015) and Ford and Higton (2015). The contexts for each of these texts are the U.S.A and U.K.

First, the work of Prothero (2007) is drawn upon extensively in academic research in the field of religious literacy. Soules and Jafralie (2021, 41) highlight an important point, that because religious literacy is 'a broad term, and the task of becoming religiously literate can be daunting in any context', it may be of help to follow Prothero's descriptions of categorising specific 'religious literacies.' Prothero (2007) therefore agrees that religious literacy is context specific, and his approach advocates multiple *religious literacies*. He proposes that religious literacy in general should be understood as shorthand for one or more of these particular literacies.

Prothero, in the U.S.A context, described religious literacy as:

> '…the ability to understand and use the basic building blocks of religious traditions – their terms, symbols, doctrines, practices, sayings, characters, metaphors, and narratives.' (Ibid)

Prothero helpfully expands, clarifies, and gives examples of what this means in practice:

> 'Religious literacy might also be divided into a variety of functional capacities; for example, ritual literacy (knowing how to cross yourself during the Catholic Mass or how to perform ablutions before Muslim prayers); confessional literacy (knowing what Christians affirm in the Apostles' Creed or what Muslims affirm in the *Shahadah*); denominational literacy (knowing salient differences between Episcopalians and Catholics or between Reform and Conservative Jews); and narrative literacy (knowing what Adam and Eve are said to have done in the Garden of Eden or how the Buddha came to abandon his palace for the life of a wandering ascetic). (Ibid)

He then concludes by emphasising the two key components of his view:

> 'Religious literacy, in short, is both doctrinal and narrative; it is conveyed through creeds and catechisms, yes, but also through creation accounts and stories of the last days.' (Ibid)

This approach to religious literacy involves promoting an understanding of religious language as a starting point. It advocates varying religious 'literacies' which relate to different areas of competencies or expertise of religious knowledge. It is primarily from a Christian context, as the language of doctrines, creeds and catechisms would not feature prominently in other traditions. Prothero therefore views breadth and depth of knowledge about religions as important. Breadth of knowledge is aimed for through the variety of aspects of different religious traditions advocated. Depth of understanding is the goal, too, through discerning the 'building blocks' of each religious tradition to be studied. The approach engages with other religions alongside Christianity (Islam, Judaism and Buddhism) in the context of comparing different practices, organisational structures or narratives. This approach would be appropriate in countries where Christianity is the dominant religious tradition, yet religious diversity is present.

Secondly, Prothero and Kerby (2015) discuss diminishing religious literacy in the U.S.A. They argue that traditionally a 'deeply religious country' (Ibid, 55) and predominantly Protestant Christian (Ibid, 56), the U.S.A has sunk into *religious illiteracy*. The focus of the approach that follows is also firmly centred on Christianity. They argue that 'the driving force behind religious literacy is the conviction that Americans must know something about Christianity and other religions if they are to be effective citizens.' (Ibid, 64) This highlights their view that it is a civic duty to cultivate religious literacy in a Western democracy. They argue that knowledge about Christianity is the prime vehicle for becoming religiously literate in their context. The authors' view is also that:

> '…it is equally important for citizens to be informed about a much wider range of world religions, from Sikhism to Sufism… Muslims and Hindus are no longer far away in Pakistan and India, but next door, in Boston.' (Ibid)

Globalisation and migration thus have implications for religious literacy. Prothero and Kerby note that the diminishing religious literacy is due to the lack of teaching about religion in public schools in the U.S.A (Ibid, 65) and suggest approaches that can be taken to combat this. They disagree with the cultural studies approach (see section 1.2.2, below) and instead propose a 'stand-alone religion course.' (Ibid, 71) The authors highlight the Modesto World Religions course for ninth graders (2007) as an illustrative example of good practice. It was a nine-week course mandatory for all pupils in the Modesto district of California. The goal was to 'simultaneously improve students' understanding of religious liberty and their religious literacy.' (Ibid) The approach is set out as follows:

> 'The history of religious freedom and freedom of conscience in America was the topic of the first two weeks of the course. These principles then served as a framework for students to approach the remainder of the course, which addressed Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. To avoid controversy, teachers were instructed to be strictly descriptive, rather than comparative, focusing on dates, geography and historical and contemporary practices. Neutrality toward all religions studied was considered paramount.' (Ibid)

This World Religions course, then, is framed through sociological and historical lenses to begin with, situating religion and its history in America. One positive from this is that a range of religions are studied, which would imply a basic level of knowledge to be developed about each. It is, however, descriptive in practice. This would indicate that this approach is not critical or engaging in philosophical enquiry. There is no mention of theology, or even beliefs. This approach is firmly rooted in understanding the functional aspects of religions, instead. In addition, one religion should not be advocated over others. This approach would be fitting in countries where there is a lack of compulsory education about religion. This approach does not appear wholly relevant to Scotland, due to the compulsory nature of Religious Education in state schools.[2]

A second approach, different in nature, is also proposed by Prothero and Kerby:

> '…the other major type of stand-alone Religion course is the Bible as Literature. Proponents of Religious Studies in schools have often argued that a working knowledge of the Bible is essential to understanding Western literature and Western politics.' (Ibid, 73)

The emphasis of this approach is therefore on promoting biblical literacy, which would contribute to religious literacy. It could be argued that this is in tension with some of the principles outlined in the World Religions course outlined above, such as neutrality, as the scriptures of one religious tradition is given priority. However, it does fit into the schema of understanding the history of religion and its contemporary cultural and political manifestations in the U.S.A. Prothero and Kerby argue that since it is 'unlikely that students are receiving much instruction elsewhere in the Bible's content, history and contemporary influence, the need for Bible as Literature courses is clear.' (Ibid) The same rationale could apply to the contemporary Scottish context, as school may be the only site of religious learning for many pupils.

This approach treats the Bible as 'literature', not as sacred scripture, and is in line with the U.S.A constitution of not advocating one religion in the school setting. This approach could be more fitting in countries where teaching about religion in schools is already compulsory, as

[2] The compulsory nature of R.E in Scotland will be analysed in chapter 5.

this could complement existing curricula. This could represent an interdisciplinary opportunity between English or Literature departments and Religious Education/ Religious Studies.

These approaches have many positive aspects. The World Religions course promotes learning about a variety of religious traditions, and is thus important in Western multicultural and religiously diverse societies. The Bible as Literature approach also seeks to promote biblical literacy and critical engagement with biblical texts. This can promote knowledge of the Bible from both believers and non-believers. However, the short duration of both and the introductory nature make the approaches less desirable. If religious literacy is a complex endeavour, it does not seem likely that one can become religiously literate through a nine-week introductory course. Our definition of religious literacy demands more than a topical understanding. These approaches are therefore more useful as a starting point on which to build.

Third, Ford and Higton (2015) discuss religious literacy in the secular university context in the United Kingdom. They do this through the prism of Theology and Religious Studies, and in particular, the 'academic study' of Christian Theology. Ford and Higton's focus on Christianity as a source for developing religious literacy links to the task of considering school-based Religious Education in the Catholic Christian tradition.

The authors analyse the relationship between Theology and Religious Studies today:

> 'Theology' might be said to assume the faith of the person doing the studying, while 'Religious Studies' might be said to bracket the student's faith or lack of faith, and to be a self-consciously neutral discipline. Or 'Theology' might be said to be the internal discourse of a specific religious community, properly at home in that community's seminaries, while 'Religious Studies' is a discourse belonging to the public at large, properly at home in a secular university.' (Ibid, 39)

This is important, as Ford and Higton outline that the task of studying religion does not require religious faith, but it does require attention to the discourse within religious traditions. (Ibid, 42) The intention is for believers *and* non-believers to grow in understanding. The absence of the term 'theology' in much of the literature relating to models of religious literacy that prioritise 'religion' would be in line with the distinction above. Scholars may use the term 'Religious Studies' rather than 'Theology' to indicate neutrality.

The starting point for the authors is that religious literacy begins by taking into account the very existence of religious traditions (in this case, Christianity), and that these traditions are communal phenomena. This aligns with the views of Dinham and Francis (2015, 11) who also pose that the acknowledgement that religions and religious believers exist in society should be the starting point for religious literacy.

Ford and Higton's model prioritises knowledge about prominent strands of Christianity, and argue that it is possible to engage critically with the practices of 'deliberation' within these strands. These are referred to as Christianity's 'wisdom traditions.' (Ibid, 45) It involves understanding that these practices of deliberation have had, and still help shape, the order of life for those communities. Finally, an understanding should be developed that the practices of deliberation within these traditions have their own solidity and integrity and should not be deduced to other discourses. (Ibid)

This approach is critical in its scope, whilst Prothero (2007) and Prothero and Kerby (2015) are more descriptive. The authors note that Theology and Religious Studies as a discipline begins with the description of 'Christians believe x' or 'Christians deliberate and argue about x in such and such a way…' (Ibid, 45) but it does not stop with description. They advocate an active critical engagement with contemporary Christianity through studying its theology, the intra-Christian theological debates and reasoning, and how these affect Christians today.

Ford and Higton conclude their argument by saying that studying Christianity from an academic perspective (which can be from within or from outside the religious tradition) can support students to develop religiously literate reasoning methods. For the authors, this is what becoming religiously literate entails. It is not the possession of a quantity of knowledge about religions. It is rather a skillset that can be developed and applied in different religious contexts. There are no examples given, though, of what topics should or could be the focus of study. Their approach is detailed in its methodology but lacking in exemplary material. It is also an approach that is narrow in scope. Dinham and Francis (2015, 17) point towards a difficulty, that 'their idea of Theology is clearly not amenable to those modes of religion and belief that are less formal and systematic.'

Ford and Higton claim that this approach can be applied to other religious traditions. However, careful consideration should be given into how this may be possible. This approach is more

concerned with Christianity and the Western forms of theology found in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. It is not an investigation of different religions or belief systems, but rather a framework for studying them.

Ford and Higton (2015, 51) outline another approach. They suggest that Theology and Religious Studies can inspire religious literacy initiatives. Among other initiatives (outlined below in section 1.2.3.2), they advocate 'Scriptural Reasoning.' The Cambridge Interfaith Programme practices this. The approach is set out as follows:

> 'It has mostly involved studying and discussing in small groups the Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptures, with the scriptures of other traditions being increasingly included in some settings. Scriptures are intrinsic to literacy in these traditions, and the practice of joint study and conversation around them contributes to broadening and deepening understanding, not only of the scriptures of others, but also of one's own.'

This approach studies the sacred texts of the Abrahamic traditions and involves members of those traditions deliberating with one another. This approach would have much to offer interfaith ideals and could promote harmony and mutual respect. It may allow for critical reflection on modes of disagreement between the three Western traditions. This approach would be more beneficial to the believers of these traditions. They could engage with their own religious and cultural heritage. It may be less relevant to those who do not belong to these traditions.

A fourth model is from Jones (2015). He also analysed religious literacy in Higher Education in the U.K. Jones makes the case that 'HEIs are precisely good places to tackle religious literacy, though they are also precisely the places which often think they should not.' (Ibid, 187) Jones' rationale stems from the observation that religion attracts great interest in the public square, yet 'knowledge of it remains low.' The key point is:

> 'The Islamic tradition is perhaps the most obvious case of this. Despite the fact that Islam has been constantly in the media over the last decade, public understanding of it is minimal.' (Ibid)

Jones agrees with the basis of promoting religious literacy in order to support social cohesion. He argues that 'the aim of any policy aimed at improving religious literacy must always be the flourishing of civil society.' (Ibid, 201) Several priorities and challenges for religious literacy in Higher Education are discussed. Two approaches are advocated from this context.

Jones rejects the proposal from Nord (2008, 182) of two mandatory courses in Religious Studies for all undergraduates, one historical and one contemporary. His first approach instead endorses the view of Ford (2004) that the study of religion should be 'fed into all areas of the university as well as being found in departments specialising in the subject.' (Jones, 2015, 199) Jones argues that 'religion is pertinent to a huge range of academic disciplines.' (Ibid) Therefore, from this, it would be possible to learn about religions across subject disciplines to promote religious literacy, and thus complement existing Religious Studies courses.

The second approach Jones advocates uses Islam as an example. After the intense interest in Islam that followed the events of 9/11 and the 2005 London bombings, the Higher Education Funding Council for England named Islamic Studies as a 'strategically important subject' (HEFCE, 2008) (Jones, 2015, 200) An Islamic Studies Network was then created. This involved the development of 'Islamic Studies within dedicated departments and gathering information and offering guidance on the teaching of Islam in other contexts, such as the Social Sciences, Politics and Comparative Law.' (Ibid) These are examples of Jones' first model in practice. This involves recognising where religion can be taught in varying academic disciplines. This approach therefore has a specific focus:

> 'The work to build links between publicly and privately funded Islamic Studies centres also involved thinking through how the teaching of private Islamic Studies courses could help students (notably future Muslim religious leaders) engage with contemporary society.'

While Jones' focus is primarily on England, this could be applied in Scotland. This could be implemented by bringing together public and privately funded religious institutions to promote religious literacy. It could extend to other religions, in addition to Islam. Jones believes it would be possible to bring together different religious institutions from other religions, and accepts that one could 'persuasively argue that there has been an unhealthy over-emphasis on Islam in recent discussions of religion and belief.' (Ibid) This approach engages with religious

traditions, particularly authoritative figures, and is not the academic study of religion from a neutral outsider standpoint.

These approaches complement each other, but also have points of disagreement. The authors agree that the priority of religious literacy is religion. The authors either explicitly or implicitly propose that to become religiously literate through developing knowledge about the phenomenon of religion is good for society. They are all focused on the Western religious traditions of Christianity and Islam. All approaches agree that it is important to know about more than one religious tradition, and some examples are provided of how this is possible. Three of the four authors deem scriptural knowledge as an important tool for promoting religious literacy.

There are differences in the way in which religious literacy should be promoted. Prothero (2007) and Prothero and Kerby (2015) advocate clear, structured approaches to religions that seek to develop knowledge about different aspects of religions. Ford and Higton instead propose a framework for the study of religion. Jones, on the other hand, suggests finding where religion can be taught across various academic disciplines to complement Religious Studies. The approaches to religious literacy, outlined, could benefit the context of the United Kingdom, due to the existence of a diversity of religious traditions, people who have no religious faith and where there are already structures in place to implement these.

A different model, religious literacy and cultural studies, will now be considered.

1.2.2 Religious literacy and cultural studies

The cultural studies model attempts to promote religious literacy through responding to, and engaging with, *our contemporary culture*. This model is rooted in understanding how religion affects people's lives across society today. The APPG (2015, 6) outlines that religious literacy can refer to the culture of religions. This includes reflecting on how a religion's beliefs, traditions, and textual interpretations can affect the lives of individuals. This refers primarily to religious believers. This idea is taken up by Dianne Moore to form her cultural studies approach to religious literacy. It contains a broad conceptual understanding of what religion is.

Moore is an important figure in the field of religious literacy.[3] Her view is that religious literacy is:

> '…the ability to discern and analyse the fundamental intersections of religion and social, political, cultural life through multiple lenses.' (Moore, 2015, 30)

Moore's vision of religious literacy is concerned with the ability to engage with contemporary public life, by using a multidisciplinary approach that includes religion to carry this out. Her vision is a skillset, firstly, before any specific knowledge is mentioned. This approach is context-specific in that religious, social, political and cultural issues vary across different countries and different continents. Care would be needed to use this approach to meet the needs of any given contemporary society that is studied.

Furthermore, according to Moore (2015, 30), Religious literacy entails two key characteristics:

> '1) a basic understanding of the history, central texts (where applicable), beliefs, practices and contemporary manifestations of several of the world's religious traditions as they arose out of and continue to be shaped by particular social, historical and cultural contexts; and 2) the ability to discern and explore the religious dimensions of political, social and cultural expressions across time and place.'

This 'basic understanding' entails there is a knowledge base to be known. However, this appears to be an introductory level of understanding. The five different aspects of religions provided by Moore point more toward a breadth of knowledge about religion rather than depth. The approach also advocates the study of more than one religion. The second characteristic substitutes 'multiple lenses' (from the prior definition) for 'across time and place'. This hereby

[3] Moore's work on religious literacy is drawn upon by Prothero and Kerby (2015); Francis and van Eck Duymaer van Twist (2015); Henry (2021) and Soules and Jafralie (2021) among others. The context of her writing is the U.S.A.

indicates the contextual nature of the approach; one that is underpinned by the multidisciplinary study. The cultural studies approach to religious literacy therefore advocates the study of religious literature, combined with the history and politics of specific countries or societies.

Moore then expands upon how this approach can be put into practice, through:

> '…multi- and cross-disciplinary collaborations with Religious Studies scholars across the full range of social science investigations in order to explore the complex and critically important roles that religions play in our contemporary world.'

This multidisciplinary model is compatible with the approach that Jones (2015) advocates. Moore explains that religious influences are 'inextricably woven into all dimensions of human experience,' so learning about religious rituals or exploring what sacred texts say are not sufficient for religious literacy, despite these being common approaches at the time of her writing. (Ibid, 30)

Finally, Moore's approach highlights the need to understand power structures in religious traditions:

> '…the method calls for an analysis of power and powerlessness related to the subject at hand. Which perspectives are politically and socially prominent, and why? Which are marginalised, or silenced, and why? Regarding religion, why are some theological interpretations more prominent than others in relationship to specific issues, in particular, social/ historical contexts?' (Ibid, 31)

Careful planning and preparation would be necessary to consider the structures of different religions to discern how, or if, this approach would be applicable. This would apply to Catholic Christianity, which is a religion of authority, but may not apply to different denominations within Christianity or Eastern religious traditions where this may not be compatible. There is a critical dimension to this cultural studies approach when it is applied to the structural models of religions. It is mostly an academic study of religions from outside of the traditions, rather than engagement with, or between, religious traditions.

A third model, that of viewing religious literacy as a process, will now be analysed.

1.2.3 Religious literacy as a process

A third model of religious literacy is viewing the journey of becoming religiously literate as a process. This is promoting *the ability to think, act and communicate.* There are two different approaches within this model.

1.2.3.1 The dialogic nature of religious literacy

Religious literacy and its relationship with dialogue is a common theme throughout the literature. The APPG (2015, 6) highlights that religious literacy involves a 'sophisticated ability to engage with religious groups.' This suggests some form of dialogue with, and/or critique of, contemporary religious communities in the U.K. Religious literacy also includes 'effective communication about religion.' This involves being able to engage in dialogue about religion.

Wright (1993, 78) argued thirty years ago that Religious Education should provide a platform for young people to be able to develop the social skills to enter adulthood and civic life.[4] These skills should help young people to engage in an informed dialogue on religious matters:

> '… thus the mark of a religiously educated child being that of their ability to embark on a conversation with and about religion that reflects increasing levels of wisdom, insight, intelligence and informed and balanced judgement.' (Ibid)

This approach is primarily about supporting young people to become citizens who have the ability to participate in discussions on religious matters. Individuals should be able to participate in religious dialogue and display levels of breadth and depth of knowledge. These conversations should also demonstrate elements of critical personal reflection on religions and religious issues.

Dinham and Francis (2015, 14) are also proponents of a dialogic understanding of religious literacy:

[4] This thesis will examine the relevance of this viewpoint in chapter 3.

> '…religious literacy resides, then, in an improved quality of conversation about the category of religion and belief itself, which first of all irons out the muddled binaries and assumptions explored here – about religion versus the secular, private versus public, and perceptions of religion as a threat or a risk to an otherwise rational modern world.'

This approach to religious literacy therefore primarily involves discussing religion in contemporary society, particularly by focusing on the relationship between religion and secularism. In practice, in the context of contemporary Britain, this dialogue is primarily about political or moral issues, rather than theological debates. However, this dialogic approach could include religious and theological matters as an important component.

Ford and Higton also propose a dialogic model. They argue that engagement in what they call a "conversational mode" will lead to religious literacy.' (Dinham and Baker, 2019, 1) Their 'argumentative structure', relating primarily to Christianity, is underpinned by 'paying attention to the practices of deliberation.' This involves being able to recognise the rationale behind perspectives that religious believers hold in contemporary society. This approach aims to recognise what points of further debate and dialogue are possible from this, because 'without such attention, there can be a tendency for reference to religious belief in public life to be an argument stopper.' (Ford and Higton, 2015, 42) The authors highlight that in media commentaries on topics such as religious views on abortion, there is an assumption that 'they are therefore inevitably undiscussable – they are erratic boulders that simply have to be navigated around.' (Ibid)

Consequently, religious literacy in the form of dialogue aims to address perceived controversial or hostile issues, and provides a platform to engage with these.

1.2.3.2 Developing religious literacy: a continuous trait

A second view in this model is that developing religious literacy is a continuous process. Prothero (2007, 14) agrees that religious literacy involves the 'ability to participate in our ongoing conversation about the private and public powers of religion.' However, this should

include the caveat that 'basic [religious] information changes over time.' To extrapolate Prothero's point further and apply it to contemporary religions beyond 'basic information', then doctrinal matters, textual interpretations, synodal developments, ecumenical and interreligious initiatives and religious responses to moral issues occur within the context of human history. Religious literacy should therefore be viewed as an ongoing process. One that is never quite complete.

As part of this religious literacy process, there have been numerous contemporary initiatives. Ford and Higton (2015, 46) call this 'institutional contexts.' They explain:

> 'The proper critical edge of the academic study of Christianity (and other traditions) is not best secured by turning away from engagement with the churches (or other religious communities), nor by adopting a stance of supposed neutrality, but by bringing multiple engagements, multiple perspectives, the discourses of multiple traditions (religious and secular) into conversation with one another.'

This dialogic and continuously developing model of religious literacy can therefore be promoted through engagement between different organisations and communities. These can be religious or secular, and this mixture is deemed to be enriching for the religious literacy endeavour. There have been examples of projects and institutions who have adopted this approach. These include *The Society of the Study of Theology, Durham University, St Mellitus College* and the *Cambridge Inter-faith Programme.* (Ibid) Community initiatives have also been referred to, such as *Coexist House, Jewish Living Experience, The Birmingham Soul Boats Project, Art Trails and The Harvard Religious Literacy Project.* (APPG, 2015, 42) This shows that the approach of engagement between different religious communities or interested groups to promote religious literacy is growing in Higher Education and wider societal contexts.

To conclude, understanding religious literacy as a process therefore contains some fundamental characteristics: being religiously literate involves having the ability to engage and sustain a dialogue about religion, particularly about contemporary religious manifestations or issues; it also means that religious literacy is continuous and ongoing through a process of learning and initiatives.

1.2.4 Religious literacy and religious diversity

1.2.4.1 Religious literacy to respond to religious diversity

Religious literacy that relates to religious diversity means being *informed about the diversity of religious truth claims*. In this model, religious literacy also involves:

> 'A critical awareness, meaning that an individual has the ability to recognise, analyse and critique religious stereotypes, and engage effectively with, and take a nuanced approach towards, the questions raised by religion.' (APPG, 2015, 6)

This model of religious literacy is therefore underpinned by critically addressing religious stereotypes. The aim is therefore to address preconceptions of religious communities or individuals that are often false. This model of religious literacy essentially means:

> '…seeking to inform intelligent, thoughtful and rooted approaches to religious faith that countervail unhelpful knee jerk reactions based on fear and stereotype.' (Dinham and Francis, 2015, 266)

These stereotypes can breed fear and resentment of others. This can lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Seiple and Hoover (2022) have developed an important contemporary model.[5] They propose a version of religious literacy named *Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy* (CCRL) based on a philosophy of *covenantal pluralism* (which will be explored further in chapter 3). Their publication includes 33 chapters from scholars across the world who are sympathetic to this vision. Thus, it is gaining prominence in the field of religious literacy. 'Cross-cultural religious literacy':

[5] Seiple and Hoover have edited the series *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement* (2022).

> '…demands that one be reflective about one's philosophy/theology of the other, toward practical and positive engagement in a multi-faith, globalising world that will require multi-faith partners to serve the common good.' (Seiple and Hoover, 2022, 11)

The authors expand upon what this means in practice:

> 'Put simply, we must first understand ourselves (a personal competency), then understand others as they understand themselves (a comparative competency), and then understand the nature and requirements of leadership in crossing cultural and religious barriers for the sake of practical collaboration, which tends to yield civic solidarity (a collaborative competency). (Ibid)

Cross Cultural Religious Literacy is therefore a particular model that aims for intercultural and interreligious harmony. The aim is for people to work together for the betterment of society, irrespective of their religious background. It provides a space for individuals to understand their own religious or spiritual convictions and come to learn, respect, and appreciate the religiosity of others.

This is relevant to our study of Catholic R.E. *CCRL* has been related to Pope Francis' recent social encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020). This encyclical 'invites the Church to live out the call to universal fraternity and social friendship', and focuses on 'community', and 'our shared responsibility to promote the common good.' (USCCB, N.d.(b)) Cusimano Love (2022, 64) explains the link to *CCRL*:

> 'The world's largest and most geographically dispersed religious actor, the Catholic Church, has been walking the same path as covenantal pluralism recommends, for the past half century, and through Fratelli Tutti has just re-upped commitment to the project at the highest level.'

Consequently, the Pontiff's authoritative teaching in the encyclical emphasises a similar approach to religious diversity. This demonstrates that religious literacy and religious diversity is relevant to contemporary Catholic education.

Barnes and Smith (2015, 77) provide another model which is similar, although it was published prior to Seiple and Hoover. They discuss religious literacy through 'a dialogue with the concept of lokahi – a Hawaiian theory of positive interaction through diversity.' The title of their

chapter describes this as 'social harmony through diversity' and view this form of religious literacy as:

> '…distinctive in seeing religious diversity not as a problem to be managed but as an inevitable and rich source of human diversity… lokahi begins with the conviction that diversity is inherent in individuals and communities of faith. The task is not to elide but to value difference and embrace it as part of working with others for the common good.' (Ibid, 78)

This implies that there are areas of society which view that contemporary religious diversity brings difficulties and tensions. The authors instead recognise religious diversity as beneficial to civic life. The aspiration to bring religious traditions together towards working for the 'common good' highlights their view that interfaith initiatives are important. Barnes and Smith's vision does not place religious literacy within the realm of philosophy of religion, but rather through philosophy of relationality. This seeks to build community and is a space for such reflection and dialogue.

1.2.4.2 Internal diversity within religions

The second approach draws attention to the fact that within contemporary religious traditions and communities, there exists internal diversity. Sociology of religion research demonstrates this is growing in importance.[6] Biesta et al. (2019, 29) explain this importance:

> '… insufficient attention is paid to the profound religious diversity that characterises all religions. The emphasis should be on learning how to recognise and appreciate the diversity found amongst all those who are religious. Within the same religion there is a rich diversity in terms of both beliefs held and practices engaged with.'

There can be a range of beliefs and practices found within one religion. This fact is often overlooked, which can lead to generalisations of religions and religious communities. The APPG (2015, 6) also agreed that the development of religious literacy, in the context of 'plurality' (religious diversity), entails recognising internal diversity. They cite examples such

[6] Contemporary religious demographics, practice rates and beliefs will be analysed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

as how different individuals can interpret the same text or religious principle in different ways. This model therefore advocates understanding the nuances of religious interpretations.

Moore's approach to religious literacy (2015, 27) is also underpinned by responding to religious diversity in contemporary society. Moore begins by making a distinction about approaches to the study of religion:

> 'First and foremost, scholars highlight the difference between the devotional expression of particular religious beliefs as normative, and the non-sectarian study of religion that presumes the religious legitimacy of diverse normative claims. The importance of this distinction is that it recognises the validity of normative theological assertions without equating them with universal truths about the tradition itself.'

This variance helps to explain the ways in which the development of religious literacy may differ depending upon the setting. Ecclesial or catechetical models may differ from a non-sectarian (Moore's explanation for a non-confessional) approach. The former will approach religious questions through an objective lens. This means that the answers given by religious communities or believers to religious questions are believed to amount to objective facts. This includes topics such as the nature of the universe or the nature of human beings. The latter study will recognise diverse claims within traditions and approach them subjectively. This indicates taking a more neutral standpoint, and not advocating the viewpoint of one religious tradition.

In conclusion, there is a consensus among scholars that religious literacy should involve responding to, developing an awareness of, and engaging with, the diversity of religious beliefs found in society and the internal diversity within religious traditions.

A final model will now be analysed.

1.2.5 Religious literacy and the secular

The final model of religious literacy is that it must comprise, and respond to, aspects of secular life. This involves being *intelligent and sensitive* towards religion and contemporary culture.

The aim of this model is to support individuals to navigate the complex contemporary religious and non-religious beliefs and identities context in British society. In the educational context, this involves:

> '…providing a whole variety of learners with the forms of knowledge and understanding, the practices of engagement, that might enable them to navigate a complexly religious and secular landscape.' (Ford and Higton, 2015, 41)

The priority of this model, then, is to help students to develop their knowledge and understanding of points of reference where religious and secular identities or ideas may meet, and recognise the relationship or distinction between them.

Academic dialogue on religious literacy has recently emphasised the inclusion of secular life. Chan et al. (2021, 8) explain that this is because of the increasing emphasis on the social cohesion aims of religious literacy, combined with changing religious demographics. They explain that while early discussions of religious literacy focused solely on religion, now there is a greater awareness about the need to include 'spiritual' and non-religious groups. This advocates a realist understanding of the nature of religious demographics. Dinham and Francis (2015, 11) also propose that religious literacy should include non-religious 'identities' which are equally complex as religions. They maintain that religion should be prioritised, however.

A method of including secular views in religious literacy is Shaw's approach. Shaw (2020, 155) reframes the debate, arguing for the inclusion of the term 'worldviews' to the religious literacy agenda:

> 'R&W [religious and worldviews] literacy calls for a nuanced understanding of the complexity of 'unbelief' alongside that of religion – making sense of the religious and the secular and the complex relationship between them.'

Shaw further expands on the areas that are taken into account:

> 'Reflection on the categories 'religion', 'secularity' and 'worldview' and the relationship between them both at the level of the individual and as social, historical and political concepts, contributes to epistemic awareness.' (Ibid, 157)

Shaw advocates a certain critical mode of reflection. Like Moore, Shaw argues for a critical exploration of knowledge construction, representation of religious views and the power relationships embedded in representations of religion and worldviews.

Robertson (2022) advocates a similar approach. Robertson's perspective is situated in the U.K and aims to address the Higher Education sector. His viewpoints are also aimed to address how religious literacy is viewed across society. He is critical of approaches to religious literacy 'which may actually reinforce the idea of religion as a discreet or even *sui generis* aspect of life which requires special handling.' (Ibid, 480) Robertson then proposes 'religion literacy' as opposed to 'religious literacy', to 'challenge existing hegemonies' (Ibid, 481) Robertson argues that rather than 'knowledge about religions', his 'religion literacy' would involve 'knowledge about the idea of religion- what is classified as religion in any given context and the legal and social implications of that classification.' (Ibid) This would necessarily include aspects of non-religious worldviews and philosophies. It would identify key comparisons and contrasts between religious and non-religious identities.

Finally, Catto and Perfect (2015, 136) highlight the need to include secular views in religious literacy due to existing legislation. They examined six legal cases in England, in which the issues of religion and belief are central. These legal cases focused on discrimination, and the authors draw attention to the legal protection of non-religious beliefs:

> 'The "or belief" in the protected ground indicates that it is not only religious beliefs that are now protected in England and Wales. Belief in the importance of public broadcasting, against foxhunting, and in man-made climate change have all been considered qualifying beliefs in domestic cases, while political party membership has not (Sandberg, 2011). Such cases are indicative of the complex and fast-changing nature of the legal and social landscape in relation to religion or belief.'

Religious literacy is therefore regarded as important to ensure citizens are aware of these protections and understand the legal ramifications of religious and non-religious beliefs.

Religious literacy and the secular is therefore framed within contemporary understandings of religious and non-religious identities in Britain. This model seeks to include non-religious views in developing religious literacy and includes a critical dimension.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has critically engaged with the concept of religious literacy within the context of policy and practice. It has considered the views of prominent scholars to form a working definition of religious literacy, whilst recognising the complex complementary and contesting views that may exist. The framework of religious literacy proposed in this thesis is the working definition. This definition incorporated the models that were subsequently outlined. This chapter identified five common models of religious literacy: religious literacy and religion, religious literacy and cultural studies; religious literacy as a process; religious literacy and religious diversity; and religious literacy and the secular. These models are independent structures. However, some areas of overlap were discovered. These will be the lenses through which the Scottish Religious Education in Roman Catholic schools (RERC) curriculum will be critically examined later in this thesis.

The following two chapters will address the second research question: is religious literacy important in contemporary Britain?

CHAPTER 2: THE GLOBAL, BRITISH AND SCOTTISH RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

Introduction

There is a need to understand the 'real religious landscape', because 'grasping the shape of religion and belief is a key part of the religious literacy journey.' (Dinham and Francis, 2015, 13)

In this chapter, the global religious landscape will be explored first, allowing us to gain a comprehensive view of the worldwide contemporary situation. The chapter will present global religious affiliation statistics, including those who are unaffiliated to any religious tradition. Then, an analysis of the available British and Scottish religious demographics data will be carried out. The implications of the data and subsequent analysis for religious literacy, and particularly for Catholic schools, will then be explored.

2.1 Global Religious Landscape

The most recent PEW Research data (2017, 8) shows that global religious affiliation is estimated as follows:

Table 1: Global religious affiliation % (2015)

Religious affiliation	Percentage (%)
Christians	**31.2**
Muslims	**24.1**
Unaffiliated	**16.0**
Hindus	**15.1**
Buddhists	**6.6**
Folk religion	**5.7**
Other religions	**0.8**
Jews	**0.2**

Table 2: Number of people (2015) in billions. (Ibid)

Religious affiliation	Global Population (in billions)
Christians	**2.30**
Muslims	**1.80**
Unaffiliated	**1.20**
Hindus	**1.10**
Buddhists	**0.50**
Folk religion	**0.40**
Other religions	**0.10**
Jews	**0.01**

The data from **Table 1** and **Table 2** shows that across the world, those with no religion remain a minority. These statistics demonstrate that religion remains an important part of people's identity worldwide. Over 80% of the world (4 in 5 of the global population) are perceived to be religious from this analysis. This situation is expected to evolve throughout the decades that follow.

Table 3: Estimated percent change in population size, 2015-2060. (Ibid, 9)

N.b. Estimated growth in overall global population is 32%.

Religious affiliation	Percentage (%)
Muslims	70
Christians	34
Hindus	27
Jews	15
Folk religions	5
Unaffiliated	3
Other religions	0
Buddhists	-7

The global religious demographics are therefore forecast to change substantially during this century:

> '… by 2060, the count of Muslims (3.0 billion, or 31% of the population) will near the Christian count (3.1 billion, or 32%). Except for Muslims and Christians, all major world religions are projected to make up a smaller percentage of the global population in 2060 than they did in 2015.' (Ibid, 8)

Table 3 demonstrates that religion it is expected to survive, grow (in some areas) and change demographically in the upcoming decades. Islam is on course to be the world's largest religion if this growth continues towards the end of this century. Islam and Christianity are predicted to grow faster than the overall global population growth. However, the number of adherents to other religions are predicted to decline in real terms. Global religious demographics are thus in a transitional state.

Moreover, the growth of the unaffiliated is marginal compared to some major world religions. This is affirmed by the PEW data (2017, 10), which shows that the growth of the non-religious is expected to occur in the West, but not across the world:

> ‘By 2060, the unaffiliated population is expected to reach 1.2 billion. But as a share of all people in the world, religious “nones” are projected to decline from 16% of the total population in 2015 to 13% in 2060. While the unaffiliated are expected to continue to increase as a share of the population in much of Europe and North America, people with no religion will decline as a share of the population in Asia, where 75% of the world’s religious “nones” live.’

The population of the world will remain largely religious throughout this century. It is important, however, to acknowledge the context specific nature of religious demographics. There will remain predominantly religious societies in the world, particularly in areas like Africa, South America and the Middle East. There also exist growing secular parts of the world, such as large parts of Europe, North America and Asia. There are only a small number of countries worldwide which have more than 50% of the population who have no religious affiliation. (Woodhead, 2016, 252)

2.2 The context: secular Britain

Secularisation, in the form of declining religious belief and practice, is a key theme in the literature surrounding the religious landscape of Britain. There are other forms of secularism and secularisation, the main one being a primarily institutional form that is ‘typically understood as meaning a commitment to upholding the separation of church and state.’ (Kettel, 2019, 2) We will instead focus on the secularisation that relates to religious demographics.

Davie (2015, xi) contextualises two related contemporary issues that are ‘happening at once’:

> ‘On the one hand are the increasing levels of secularity, which lead, in turn, to an inevitable decline in religious knowledge as well as in religious belief. On the other is a series of increasingly urgent debates about religion in public life, prompted by the need to accommodate new populations, who bring with them very different ways of being religious.’

The decreasing religious affiliation in the West, communal and individual religious practice rates, and personal perspectives on morality and spirituality will be analysed in this chapter. Religious diversity in Britain will also be highlighted. The term 'diversity' will be used from hereon when discussing the religious landscape as opposed to 'pluralism.'

Woodhead (2016, 260), writing about the rise of the 'nones' (the now common shortened term in academia referring to those who have no religious affiliation), explains the religious landscape of the UK. She states that the U.K exists 'somewhere in-between—between Christian, multi-faith and 'none', so we cannot describe Britain as purely 'post- Christian' or straightforwardly non-religious.' (Ibid) Christianity is declining in the U.K and those who have no religious affiliation are growing demographically. (Woodhead, 2017, 251) High levels of atheism and agnosticism combined with comparatively low levels of religious identification and participation make the UK one of the most secular nations on earth today. (Zuckerman et al., 2016, 79)

2.3 The religious landscape of England/Wales and Scotland: data

This section will explore recent English, Welsh and Scottish official census data. These are important, as they are the most comprehensive set of data on religious affiliation that exists.

Another recent piece of data is the NatCen's *British Social Attitudes* survey. This research has been carried out since 1983 to measure and track changes in the population's social, political and moral attitudes. It is used in both policy and in the academy. It is a representative survey, and therefore is not as comprehensive as a national census. Only around 3000 people take part each year, demonstrating its limited nature.

A third important piece of data is the *Scotland's People Annual Report* (2019). This research has been carried out since 1999 to gather data on a range of topics, including social attitudes. 10,580 people took part in this survey, and therefore caution must be exercised when comparing this to Scotland's population of close to 5.3 million. (Scottish Government, 2015) The Government, along with academics and relevant charities, utilise this data.

There is a clear discrepancy when attempting to gain a comprehensive understanding of the 'real religious landscape' using census data. The Office for National Statistics released the data for the *Census 2021* (England and Wales) in November 2022. The *Scotland's Census 2022* was carried out in a different year from the rest of Britain for the first time since these records have been published since 1801. A direct and fair comparison between the nations of the British Isles is currently not possible. This section will also not compare Scotland with the final U.K territory Northern Ireland because of the significantly different religious, cultural and political landscape.[7] Our study will focus on the religious landscape of England, Wales and Scotland in the British Isles. This section will outline the most recent census data available.

Table 4: Census data from England/Wales (BBC (2003), ONS (2015) and ONS (2022))

England/Wales	**2001**	**2011**	**2021**
	%	**%**	**%**
Christian	71.75	59.30	46.20
Other Religion	5.73	8.40	10.70
None	14.81	25.10	37.20
No Answer	7.71	7.20	6.00

Table 4 shows that less than half of the population now identify as Christian in England and Wales for the first time in census records. There is a continuing trend of a decline of the Christian population. Christianity becoming a 'minority' religion was the headline figure in the mainstream British media when these figures were published. (Duncan et al., 2022) (Russell

[7] 80% of the Northern Ireland population stated they were Christian (42% Catholic and 38% Protestant) in the 2021 census, with 19% stating they had no religion or did not state their religion. Only 1% stated they were another religion. (NISRA, 2022)

and Farley, 2022) (Carey and Duncan, 2022) This change occurred alongside a non-religious 'surge.' (Humanists UK, 2022) The rise of the non-religious is a continuing trend.

In the *British Social Attitudes, 36* released in 2019, the data showed a slightly different perspective on the religious landscape. Only 38% of those surveyed identified as Christian, whereas 52% stated they had no religion. This demonstrates the reliability of census data over other social surveys, as these stats were not replicated in the census. It also shows that the rise of the 'nones' is not occurring at the rate as was expected. Over half of England/Wales identified as having a religion in the latest 2021 census. This had the potential to be key milestone in the religious demographics of Britain if over half of the population identified as having no religion. This may occur over the next decade. The data from the *BSA 36* did, however, portray an accurate portrait of the rise of other religions and the growth of religious diversity. (Curtice et al., 2019, 5). Religious diversity can also be linked with geography. There are pockets of religious and non-religious intensity around the UK. (Dinham and Francis, 2015, 120)

Data relating to the growth of the 'nones' shows a significant correlation between age and religious belonging. The authors of the *BSA* survey argue that Britain is becoming more secular because adults who identify as Christian are 'gradually being replaced in the population by unaffiliated younger people.' (Curtice et al., 2019, 5). Woodhead's study (2017, 251) corroborates this analysis. She explains that the most distinguishing mark of the 'nones' is their relative youthfulness. Woodhead compared those who identified as "Christian" and "no religion" in the youngest cohort (aged 18–24 years) with around 60 percent reporting "no religion" and 30 percent "Christian", and the oldest (aged 60 years and over) 'where the proportions are reversed.' Religious affiliation is therefore linked with age, then, as older generations are more likely to retain their religious belonging than younger generations.

The Scottish context from the latest available census data will now be explored.

Table 5: Detailed religious affiliation in Scotland (2001-2011 census data) (Scottish Executive (2005) and The Scottish Government (2015))

Religious Affiliation	**2001**	**2011**
	%	%
Church of Scotland	42.40	36.70
Roman Catholic	15.88	15.90
Other Christian	6.81	5.50
Buddhist	0.13	0.20
Hindu	0.11	0.30
Jewish	0.13	0.10
Muslim	0.84	1.40
Sikh	0.13	0.20
Another Religion	0.53	0.30
All Religions	**66.96**	**60.80**
No religion	**27.55**	**36.70**
Not Answered	5.49	7.00
All no religion / Not answered	33.04	43.70

Table 5 shows the Scottish context with the most recent census data (2011). Further analysis should be carried out upon the publication of the 2022 statistics.[8] The census data shows that the 'national' Scottish Church (Church of Scotland) is declining, along with other Christian denominations. A relevant point is that the Catholic population is roughly similar (with a

[8] Religious data is due to be released in Spring 2024. (Scotland's Census, 2023)

minimal increase). The number of those without a religion continues to grow and all other religions surveyed, aside from Judaism, have increased. This data shows that most of the Scottish population identify as belonging to a religion. The numbers of those identifying as belonging to another religion other than Christianity are low. Nonetheless, the statistics show that religious diversity is present in Scotland and this is gradually growing.

The religious landscape of the UK is different than it was thirty years ago. Large demographic changes in the UK are likely to continue, meaning that the religious landscape will continue to change in the future. (APPG, 2015, 4) Migration patterns that existed prior to Britain's exit of the European Union are now changing. Net migration of EU citizens is projected to decrease whilst figures for non-EU citizens is expected to continue to increase. (Sumption and Walsh, 2022) This has important implications for the sociology of religion. Citizens from other parts of the world may move to live in Britain and bring with them different religious belonging than has been the case in recent decades.

The multi-religious nature of Scottish society is now widely accepted and promoted by various individuals, groups, organisations and institutions. (Interfaith Scotland, 2018, 4) The Scottish Government does recognise this religious diversity, and state that they 'value Scotland's diverse faith and belief communities and the important role they play in making Scotland a safer, stronger and more inclusive society.' (The Scottish Government, N.d) An increasing number of initiatives have been put in place by the Scottish Government and other relevant bodies to respond positively to religious diversity. These include interfaith summits, Interfaith Week, Action of Churches Together Scotland, Islam Awareness Week, Holocaust Memorial Day and Srebrenica Memorial Day. (Ibid)

A final piece of data relating to the Scottish context will now be explored.

Table 6: 'Religious belonging' in Scotland. *Scotland's People Annual Report.* (The Scottish Government, 2019, 14)

Religious Affiliation	**2009**	**2019**
	%	**%**
None	40	56
Church of Scotland	34	20
Roman Catholic	15	13
Other Christian	8	8
Another religion	3	3

Table 6 follows a similar trajectory to the Scottish census data, with the Church of Scotland seeing a significant decrease in adherents. Likewise, the percentage of the Roman Catholic population remains roughly the same, with a marginal decrease. Importantly, those who identify as belonging to another religion or other Christian denomination is static. Because of this, it appears, the number of non-affiliates has changed the most. There is a substantial increase. Like the *BSA* survey, over 50% of those surveyed identified as having no-religion. This would be a significant moment in the sociology of religion in Scotland if this is verified in the 2022 census data. The data also shows similarities linking religious demographics with age. 7 in 10 adults aged 16-34 said that they did not belong to a religion and adults aged 60 or over were significantly more likely to belong to the Church of Scotland [the traditional national church of the country] than any other age groups. (Ibid)

Our focus will now turn towards contemporary Catholicism in Britain.

2.4 Bishops' Conference of Scotland data

Table 7: The Catholic Church in Scotland (Bishops' Conference of Scotland, 2020)

Estimated population of Scotland (2019)	5,463,300
Estimated Catholic population	705,500
Number of priests	592
Number of dioceses	8
Number of parishes	390
Baptisms in 2020	5,737
Marriages in 2020	1,019
Average weekly Mass attendance (2019)	127,300

The most recent data published from the Scottish Catholic Church's Bishops' Conference in **Table 7** is partially useful. The census data remains the prime source of evidence. However, the *BCoS* give a useful indication into the organisational elements of Scottish Catholicism (such as number of priests, dioceses and parishes) and scale of Catholic affiliation in Scotland (particularly Mass attendance). The data demonstrates that the sacraments of Baptism and Marriage were administered during the problematic COVID-19 pandemic. Places of worship in Scotland were closed for months, and then were able to re-open with continued social distancing measures and restrictions. It shows that there is a significant gap between the estimated Catholic population and those who attend weekly Mass. The statistics are further complicated by the move to online streaming of Mass and other liturgies. This is now common for Scottish Catholic parishes, after the necessary steps that were taken in early 2020. No such data exists which presents the number of Scottish Catholics who now stream Mass on the Internet. This data would be useful to gain a comprehensive understanding of Catholic identity in contemporary Scotland.

Mass attendance statistics, and further issues in Catholicism in Britain, will now be presented.

2.5 Contemporary Catholicism in Britain

This subsection will explore recent research into contemporary British Catholic practices, beliefs and attitudes. The main researchers in this field are Clements and Bullivant. A key problem that thinkers studying the sociology of Catholicism in Britain face is the lack of academic research in this area since Hornsby-Smith (1987), and thus no recurring studies to compare such data. (Clements and Bullivant, 2022, 385) Clements (2017a) points out, cautiously, that 'typically, Catholics constitute a small proportion of the sample for any social survey conducted in Britain.' Accordingly, 'they should be interpreted with that caveat in mind and be treated as indicative- not definitive.' The findings from recent research will now be presented, prefaced by this acknowledgement.

2.5.1 Catholic Mass attendance rates

Table 8: 'Typical Sunday' Mass attendance (000s) (Bullivant, 2019)

Year	England/Wales	Scotland
1960	1949	418
1970	1900	394
1980	1644	369
2000	1006	212
2008	919	186

Table 9: Frequency of Mass attendance in Britain and Scotland ((Clements, 2020) and *Catholics in Britain Survey 2019* (Clements and Bullivant, 2022)).

Frequency of Mass attendance	**Britain**	**Scotland**
	%	**%**
Weekly or more often	31	32
Fortnightly or monthly	10	11
Less often	25	27
Varies too much to say	6	10
Never	28	22

Bullivant's research in **Table 8** shows that there is a clear decline in regular communal worship among British Catholics. Consequently, **Table 9** shows that less than a third of Catholics in Britain surveyed attend Mass each week. The research showed that approximately 1 in 4 of those who identified as Catholic never attend Mass. Clements' (2017a) carried out further research into the socio-demographic factors associated with regular churchgoing. The main variable identified was age, as older Catholics are more likely to attend Mass. Education and qualifications were corroborated as a key variable in Church attendance from a previous study. Clements (2020) shows that those with a degree and advanced degrees were more likely to say they attend Mass regularly. Diversity in Catholic practice can therefore be apparent through age and educational experiences or attainment.

2.5.2 Catholic disaffiliation in Britain

Bullivant's (2019) seminal publication is a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative study that explores Catholic disaffiliation in both the U.S.A and Britain. Some of the key findings are as follows:

Table 10: Current religious affiliation of 'cradle Catholics' (Bullivant, 2019)

	Current affiliation (%)			
	Catholic	Other Christian	Non-Christian religion	No religion
Scotland	56	3	0	40
Britain total	56	5	1	38

Table 10 shows that over half of those who were raised Catholics in Britain remain so in adulthood (referred to as 'retainees'). The Scottish context is consistent with the whole of Britain's figures. There is a significant number of 'cradle Catholics' (those who were raised as Catholic) who now say they have no religion (around 2 in 5). Many young Catholics therefore do not retain their Catholic faith and identity into adulthood. This has implications for the philosophy of education in Catholic schools.

2.5.3 Catholic attitudes

Recent research on British Catholic attitudes includes abortion and euthanasia (Clements, 2014), faith schools (Clements, 2018), Pope Francis (Clements and Bullivant, 2020), morality and structural issues in the Church (Clements and Bullivant, 2021) and the faith commitment of young Catholics (Clements and Bullivant, 2022). Rosie (2022) then examined the previous research to compare this to the Scottish context.

An in-depth analysis of the available research is beyond this study, but some key analysis and conclusions can be made. A crucial point that can be derived is that the Catholic community in Britain is not homogeneous. Internal diversity has been found in personal attitudes. These are views that are often not in congruence with the view of the Catholic Church. Recent social surveys show that British Catholics have generally moved in a liberal direction on key social issues. (Clements, 2017b) Likewise, in ecclesial issues, Pope Francis' positive popularity only ranged between 50%-60% of those surveyed. The main conclusion that Clements and Bullivant's 'wide-ranging' study (2021) found was that [author's own emphasis in italics]:

> ‘Amongst Catholics in Britain, in aggregate terms, public opinion is very much in favour of liberal positions on social moral issues and of reforming access to the priesthood… *there was no issue on which the plurality or majority view was consistent with the Church’s social teachings*.’

The focus of these studies was to examine reasons or correlational factors that may contribute to internal Catholic diversity. The authors advocated a ‘multifaceted approach’ to measure personal religiosity.

This included: (1) beliefs (using a composite religious belief index, based on the following items: life after death; heaven; hell; purgatory; real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist; religious miracles; and the intercessory powers of the Saints). (2) Behaviour (how frequently one attends Mass and how frequently one prays). (3) Salience (the personal importance of religion in general and of the Catholic Church in particular).

Upon further study using this approach, they discovered that those British Catholics with higher religious engagement ‘decreased the likelihood’ that they would ‘take positions that dissent from the teachings of the Church.’ (Ibid, 600) Clements (2016) argued that it might be Catholics who are ‘nominal’ in their affiliation who are much less likely to defer to the institutional authority of their church. They are subsequently less often exposed to the teaching it provides. In the case of faith schooling, too, Catholics with more increased religiosity were more likely to show solidarity with *all* types of faith schooling, not just Catholic. This demonstrated a support of the ‘solidarity of the religious’ thesis. (Fetzer and Soper, 2003) Some members of the Catholic faith valued other forms of religious schooling. This is an indication of a point of harmony between religions.

To conclude, there is data that demonstrates internal diversity in British Catholicism. The evidence in the research also shows that the higher someone’s religious engagement is in the Catholic tradition, the more likely they are to have beliefs, practices and attitudes that are coherent with the view of the Church. Religiosity across Britain, beyond the Catholic tradition, will now be studied.

2.6 Religiosity in Britain

Understanding the religiosity of the British population is important to appreciate the religious landscape. Using the above 'multifaceted approach', a brief outline of the religiosity of Britain will be presented from the survey data: that of beliefs, behaviour and salience. Key findings from the *British Social Attitudes 2019* will be outlined.

2.6.1 Beliefs

The data shows that around half of the population (55%) expressed 'some sort of belief in some kind of God' (Curtice et al., 2019, 11). This has declined from 72% in 1998. The data shows an 'increase in the number of people who are confident atheists: from 10% in 1998 to 18% in 2008 and then 26% in 2018.' The number of those considered agnostic in their response to God's existence has remained steady.

With reference to other religious beliefs, these are also a decline from 1998. 42% surveyed in 2019 believe in life after death (50% in 1998); 37% believe in heaven (45% in 1998), 26% believe in hell (27% in 1998); and 26% believe in religious miracles (32% in 1998). There are also 20% who believe in incarnation, 8% believe in nirvana and 16% believe in supernatural powers of ancestors. These beliefs were not sampled in 1998. (Ibid, 13)

This range of responses to beliefs shows there is a significant level of personal choice involved in religious beliefs in Britain. These do not directly correlate with one another, nor do these beliefs align with the demographics of religious affiliation in the country. For example, whilst over half of those surveyed expressed that they had no religious affiliation, over half did nonetheless state some form of belief in God. This seems to lend weight to the view that religion is experiencing a 'consumer culture' (Turner, 2012, 135) which suggests certain aspects of religions and beliefs are being chosen, whilst other parts are rejected or neglected.

2.6.2 Behaviour

Table 11: Attendance at religious services, 1998-2018. *British Social Attitudes 36* (Curtice et al., 2019, 9).

	1998	**2008**	**2018**
How often attends religious services	**%**	**%**	**%**
Once a week or more	12	10	11
At least once in two weeks	2	2	2
At least once a month	5	6	5
Less often than once a month	19	19	13
Never or practically never	48	50	43
No religion and not brought up in a religion	11	12	23

Table 11 shows a different trend to the data on religious demographics thus far. This is because there remain similar levels of religious practice in 2018 as there was over 20 years ago in Britain. This demonstrates that whilst the number of those who never attend communal religious services is at 66% (2 in 3), there is a resilience among the numbers of those who do practice.

The editors of the Survey also draw attention to prayer. They highlight the 'convenient nature' of personal prayer, in contrast to communal worship. The findings from the study showed that only half of people claim to ever pray (49% as compared to 56% in 2008 and 67% in 1998) (Ibid) Personal prayer decreasing to less than half of those surveyed is an important indication of the decrease in the personal spirituality of the population. This is in line with the decreasing religious affiliation of the country. More people pray than attend religious services. Religious identity is thus more nuanced than using any one indicator, such as census affiliation or attendance at religious services.

Linked to this, Davie's (1990) and (1994) research on 'Believing without Belonging' (retaining personal religious beliefs without affiliating to a communal religion) played a role in understanding the changing British religious sociology. Woodhead (2017, 256) explains an important point from her related research:

> 'As for religious practices, again my surveys reveal diversity. A quarter of nones report taking part in some kind of personal religious or spiritual practice in the course of a month, like praying. What they absolutely don't do is take part in communal practices like worship.'

The statistical decline of attendances at religious services or self-designated affiliation does not necessarily mean the rejection of spirituality. This aspect of the religious landscape supports an opposing view to the narrative of secularisation.

Post-secularism will now be addressed.

2.6.3 Post-secularism

Woodhead (2016, 260) also argues that although belief in God is declining, 'there are some beliefs, including belief in a soul and an afterlife, which are still growing.' Her view is that:

> '…it may well be that the most important long-term influences playing out in "no religion" are a combination of liberal Protestantism and Romanticism sifted and reworked in the context of democracy, pluralism, and consumer capitalism.'

This views the genesis of the secular landscape of Britain as being rooted in versions of Christianity that have been adapted to secular modernity. Post-secularism in this context refers to a dynamic relationship between religion and the secular/modern world, rather than a dichotomy or binary. (Hotam and Wexler, 2014)

Post-secularity may also appear in different ways in different societal contexts. Examples include the transformation of orthodox religiosity in one context, theocratic revolutions in another, and the proliferation of new age spirituality. (Fischer et al., 2012, 274) The PEW

global religious landscape data lends support to this understanding, as religions are thriving elsewhere in the world while Britain is becoming less religious.

2.6.4 Salience

Finally, the results of the *BSA* survey show a somewhat negative perspective of religion from the British public. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the British public agree that religions bring more conflict than peace (28% "strongly agree", 35% "agree") – while only 13% disagree (10% "disagree", 3% "strongly disagree"). (Ibid, 16) 52% of those who are religious strongly agree and 74% of those without a religion share the same view. The findings that over half of religious people surveyed associate religion with conflict shows the enduring association of religion with the violence of Islam in particular, which will be explored in chapters to follow.

Confidence in religious institutions has fallen over the last two decades: '54% had some degree of confidence in 1998, falling to 50% in 2008, then 46% in 2018.' (Curtice et al., 2019, 10) The survey links this with:

> '…public exposure of abuse scandals and their handling by churches, coupled with a tendency to associate religious organisations with controversial positions on gender, marriage, sexuality, abortion, and so on.' (Ibid)

The survey also gauged popular opinion of members from different religions (Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Jews). A point of note is that atheists/non-believers were also included. The only group to score over half being viewed 'positive' was Christian (51%). The other groups' popularity ranged between 30-40%, with Muslims being the least positive. The author recommends further study into the reasons why over half of the population surveyed identified as having no religion, yet this group scored less than 40% in popularity.

The implications for the data that has been analysed in this chapter will now be considered.

2.7 Implications of the religious landscape for religious literacy

The focus for our working definition of religious literacy in chapter 1 was in three areas: (a) the phenomenon of religion, (b) the diversity of religious truth claims, and (c) our contemporary culture. This section will outline how the range of data above has implications for these topics.

2.7.1 The phenomenon of religion

The data has shown that religion still exists in Britain. Christianity remains the largest religion despite having a continuing decline in adherents. In the official census data from England, Wales and Scotland, over half of the populations identify as religious. The consequences are that religion is deemed an important part of most of the population's identity. It therefore should be considered an important topic to study.

Religion should, however, be presented in a way that acknowledges the historical importance of Christianity, alongside the realist understanding that Christianity is declining. The study of religion should include non-religious identities that are increasing, in addition to other religious beliefs and identities that are also growing. Religion should also be taught in a way that considers the global landscape, too. The global landscape demonstrated a predominantly religious world.

The data also means that citizens' religious experience, exposure to religious language and immersion into the beliefs and practices of Christianity, which were once wholly customary in British life, should no longer be assumed. The cultural significance of Christianity is declining, and so religious literacy that relates to Christianity cannot assume any prior knowledge or experience from citizens. The impact, then, is that Christianity may need to be presented as entirely new to the learner. Moreover, many members of society do not view religion positively. Religious literacy may offer the opportunity to portray religious traditions in a more positive manner, to offer balance to this phenomenon.

2.7.2 The diversity of religious truth claims

The steady growth of religious diversity in Britain means that it is becoming more likely that citizens will encounter people that have different religious beliefs, practices, attitudes and

moral frameworks than themselves. This has implications for religious literacy, as religions that were once marginal in British society are slowly increasing. Learning about these growing religions may be a way of breaking down socio-religious barriers and overcoming ignorance.

Another important piece of evidence from the data was internal religious diversity. This means that religions in Britain should not be presented as homogeneous structures, but rather presented in such a way that shows that internal diversity may be present in beliefs, practices and attitudes. These may differ from the official beliefs, practices and voices from religions themselves.

2.7.3 The contemporary culture

A final concluding point from the data is that religious beliefs, spirituality and practice have all shown evidence of being fluid in Britain. There is not a clear correlation between these, as those who identify as religious may not believe all the beliefs of their religion, or practice in a way that their religion officially requires. Moreover, those who do not identify as religious may retain some form of personal religious beliefs or spiritual practices. From this, a critical religious literacy that focuses on personal religious beliefs, practices and spirituality would be necessary to understand the nuanced nature of religious identity.

2.8 Implications of the religious landscape for Catholic schools in Scotland

There were two key relevant conclusions from the data that are applicable to Catholic schools in Scotland. The first is the religious demographics, and secondly, the internal diversity in British Catholicism.

2.8.1 Religious demographics

The Scottish religious demographics demonstrate that Catholic schools in Scotland should prepare young people to encounter religious diversity in the society that they live in. The ramifications are that whilst Catholic schools present a particular vision of the world, Catholic

schools in Scotland exist in a religiously diverse context and thus should engage with this wider diverse culture.

The demographics also shows that Catholic schools may be becoming more religiously diverse, as religious demographics are changing across Scotland. This means that young people in Catholic schools in Scotland may have a wide array of spiritual needs that have to be considered, across their whole schooling experience, in addition to their learning needs. As young people are now more commonly non-religious, too, then the Catholic school should show a particular sensitivity to this trend.

2.8.2 Internal diversity in British Catholicism

The data demonstrated a wide range of issues in which diversity was present among Catholics in Britain. Diversity was evident among adults who took part in surveys. The religious upbringing of young Catholics who attend Catholic schools may include this diversity. Teachers, then, should not assume uniformity of Catholic beliefs, practices and attitudes from the Catholic young people that they teach. This indicates that teaching about Catholicism may also need to be presented in a more nuanced manner, by presenting or acknowledging the contemporary diversity within the tradition. It also shows that certain liturgical practices such as Mass, or Catholic cultural references, terms, definitions or language, may not be familiar to the Catholic young people in their care.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown that religious literacy is important in contemporary Britain due to the increase in secularisation, combined with growing religious diversity. The chapter has presented the religious landscape of Britain, with a particular focus on Scotland. It has also presented the global religious demographics. Its key findings have been the growing secularity of Britain, in contrast with the growing religiosity across the world. It has demonstrated that a wide array of religious diversity, both internal and external, exists in Britain. It finally showed that these key issues have implications for both the development of religious literacy and the context of Catholic schools in Scotland.

The thesis will now explore more sociology of religion to address the second research question: is religious literacy important in contemporary Britain?

CHAPTER 3: WHY TAKE A RELIGIOUS LITERACY APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

Introduction

This chapter will present five primarily sociological reasons for promoting religious literacy and advocating a religious literacy approach to Religious Education. These will be based on social cohesion; addressing stereotypes; the need for religious literacy in workplace and service providers; responding to deficiencies in religious literacy and the harmful implications of religious illiteracy in conventional and social media. The relationship between religious literacy and school-based R.E in Catholic schools will also be considered.

3.1. Social Cohesion: beyond mere 'tolerance'

A prime motive for promoting religious literacy stems from social cohesion. There is a growing consensus in both the academy and among policymakers that religious literacy is vital for peaceful co-existence in religiously diverse, yet secular, contemporary Western democracies. There is an argument that there is an 'urgent need' for greater religious literacy because globalisation has widened communities and broken barriers down across the world. (Taylor, 2009)

Stewart et al. (2022) propose a social theory named the philosophy of Covenantal Pluralism. They outline where their of vision *Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy* (CCRL) applies, by locating this in the context of Western societies. The socio-religious context they identify involves globalisation, increasing migration (owing to geopolitical crises) and growing multiculturalism. Furthermore, they identify 'divisive trends' that exist, such as violent extremism, religious and ethnic nationalism, cultural polarisation, scapegoating of minorities, and restrictions on religion. (Ibid, 21) In this context, then, they propose a 'realistic socio-political aspiration', that:

> '…offers a holistic vision of citizenship that emphasises both legal equality and neighbourly solidarity. That is, it calls both for a constitutional order characterised by equal rights and responsibilities and a culture of engagement characterised by relationships of mutual respect and protection.'

Their vision of *CCRL* has implications for governments and citizens in society. Covenantal pluralism is religious literacy in practice through a form of solidarity across religious traditions. It therefore places understanding the religious identity of *the other* as the fundamental characteristic of being religiously literate. This form of solidarity is an aspiration for the present day and the future.

The authors propose three main reasons why their vision of religious literacy demands more than religious 'tolerance'. The first reason is that to frame the imperative of granting '"tolerance" can suggest a posture of privilege, even condescension. No one wants merely to be "tolerated," as if their presence is only grudgingly and tenuously accepted within the socio-political order.' (Ibid, 25) Second, appeals for tolerance 'can reveal an alarming degree of religious illiteracy.' Tolerance can 'at times be indicative of oversimplified, if not outright naïve, assumptions regarding the very nature of religion and religious differences.' (Ibid, 26) The third and 'arguably most significant problem with mere tolerance is that it is too easily coupled with indifference.' (Ibid)

Religious 'tolerance' is therefore problematic, as it can be based upon superficial understandings of religion and religious identity. It may also inhibit peaceful co-existence due to the perceived imbalance of power inherent in 'tolerance', between the one, or group, who grants the tolerance; and the one, or group, being granted tolerance.

Religious learning that has tolerance as its goal may therefore be inadvertently contributing to a lack of social cohesion. Instead of this, a worthy aspiration would be to utilise the rationale that underpins *CCRL*, which aims for mutual respect, equal rights and responsibilities, and engagement across religious and secular traditions.

3.2 Overcoming stereotypes, stigma and bigotry

Promoting religious literacy is also advocated as a mechanism to overcome religious stereotypes, stigma and bigotry. There is a perceived gap between the significance of religion in current events and the prominence of religious understanding and integration into comprehensive analysis and decision-making. (Sedaca, 2022, 206) Crucially, there is a notable focus on Islam. Prothero and Kerby (2015, 67) highlight that the tragedies of 9/11 resulted in Islam being at the forefront of public conscience. Islam has been heavily scrutinised in Western democracies because of war, conflicts and violent incidents across the world during the past two decades. This scrutiny of Islam has not always been carried out in a fair and truly representative manner. Such analysis also fails to grasp the geopolitical nature of war, instead opting to focus solely on theological bases.

The U.K Government has faced criticisms for the actions taken in response to violent events in the name of Islam:

> 'Government responses to Islamic violence have frequently tended to portray the actions of a few terrorists claiming Islamic justifications as representative of a 'bad Islam'. The government, in response, seeks to engage with 'good Muslims', a discourse that further hardens the public recognition of a good/ bad distinction within Islam and of religion more broadly.' (Francis and van Eck Duymaer van Twist, 2015, 116)

These binaries are deemed to have resulted from 'a lack of religious literacy at the level of understanding the categories themselves.' (Ibid) UK Government responses have included the 'Prevent Strategy.' Local Muslim communities have faced problems because of this:

> '…there was a growing climate of suspicion between the police and Muslim communities that was feeding a widespread perception that Muslims were not welcome in British society.' (Barnes and Smith, 2015, 92)

This policy has subsequently been accompanied by statutory guidance, *Prevent duty guidance.* The resulting problems and potentially prejudicial consequences from this policy are now more nuanced. (Thomas, 2020) However, the policy remains in place and still faces criticisms for its effects. (Nezirevic, 2022)

The oversimplification and generalisation of Islam at U.K Government level has therefore contributed to stereotypes that have directly harmed the life-experience of citizens. This has occurred for over a decade, and problems still arise from this. It shows that religious tensions that can be inadvertently fuelled by policy may continue over a significant period. As a result, education towards religious literacy could mitigate these problems and support individuals who are appointed to future government leadership roles to possess a better level of religious literacy. Policies that future governments enact could therefore contribute to better social cohesion, rather than stigma and exclusion.

Moreover, attitudes that perpetuate religious stereotypes, stigma and bigotry have also been found to be present in young people in Britain. The *RE and good community relations* report (APPG, 2014) discovered that there was evidence of a link between religion and bullying in schools[9], manifested in several ways, including 'intolerance of religiosity.' Religious identity was deemed acceptable (such as being a Christian), 'as long as that didn't include attendance at church.' This shows that religious commitment and behaviour is perceived to be 'odd.' There is a need, therefore, to 'normalise' religious behaviour and reduce prejudice that arises from this. (Miller, 2014) As such, religious literacy could help young people to comprehend the multidimensional nature of religious identity, of which religious practices are inherent.

Religious stereotypes are also present in Scotland. They accompany the historical socio-religious issue of sectarianism in Scotland. This primarily intra-Christian problem can be described as 'attitudinal sectarianism', which is sectarian attitudes that may, or may not, be well formulated and articulated. (McKinney, 2008, 38). The research of McKinney et al. (2021, 20) shows evidence of sectarian attitudes particularly among young Catholics. In addition:

> 'Such denominational sectarianism may be exacerbated by a more general suspicion of religious diversity, with 33% of Catholic pupils unable to affirm that all religious groups in Britain should have equal rights and 29% of Catholic pupils unable to affirm that we must respect all religions.'

The research therefore showed negative bias from young Catholics towards those of a different religious tradition to them, in addition to those from other Christian denominations. This

[9] In a 2012 survey, young people who agreed with the statement that at school 'I am bullied because of my religion' included 42% of Sikh pupils, 32% of Jewish pupils, 23% of Muslim pupils and 11% of Christian pupils. (Miller, 2014) There is a lack of contemporary available data on this topic. It would be useful and insightful if further research was able to explore this in contemporary British schools.

attitudinal issue was identified as part of a 'wider problem generated by the public visibility of religious diversity within an increasingly secular society.' (Ibid) Research of wider U.K attitudes towards religion was explored in the previous chapter.

A key finding illustrates the problematic nature of sectarianism:

> 'Pupils who do not value their religious identity (as Catholics), who do not engage in public religious practice (church attendance) and who do not engage in personal religious practice (prayer) hold more sectarian attitudes.' (Ibid, 19)

This correlation highlights that those who are active, engaged and value their religious identity are more likely to possess a level of [Christian] religious formation that may help them to have the necessary emotional, linguistic and empathic capacities to live in a religiously diverse society. Those who nominally identify as Catholic may therefore have a deficient religious literacy. Providing young Catholics with a religious literacy approach to their Religious Education can be a tool to help reduce sectarian attitudes. Learning about religion is no guarantee that religious bigotry will cease, but it will make it more difficult for it to be unwittingly reproduced and promoted. (Moore, 2007)

3.3 Religious literacy for workplaces and services

Another argument for religious literacy is for social cohesion in workplaces and from service providers. Religious literacy is 'arguably useful, if not essential, for a wide range of professionals who work to support the full participation of community members in civic society.' (Crisp, 2015, 208) An example of this is healthcare. Chan and Sitek's (2021, 117) research on practitioners and patients in the U.S.A and Canada showed that religious literacy is 'needed for all practitioners who offer client-centred care for their clients' bio-psycho-social-spiritual well-being, as well as their own.' Consequently, they propose that:

> 'Religious literacy can offer the knowledge, language, skills, attitudes, and perspectives to understand clients, perceive nuances, and support the practitioner themselves.' (Ibid)

Healthcare is a service that is accessed by many in society throughout their lifetime. Particularly in the U.K, as most healthcare services are free at the point of delivery, there is a wide diversity of citizens who access these (across age boundaries and socioeconomic or religious backgrounds, for example). Having a religiously literate healthcare service workforce can therefore support the wellbeing of citizens in a more holistic manner. Educating for religious literacy in schools can support this goal for the future.

Welfare is also identified as an important motivation for religious literacy. Dinham's chapter (2015) maps the introduction of the Welfare state in the U.K post- Second World War. Prior to this, religious communities and organisations played a vital role in welfare provisions in society. This change in dynamic, 'accidentally silenced religion and the religious sensibility as the primary language of care.' (Ibid, 110) The current situation, he identifies, is a 'mixed economy of welfare', as a range of religious groups are at the 'heart of the public sphere.' As the need for welfare grows in the U.K, and the state provision lessens, religious groups are supporting those most in need. Furthermore, Langston Bombino and Carlston-Theis (2022, 249) argue that there are public misunderstandings 'regarding the scope, variance, structure, and impact of institutional religious contributions to community well-being'. They found that faith-based organisations 'play extensive and vital roles in the network of organisations that serve persons, families, and communities.' Dinham (2015, 110) describes this phenomenon as a 'conundrum for religious literacy'. He thus believes there is an 'urgent need to re- skill its public professionals and citizens for the daily encounter with the full range of religious plurality.' (Ibid)

This subsection shows that professionals and the wider public need religious literacy to discern the ways in which religious communities and organisations support those who are most in need in the U.K today. This, in turn, could help to dispel negative attitudes towards religions. School-based R.E is an available space to address this. Religious communities could be understood in a more positive way and allow for a more comprehensive understanding of what it means for religious believers to practice their faith. Religiosity extends outside the confines of a place of worship.

Finally, religious literacy has implications for employability. The RE Commission's *RE for All interim report* suggests that 'religious literacy is key to employability in modern Britain (CoRE, 2017, 24)'. There are thus opportunities for religious literacy to fit in the wider national

Scottish education framework initiatives. The *SQA skills framework* (Scottish Qualifications Authority, N.d) outlines 5 key *Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work.* Three of which readily link to religious literacy: Health and wellbeing, Employability, enterprise and citizenship, and thinking skills.

Religious literacy could also form meaningful links with the *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW) initiative. This 'aims to prepare learners for their future pathways and the transition into the world of work.' (Education Scotland, 2022) Part of this includes schools and education establishments taking into account 'the challenges young people face in entering a rapidly changing economic, technological and environmental reality when planning their future pathways. (CLD)' (Ibid) Young adults will enter increasingly religiously diverse post-school leavers' destinations in Scotland. Thus, religious literacy could provide them with the knowledge, skills and empathy to understand the religious and personal identity of their colleagues.

This subsection has shown that religious literacy is applicable to a range of employment and workplaces. There are opportunities to integrate religious literacy alongside existing Scottish educational initiatives. This could support young people to develop the skills and attributes that are necessary for religiously diverse workplaces in Scotland.

3.4 Religious illiteracy in the U.K

Another prevalent theme in the literature is that there is a religious literacy deficit in the West. Scholars refer to this as 'religious illiteracy' (Conroy, 2015) (Moore, 2015) (Prothero and Kerby, 2015) Religious illiteracy means:

> '… the confusion of parts and wholes, where partial understanding or explanation inclines to mis-representation and mis-understanding.' (Conroy, 2015, 171)

This 'illiteracy' may manifest itself in several ways. This often means that 'differences [across religions] are framed as unimportant, and similarities, based upon assumptions about the true

nature of religion, are pronounced.' (Fuller, 2022, 109) Moreover, there can be questionable 'universal claims' in discourse about religion such as 'Islam is a religion of peace' or 'Judaism and Islam are incompatible.' (Moore, 2007) On the other hand, religious literacy involves 'question the accuracy of these', which helps to 'deepen discourse about religion in the public sphere.' (Ibid)

The level of religious literacy (or illiteracy) in the U.K today is hard to ascertain due to a lack of available data, although there appears an urgency to promote religious literacy to respond to this recognised deficiency. (APPG, 2015, 4) (Dinham and Francis, 2015)

Prothero (2015, 55) points to the Pew *Research on Religion & Public Life* (2010) research. The main finding this was that 'Americans, for all their religiosity, know very little about their own religions, and even less about those of their neighbours'. However, no such data exists for religious literacy in the U.K. The consensus among scholars is that there exists a deficient level of religious literacy. However, this chapter demonstrates that these are context specific and do not give a detailed account for the British or Scottish populations. More research in this area is essential to understanding the true extent of religious literacy today. One such statistic was provided by the *State of the Nation* report (Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 2017, 5), that approximately 800,000 pupils leave school in England with a lack of religious literacy. This refers to schools not adhering to Religious Education provision, however. Schools with a religious character were found to provide more Religious Education than those without. The provision of Religious Education is therefore deemed vital in the process of responding to religious illiteracy.

The causes of religious illiteracy are considered varied. For Moore (2015, 37), this stems from 'Enlightenment definitions of secularism that spread widely through colonialism and remain deeply embedded in cultures throughout the globe.' The APPG (2015, 4) agreed that secularism has significantly contributed to decreasing religious literacy, in addition to the 'ongoing structural failings in the provision of school-based RE.' Conroy's view (2015) is that practice within the school curricular area of R.E has contributed to deficient religious literacy, although his local study of schools would need to be re-examined and carried out on a larger, national scale to confirm this. It is not possible, either, to use National Qualifications results in Religious Studies (England) or RMPS (Scotland) as a guide. Their value towards promoting religious literacy has been questioned (Conroy, 2015). There is also varying uptake (and provision) of the certificated subject in schools across the country. Conroy's research found there was

evidence that teachers of nationally certificated R.E 'elide difficult or challenging questions' in the classroom, on the grounds that 'taking time out to explore these would militate against examination success.' (Ibid, 174) This 'facile coaching' towards examination success is an obstacle to promoting authentic religious understanding. Religious Education was also cited as contributing to religious illiteracy by the APPG:

> '…the religion that features in RE classes is often religion as framed by the preoccupations of secular public discourses, such as fundamentalism, science versus religion, or religion and medical ethics.' (Miller, 2017)

The parliamentary group argued that 'what is missing is religion as practised by individuals and communities', the lived reality or 'religiosity'. A multidimensional religious literacy approach to R.E could thus be a remedy to this religious illiteracy.

There are harmful implications of religious illiteracy. It can 'exacerbate fissures within democracies and fan flames of bigotry and hate.' (Mason, 2020, 86) It is also viewed as a threat to the safety of religious minorities. Amarasingam et al. (2021, 137) argue that Muslims suffer particularly because of religious illiteracy. They argue that religious minorities suffer on 'the level of judiciaries and legislative bodies.' (Ibid) This can be governmental discrimination against religious minorities, or through governmental regulation or social restrictions on religion. They conclude that this contributes to 'further persecution' and 'greater marginalisation' of religious minorities. (Ibid) In response to this, the authors make two key points: that firstly, education offers a potential solution to religious illiteracy. Secondly, however, it should be acknowledged that 'understanding the particularities of religious illiteracy according to a particular context represents a critical area of study, such that future interventions may be relevant.' (Ibid) This reaffirms the need for further research to be carried out to recognise the extent of religious illiteracy in local and national communities today. This thesis is locating religious literacy in the Scottish educational context.

3.5 Religious illiteracy in conventional and social media

3.5.1 Conventional media

Religious illiteracy can have ramifications for communication that surrounds religion in conventional mass media (news, TV and printed press outlets) and social media. The APPG (2015, 4) draw attention to the reality that:

> 'On a public or institutional level, religious illiteracy can lead to media stories which perpetuate stereotypes, are inaccurate, or foster suspicion and government policies which damage relations between particular religious groups and the wider society.'

Wakelin and Spencer (2015, 235) conclude from their research that 'religious literacy is needed in the media.' They explore the changing methods of reporting about religion in the BBC since the 1990s, which they argue has been to the detriment of fair and accurate portrayals of religion. Additionally, they draw attention to print media and its relationship with religious illiteracy, and argue that 'religious specialists in broadsheet journalism are few and far between.' They highlight that 'social, cultural and political specialists' carry out much of religious affairs reporting. (Ibid, 231) Religious literacy is therefore important for those involved in publishing about religion. There is also a need for more journalists to specialise in religious reporting in public life.

Reports about Islam have been used as evidence of religious illiteracy in the media. Articles written about Islam since 9/11 have often:

> '…contributed to false impressions and stereotypes of Muslims, stoking anti-Muslim bigotry and hate that resulted in an uptick in violent attacks and aggression against U.S. Muslims or people mistakenly identified as Muslim.' (Mason, 2020, 81)

These provocative pieces have not been written by journalists who specialise in religious affairs. They display evidence of religious illiteracy. This trend in the U.S.A parallels Britain. Francis and van Eck Duymaer van Twist (2015, 113) point towards the hyper-focus on the perceived 'sinister' side of religion in media reporting:

> '…the media has often focused on ways in which religion has been a threat to society, often at the expense of the positive and constructive contributions of faith-based communities and organisations.'

The negative media attention given to religions, to the neglect of any positive appraisals, may contribute to religious illiteracy and increase further tensions. This is due to the reality that the only information citizens may receive about religions is from mass media. This information is often about religious problems, tensions, controversies or conflicts that occur. There remains a balance to be found, then. Better religious literacy 'does not preclude criticism of religion', but it should 'ensure that criticism is better informed, researched and evidenced.' (Wakelin and Spencer, 2015, 235) Educating towards religious literacy could support this endeavour.

Finally, MacDairmid (2021) points to a key problem: the media may not want to reform. He argues that a 'large percentage of the media may not want to produce content that is more moderate and sensitive to religions, because extreme depictions of religions tend to sell more copies.' Therefore, religious literacy may need to be promoted from outside media outlets to help citizens navigate the information about religion that they receive from the conventional mass media outlets. School education is a prime location to support this goal.

3.5.2 Social Media

Religious illiteracy can also have implications for social media. Henry (2021, 90) argues that discussions of religion have changed because of social media platforms:

> 'In the disintermediated selection process, independent content creators with a significantly large enough audience on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms can unearth and amplify particular stories into the public's consciousness without the help of media gatekeepers.'

There are significant implications for religious literacy because of this changing communications landscape. Stereotypes can be manifested and perpetuated through social media. Henry further explains that as false narratives about religion spread, 'this rapid spread of mis- and disinformation on social media threatens the advancement of religious literacy.' Müller and Schwarz's (2023) study corroborates this. Evidence showed that there was a correlation between the publishing of anti-Muslim posts on Twitter and an increase in hate crimes offline in the following days. This demonstrates that religious illiteracy manifested on social media can provoke and amplify intolerance, which can lead to religious tensions,

discrimination and hate crimes. Religious literacy, from this perspective, is seen as an antidote to these social problems:

> '…the advancement of religious literacy on social media platforms must involve scholars and teachers taking on the role of "strategic amplifiers," agents that amplify content that promotes religious literacy while being aware of the challenges these platforms present.' (Henry, 2021, 89)

Henry believes it is the responsibility of scholars and teachers to be at the forefront of promoting religious literacy that seeks to combat the spread of religious intolerance on social media. There are potential barriers and obstacles to be overcome.

Data from a recent YouGov poll demonstrates the varying extent to which the British population receive their news, across age and generational boundaries. Some selected data shows the divergence in how the British population access information:

Table 12: How Brits get their news. (YouGov, 2023)

News sources	**All**	**Aged 18-24**
	%	**%**
National or regional TV news	71	37
National, regional or local newspapers	18	12
News websites	41	29
Social media	27	52

These statistics show evidence of a complex mix of how adults stay informed with contemporary news and events. Young adults are more likely to receive their news from digital sources than the general population. Social media is the primary source that young adults stay informed about current events. This has implications for R.E and educators. First, it involves the quality (or lack thereof) of information about religions and worldviews that are instantly available to students. Secondly, that teachers may lack familiarity with such media. (R.E

Council England and Wales, 2017, 4) Religious literacy and digital media are becoming inextricably linked.

Culham's St Gabriel's Trust (2022) outline the relevance to RE. They draw attention to points that could be raised with pupils about the importance of accurate media reporting. They outline test criteria for selecting media-based resources to share with pupils:

> 'How far does this text / clip / image reflect lived experience of religion? Is this headline fair, balanced and appropriate? Would any groups or individuals have cause for complaint about it?'

Additionally, the Trust outlines how 'curriculum developers and teachers could translate some of the recommendations into their own practice.' This includes:

> 'How can we reflect the 'lived experience' of religion, as well as its doctrinal, ritual, and ceremonial elements, in curriculum plans and lessons? How can we ensure that curriculum plans, and lessons, cover religions and non-religious worldviews in fair, balanced and appropriate ways? Would any groups or individuals have cause for complaint about our curriculum plans or lessons?'

Religious literacy in schools is applicable, therefore, to teachers, curriculum designers and for young people studying R.E. Teachers of R.E need religious literacy that is continuously developed. A religious literacy approach could also allow young people to navigate information about religion found in conventional and social media in an *informed, intelligent, and sensitive manner* (Wright, 1993, 73). This could also help young people to understand what a true representation of a faith tradition is, and what represents the lived experience of believers today.

3.6 The perspective of the Catholic Dicastery for Culture and Education

'Religious literacy' is not part of the Catholic Church's lexicon. It does not appear in any of the documents published by the Congregation for Catholic Education, which is now part of the Dicastery for Culture and Education since June 2022. These documents range from

Gravissimum Educationis (Pope Paul VI, 1965) published after the Second Vatican Council to the most recent *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022). In these papers, the Church has paid relatively little attention to Religious Education as a distinct subject area in Catholic schools. The Congregation has paid more attention to 'wider cultural and identity issues which surround Catholic education.' (Franchi and Robinson, 2018) 'Only one document, issued in 2009, deals specifically with RE.' (Ibid) This is the *Circular Letter.*

There is one reference in the documents, however, to a *lack of* religious literacy. In *Educating Today and Tomorrow* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014), discussing pastoral challenges (in section 'g') the Congregation states:

> 'A growing number of young people are drifting away from the institutional Church. Religious ignorance or illiteracy are rising. Catholic education is an unglamorous mission. How can students be educated to exercise their freedom of conscience and take a stance in the immense domain of values and beliefs in a globalised society?'

This is in the context of 'deculturation' of Catholic educators and pupils. This very brief and sole reference to religious illiteracy therefore shows that the Church is aware that religious literacy is decreasing. Placing this in the context of 'pastoral challenges' suggests that this is not a positive trend. Therefore, it could be argued that the Church recognises the importance of religious literacy but does not outline what religious literacy is, the extent to which religious literacy is important or why this is so.

It is possible to speculate why this may be. The academic focus of religious literacy has been primarily from the U.K and the U.S.A. The focus is often in the Anglophone world, not the global or Italian educational arenas. This is vital, as Italian is the 'working language' of the Roman Curia.' (Franchi, 2018, 403) Church teaching on Religious Education is translated from Italian to English and can display 'a lack of conceptual consistency (in English) regarding key terms.' (Ibid)

An important and relevant point is raised in several Congregation documents: professional and pedagogical development in Catholic schools. First, that Catholic educators should be:

> '…very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world.' [Gravissimum Educationis] (Pope Paul VI, 1965, 8)

Moreover:

> '…the continuous rapid transformation that affects man and today's society in all fields leads to the precocious aging of acquired knowledge that demands new attitudes and methods.' [Educating Together] (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007, 21)

The Church's own vision, then, is that its educational mission in schools should be carried out by teaching staff whose professional, intellectual and spiritual formation is continuously developing. Because of this, there is a requirement for educators in Catholic schools to:

> '…constantly update the contents of the subjects he teaches and the pedagogical methods he uses. The educator's vocation demands a ready and constant ability for renewal and adaptation. It is not, therefore, sufficient to achieve solely an initial good level of preparation; rather what is required is to maintain it and elevate it in a journey of permanent formation.' (Ibid)

There are clear expectations, then, that teachers in Catholic schools are committed to ongoing professional development. This should consider the needs of pupils, Catholic schools and wider society. The Church views pedagogy as central to professional development. Therefore, should the Catholic *Bishops' Conference of Scotland* (BCoS) agree that religious literacy is a valuable pedagogical principle and method, there is a valid sociological cause to implement this in R.E in Scottish Catholic schools.[10]

Concluding remarks

[10] The Congregation states that 'it is for the Church to establish the authentic contents of Catholic religious education in schools.' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, 13) 'It is for the conference of bishops to issue general norms about this field of action and for the diocesan bishop to regulate and watch over it.' (Ibid, 14)

This chapter has outlined that there is a consensus that religious literacy is important in contemporary Britain. A range of sociological arguments have been presented, and these demonstrate that a sociological rationale for promoting religious literacy exists. The implications for school-based R.E, particularly in Catholic schools, have also been considered. Religious literacy therefore presents Catholic schools with the opportunity to contribute to social cohesion in a variety of ways. The Church's philosophy of education will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 7.

The thesis will now return to the first research question: what is religious literacy? It will answer this by exploring how academics have advocated religious literacy to be promoted in school-based Religious Education in Britain.

CHAPTER 4: RELIGIOUS LITERACY APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Introduction

Robinson (2011) outlines pedagogical approaches to contemporary R.E in the U.K. He analyses the Critical Realist, the Phenomenological, the Anthropological, the Interpretive, the Experiential, R.E as a Gift to the Child, the Narrative, the Religious Literacy and the Constructivist approaches. Therefore, there are a variety of approaches to R.E that exist and are advocated in the academy. Religious literacy is among these.

This chapter will outline what the religious literacy approach to R.E entails and analyse the different approaches presented by key thinkers within this pedagogical philosophy.

Parker (2020, 129) provides an overview of the scope of religious literacy in R.E:

> 'Religious literacy describes the abilities to be accrued across, and by means of, a student's religious education. Religious literacy is therefore not the subject as such, it is an aim of the subject (the subject may have other aims)… Religious literacy terminology thus has the potential to *reframe* and *refine* what religious education is for'.

It is possible to describe religious literacy in education as a vision of R.E, a principle of its curriculum design and a pedagogical method for teaching staff. Thus, this is a particular setting for the framework of religious literacy in practice.

Robinson (2011) also uses the work of Grimmitt's three questions (2000) as a starting point for his exploration of good pedagogic practice in R.E:

I. 'What kind of interactions between pupils and religious content does the model seek to promote?
II. What procedures or strategies are employed in order to achieve this?
III. What principles inform the procedures, including choice of content?'

This chapter will explain the religious literacy approach to school R.E through addressing these three questions. Robinson points to three key figures who present a religious literacy approach: Wright, Homan and Barnes. Robinson notes that there are others, too. These scholars explain their religious literacy approach in particular ways. It is helpful, then, to speak of religious literacy approaches, rather than a single overarching approach.

The work of these scholars will be now outlined and analysed.

4.1 What kind of interactions between pupils and religious content does the model seek to promote?

This subsection will explore strategies advocated to be deployed in the R.E classroom by examining the relationship between pupils and the stimuli they are to be provided with.

The first religious literacy approach is that of Wright (1996). The prime interaction that Wright (1996, 173) proposes is engagement with questions of 'ultimate truth':

> 'Such questions are not optional to the human condition. Every framework within which human beings choose to live, including the doctrinal systems of the world's religions, and the systems of scientific naturalism, liberal experiential-expressivism and post-modernism, entails, whether implicitly or explicitly, a fundamental ontology, an account of what is ultimately true about reality.'

The engagement with ontological truths, that is, religious accounts of the nature of reality, underpins Wright's approach. Alongside this, Wright acknowledges that religious ambiguity exists, 'different traditions and systems tell conflicting stories about what is ultimately true.' (Ibid) These should be addressed in the R.E classroom. Finally, Wright explains that his approach is firmly rooted in developing knowledge of religious language, particularly those used in public discourse. (Ibid, 174)

Wright (1993) and (1996) argues against the phenomenological approach to Religious Education. His model prioritises a critical, language-based engagement with religious content, in place of personal religious experience. This model uses the shared language of religious traditions to engage in critical enquiry about existential truths and realities.

Homan (2004) presents a second approach. Homan argues that religious primary texts are essential to promoting religious literacy. He argues that greater access should be given to these. There is no mention of which books, but reference to 'primary sources' and 'sacred text' (Ibid, 27) suggests the sacred scriptures of religious traditions. Homan argues that these texts must be managed in a particular way:

> 'Sacred text, like the apparatuses of devotion, does not exist primarily as a classroom resource…The management of mood is critical in receiving text in a manner that honours those who own it and yet in recognising it as source material to which pupils are entitled to make a conscientious response.' (Ibid)

Homan therefore argues that a respectful, yet critical personal response to religious texts should be utilised in the R.E classroom. Furthermore, Homan's approach to religious literacy is linguistic. He argues that pupils should engage with the 'language' and 'poetry' that religious traditions use.

Moreover, the texts that young people are presented with should not be simplified, nor should perceived issues of debate be ignored. RE specialists should resist the temptation to simplify or 'tidy up' religious texts. (Robinson, 2011, 178) As a result, Homan is critical of directed activities, and argues that these can inhibit the promotion of religious literacy:

> 'Directed activities related to texts (so-called DARTS) commonly ask pupils to select information from a passage or to search it for a keyword that answers a set question: this may involve hunting without reading. Both kinds of activity dispose the pupil in a relationship of dependence upon the text as the source of information.' (Homan, 2004, 27)

Homan then argues for multiple sources to be used to promote 'healthy scepticism'. This approach aspires for pupils to reconcile the knowledge about religion they have gained and

apply this in different contexts, rather than a dependence on the core material provided by the classroom teacher. It is somewhat critical in scope.

A third approach is from Barnes (2001) and (2009). Barnes also rejects the phenomenological approach to Religious Education and argues for the priority of religious language over religious experience. Barnes believes that 'religious concepts and religious language structure and condition religious experience.' (2001, 456) He posits that public concepts and language have priority over inner experience, and explains that 'without the appropriate religious concepts and religious language there would be no religious experience.' (Ibid) Barnes' appeal to religious language over experience is to ensure that religion can be exposed to 'rational criticism and assessment.' (Ibid, 457)

Barnes is clear that Religious Education should engage with issues of religious 'truths' and 'relevance.' (Ibid) He believes the promotion of religious literacy should therefore go beyond experience, towards dialogue and critiques of the truth claims that religions make. Barnes (2009) expands and argues that Religious Education should involve taking religious differences seriously. Barnes, like Wright, proposes a model of understanding religion that is free from the 'axiomatic commitment that the religions are all equally true' (2009, 47) Religious differences should be made clear:

> 'There can be open acknowledgement that the religions are different: they teach different things; they pursue different goals; they prescribe different courses of action; and they recommend different practices. The diversity of religion can be acknowledged, without the need to tailor representations of it to fit theological schemes that posit some deeper religious unity, or to fear that recognition of real differences between people is somehow incompatible with respect for them.' (Ibid, 47)

This approach therefore presents and acknowledges different beliefs, and practical or experiential differences between religious traditions. Barnes is also critical of the increasing number of religions studied in 'post-confessional Britain', arguing that 'it does not take a study of over ten religions' to expose pupils to religious diversity. (Ibid, 48) Barnes therefore believes that a limited number of religions should be explored, and that depth of knowledge about religion should take priority over breadth.

Barnes also acknowledges the importance of religious beliefs and doctrines, stating they are 'central to any responsible educational interpretation of the nature of religion.' (Ibid, 49) This concern should also extend to how these beliefs are expressed, 'in ritual, in art, music and drama, in history and in the lives of famous religious believers.' (Ibid) This would suggest a multidisciplinary approach to engaging with the theology of traditions.

Moreover, the study of religion should also expose young people to religious scepticism. (Ibid, 51) Barnes argues:

> 'Pupils need to be familiar both with secular challenges to religion and with religious challenges to secularism. There must be an open, dialectical and critical enquiry into religious truth, an enquiry that interprets and evaluates not only religious beliefs and practices but also secular beliefs and practices.'

This approach is grounded on the supposition that the U.K is a secular society, and that engagement with religious beliefs should extend to, and engage with, secular points of view. Barnes argues that this should include 'secular forms of morality, to the philosophical and religious criticisms made against them' and to the 'debate about the relationship of science and religion.' (Ibid) His approach is carried out in Religious Education by engaging with contemporary debates between religious traditions and the secular realm. Finally, Barnes argues that Religious Education must challenge prejudice and intolerance. (Ibid, 51) He believes that a 'range of arguments and considerations should be employed, philosophical, moral and religious.' (Ibid) This approach to R.E is therefore rooted in promoting social harmony. It takes religious difference seriously as a means of promoting respect.

Conroy (2015) and (2016) describes a fourth approach. These papers are findings from two empirical based research projects on contemporary R.E in the U.K. Conroy's definition (2015, 169) reveals the content which he believes should be explored:

> 'Religious literacy denotes not an attachment to any particular religious formulary or doctrine per se, but an acquaintance with, an understanding of, the nature of religious language, religious concepts and practices, and some grasp of the complexities, contradictions and challenges of at least one religious tradition.'

Conroy does not argue for a breadth of knowledge about different religious traditions. He views that it is possible to be religiously literate through developing knowledge of one tradition. More may be desirable, but not necessary. However, it could be argued that this is a certain form of religious literacy, limited in breadth. For Conroy, the most important element is an engagement with 'religious language and its import.' (Ibid) This is another linguistic approach, as it advocates engagement with the language of religious traditions.

Smalley (2018) explains a final religious literacy approach. His definition shows a different focus than those outlined above:

> 'Religious literacy is the ability to interact fluently with the ideas and customs of any religious group commonly found in our local or global society by having a conceptual understanding of religion, such that one can identify and appreciate the reciprocal influence of these groups on public policy, government, society, culture and indeed daily life.' (Ibid, 60)

Smalley points out that his definition does not advocate depth of knowledge about a variety of religious traditions, but that the key terms are '*ability, conceptual understanding* and *appreciate the reciprocal influence*.' (Ibid) He acknowledges that his approach advocates an 'informed and nuanced understanding of religion'. (Ibid) As such, it is about prioritising knowledge of the contemporary religious landscape, and the interactions between religion and public life. The approach seeks to discover how religious traditions and believers interact with key aspects of secular life in a Western democracy.

Analysis

The approaches outlined above are each distinct. However, there are areas of engagement with religious content that are common to some. The first is the focus on religious language. Today, 'literacy' is most often associated with the English curricular area. Mostly, this involves reading, writing and speaking. Four of the authors (Wright, Homan, Barnes and Conroy) also

agree that a religious literacy approach to R.E should be underpinned by focusing on the language that religions use.

A second area in common is the focus on the truth claims that religions make about the nature of reality. Wright and Barnes are clear that Religious Education should engage with these claims, and this can be done through a critical lens. The authors draw attention to the diversity of truth claims that religions make, and encourage these to be presented and evaluated in the R.E classroom. This approach does not side-step the issue of conflicting religious beliefs about the nature of what exists. Rather, it encourages teachers to present these openly to their pupils.

A third area of agreement is that R.E should involve pupils engaging with religious content in a critical manner. Homan argues that primary texts are central to educating for religious literacy, and the use of more than one source in the classroom encourages young people to develop critical skills and knowledge. Barnes encourages this critical aspect through an introduction to criticisms of religious traditions and secular philosophies.

Smalley's approach is different in nature. It uses the development of religious knowledge to better comprehend secular society. Smalley advocates a more sociological study to religious literacy, through a focus on issues such as religious influences on politics and culture.

4.2 What procedures or strategies are employed in order to achieve this?

This subsection will present the practical strategies which scholars suggest should be implemented in the R.E classroom.

Wright's approach (1996, 175) proposes a four-step pedagogical model. (1) Pre-understanding of pupils own knowledge of religious language 'will need to be recognised, articulated and acknowledged.' (2) Pupils should have the opportunity to recognise the sources of their pre-understanding. For example, the intersections 'between Judaeo-Christian narratives, or the narratives of other world faiths, and the narrative woven by secular, atheistic humanism.' (3) Pupils should use this pre-understanding to 'dialogue with the narratives and language of relevant primary religious traditions, as owned by faith communities, and also key secular

traditions that deny religious truth.' (4) Pupils should be challenged with 'narratives and truth claims' to recognise that 'religious ambiguity' exists.

Wright's methodology is a pupil-centred approach to Religious Education. It takes the young person's own preconceptions of religious faith as a starting point, and uses this as a platform on which to build. This may be difficult to put into practice if there is a wide range of religious diversity found in the R.E classroom. This may be more practical in faith-school settings where there may be less religious diversity. Wright is clear that different religions can be presented through this approach, and this should also include non-religious philosophies. It is a critical approach, and it allows pupils to consolidate and recognise their own personal beliefs.

Wright concludes by acknowledging that this framework will have to meet the needs of individuals. This includes the age, developmental stage, aptitude and cultural roots of the individual child. (Ibid, 176) This approach may therefore be further challenging. It would require a level of trust between pupil and teacher, and pupil and peers. An encouraging atmosphere of mutual respect may have to exist before this approach is implemented. This linguistic-based model could draw upon other curricular areas that utilise similar approaches to their subject.

Secondly, Homan's (2004) approach involves three steps. 'Firstly, that there are some—if not many—terms in religious discourse that warrant exploration rather than definition.' (Ibid, 24) Homan provides several examples of religious terms that are primarily located in the Western religious traditions, including that of 'pilgrimage.' He is critical of glossary approaches that appear to overlook the reality of varied understandings. This approach therefore encourages young people to understand that there can be different approaches to defining key terms. Religious literacy is promoted by recognising the varying lenses through which to explain or describe these terms. Homan continues, and explains that teachers of Religious Education should be encouraged to look beyond the labelling and classification of words to register and etymology. (Ibid, 25) His model uses religious language as the primary vehicle, then, for the development of religious literacy skills and capabilities.

Homan's final step is that variant and alternative spellings should be used as a learning opportunity. (Ibid) Homan is critical of R.E curricula that allow for varied spelling of only a limited number of terms. He argues that his approach can contribute to interfaith dialogue, and

he is a proponent of pupil dialogue. He also encourages listening as a 'seminal skill', as it calls for 'openness to new ideas' and the 'ability to respond honestly and without offence'. (Ibid, 30) This would also require a safe classroom ethos to exist, where young people feel comfortable and confident to discuss issues of a spiritual or religious nature with one-another. Homan draws upon the study of Ipgrave (2001) who found that there can be 'outstanding merits of dialogue':

> 'Children confront and address sensitive issues of race, colour and dogma with a confidence that might never have developed if left to the devices of the written word. Moreover, they hear key terms pronounced by those who own them.' (Homan, 2004, 30)

The classroom teacher has the responsibility, then, to facilitate and navigate these intra-pupil discussions. Homan points out that 'pupil dialogue without the persistent intervention of a teacher inevitably leaves some insights confused and facts unchecked.' (Ibid) This requires teachers to use professional judgement to steer the topics of conversations to meet the intended learning outcomes.

Thirdly, Barnes (2009, 50) argues that to respond critically to the phenomenon of religion, whilst acknowledging religious difference, then 'there needs to be an element of philosophy incorporated into religious education at secondary level.' His belief is that philosophy provides the 'skills and the framework for assessing and evaluating competing truth claims.' (Ibid) Barnes' view is that R.E and philosophy are intrinsically linked because the skills and abilities accrued in philosophy are transferable to the R.E setting. Importantly, his call to promote religious literacy by including secular religious scepticism in the curriculum rejects the teaching of Humanism:

> 'Contemporary enthusiasm for the study of humanism within religious education…unfortunately does not address the sources and the nature of religious scepticism. The number of humanists is small compared with the number of those who express and exhibit some form of religious scepticism. Religious scepticism is important in its own right and arguably such an attitude is culturally pervasive.' (Ibid, 51)

Study of Humanism is common in contemporary non-denominational R.E in the U.K. Barnes argues that religious scepticism as a philosophical area, distinct from the philosophy of Humanism, should be studied.

Conroy (2015, 179) encourages a pupil-centred approach that unpacks young people's preconceptions of religion. He argues that there is often a gap between 'the ways in which schools dissect and deconstruct religious practices and questions, and the fragility of the conversation in the home.' This method therefore seeks to develop an awareness that faith may be a lived reality for members of an R.E classroom. Religion may also be unfamiliar to other young people. This may be more suitable in faith schools where more pupils have similar religious experiences.

Conroy (Ibid, 182) is also critical of the secularisation of R.E. He is critical of the perspective that secular Humanism should sit alongside Christianity and other faiths in a 'pluralist marketplace of alternatives.' He argues that, as a result, the study of religions within this framework means they lose 'the distinctively transcendent and theologically grounded epistemic claims.' They have been replaced with 'a religion of manners more attuned to the requirements of modern social structures, while maintaining their residual symbolism.' The use of religious language and engagement with theologies of religions is viewed, then, as an antidote to a perceived superficial study of religion.

Conroy's study (2016, 172) raised concerns about the issue of 'non-specialist' teachers of R.E:

> 'A number of schools in our study relied on non-specialists to deliver RE. Arguably, this contributes to the growth of illiteracy as they often have a modest grasp of theological concepts or history.…the reliance on non-specialists without command of a field of knowledge undermines the claim to being a professional.' (Ibid)

Conroy refers to Scotland, where two graduating courses must be achieved before teaching any subject. He states that the two courses are often in areas such as history, sociology or psychology of religion, or philosophical ethics. (Ibid) He argues that these choices contribute

to the lack of religious literacy. (Ibid) This suggests that Theology and Religious Studies should be the essential required subject to be studied for prospective teachers of Religious Education. This approach, then, would require universities to be cognisant of, or in agreement with, their role in promoting religious literacy through Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

Finally, Smalley (2018) argues that when exploring religious narratives or key terms, pupils should be asked to examine what these mean to the lives of believers. Smalley gives two examples: the biblical story of 'the Rich Man and Lazarus' in Christianity and the 'concept of Jihad' in Islam. (Ibid, 60) He states that it is not enough for pupils to be able to explain or define what these mean, or to relate these to contemporary society in a manner that dilutes the 'theological'. Rather, religious literacy is to be promoted through considering the perspectives of religious believers to religious content such as this.

Smalley draws upon the work of Hammond et al. (1990, 18) to criticise the 'World Religions Approach' to Religious Education. They argued that this approach concentrated on knowledge of external phenomena, at the expense of developing understanding of empathy, intention and religious experience. (Smalley, 2018, 62) Smalley argues that this has:

> '…led to a de-skilling of pupils, who were unable to appreciate the affective dimension, or understand the believers' experience. They promulgated RE teachers as de-indoctrinators whose role was to show that the implicit secular model of humanity radically effects the way we experience the world.' (Ibid)

Smalley claims that models of R.E which are critical, or lack a sense of the 'sacred', has contributed to the decline of religious literacy. He then proposes that educating for religious literacy should include 'encountering the lived reality of religious belief, and RE teachers should not be afraid of being passionate advocates of this spiritual reality.' (Ibid) This requires teachers to present the views of members of a religion in a manner that is authentic, sensitive and respectful. This would also draw attention to internal diversity within religious traditions.

Analysis

A common theme throughout the literature in this section is that the child's personal experience of religion is the heart of the strategies employed. These include realistic approaches, rather than idealistic ones. Wright argues that the preconceptions about religion from young people are essential. Conroy agrees, specifying the child's experience of religion and religious discussions at home should be considered. Wright summarises this well by making it clear that a religious literacy approach should be age-and-stage appropriate. Barnes argues for critical R.E that includes philosophy. Barnes is clear that this would be appropriate for secondary R.E, therefore acknowledging the stages of pupil development. He hopes for young people to be equipped to overcome the varying challenges to religious literacy which secularity brings. Finally, Homan also proposes that the experience and understanding of the pupil are therefore at the centre of R.E. His approach is pupil-centred because it is in the form of intra-pupil dialogue. Homan places the most emphasis on dialogue among these authors.

Barnes and Conroy are critical of the inclusion of secular philosophies being treated as equals alongside religions. Barnes' view is that Humanism is not a significantly popular philosophy of secular life, therefore it has been given too much consideration in liberal forms of R.E. Conroy approaches this from a theological and epistemic basis. The increasing secularisation of R.E is regarded as a challenge to educating for religious literacy. Smalley also argues for a theological response over a secular one.

Smalley's approach is mostly different from the others. His strategy revolves around the spiritual and lived reality of religious believers, rather than the experience of the pupils in the classroom. The above approaches are therefore not necessarily reconcilable. However, Smalley's approach is also a realistic one, as it places the contemporary lived perspectives of believers at the heart of its methodology.

4.3 What principles inform the procedures, including choice of content?

This final subsection will highlight the rationales which underpin each religious literacy approach.

Wright's approach is rooted in a particular type of epistemology. It combats the phenomenology espoused by other thinkers, and 'this requires the development of linguistic competence within a range of religious discourses.' (1996, 175) Phenomenology as a philosophical framework places the priority on lived experience; it is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. (Smith, 2018)

Wright (1996, 175) explains his reason for rejecting this approach to R.E:

> 'Phenomenological description, within the experiential-expressive framework, leads not to religious literacy but to heightened sensitivity. The freedom to feel can be no substitute for the freedom to understand. Indeed, feeling without reason opens up the possibility of an anarchy of pre-reflective personal preference.' (Ibid)

Wright therefore views his linguistic and critical approach to R.E as the prime vehicle for promoting religious literacy. In his view, this combats the perceived relativism that can stem from taking personal experience as the starting point for exploration in the R.E classroom.

Barnes (2001, 457) is explicit in his agreement with Wright (1993) and (1996) that R.E should 'espouse the cause of developing religious literacy'. Barnes' view is that the aim of R.E should be to advance the understanding of public religious discourse. Barnes agrees that religious language has priority over private experience of religion. There is an epistemic hierarchy in Wright and Barnes' views. They place private experience lower than shared public discourse. Their view is that R.E should be academically rigorous and intellectually credible. Thus, young people should be able to scrutinise religious content.

Barnes' vision (2009, 50) for promoting respect and social harmony through acknowledging religious difference is clear:

> 'Respect for others entails accepting the other's right to believe something different, something that may contradict one's own beliefs and commitments. Disguising difference and failing to appreciate its 'intractable' nature only alienates traditional religious believers who take their beliefs and practices seriously.'

This approach is regarded as a remedy against the form of perceived 'citizenship education' that had been prevalent in liberal R.E since the late 1980s. This method did not focus on religious differences, they were often overlooked. Thus, it is argued that young people were receiving a diluted R.E that was not intellectually rigorous and which presented superficial, idealistic representations of religions.

Homan's approach (2004, 31) views R.E as playing a role in cross-curricular initiatives. He states that his paper addressed two concerns. First, he demonstrates that 'language issues and skills are of the essence of religious education.' Secondly, 'that the subject may play its part in Literacy Across the Curriculum (LAC) without damage or strain.' Homan's linguistic approach therefore draws upon the skills that young people are already using in other curricular areas. He demonstrates that R.E can support the promotion of literacy as a distinct skill through promoting religious literacy.

Conroy (2015, 170) is clear that depth of religious knowledge should underpin his approach to religious literacy. He argues this is not always possible to promote and foster through national qualifications and examinations:

> 'The consequence of singling out only the parts is that they can be made to look partial, ridiculous or inflated. It is, after all, not difficult to extrapolate a social or liturgical practice from its historical or theological context and point to its apparent absurdity.'

Conroy argues that pupils should explore religious content in its full context, both historical and/or theological. He argues that R.E examinations cannot enhance religious literacy on their own. The role of compulsory R.E in the U.K would therefore be important.

Finally, Smalley criticises the critical approaches to R.E, outlined above, and this is the basis for his sociological approach:

> 'Teachers of RE, their pupils and the population at large have become skilled at critically questioning and evaluating both individual religious phenomena and whole belief systems, particularly in their response to certain ethical issues, but have little understanding of the centrality of faith, of the truth of religious experience that drives and colours all aspects of the believer's life.' (Ibid)

Smalley disagrees with the direction religious literacy has taken in R.E following Wright's publication:

> '…much RE, following Wright (1993), has sought to evaluate religious ideas and teaching in a philosophical, rational way. But often religion is not rational, and being religiously literate involves understanding that the spiritual dimension of life radically influences believers, sometimes in a non- rational way.' (Ibid, 61)

Smalley's method therefore prioritises religious experience and spirituality over critical evaluations of the theological and philosophical dimensions of religions. His rejection of Wright's approach is underpinned by spirituality over rationality.

Analysis

Wright and Barnes' views align; both argue that religious language should have more consideration than religious experience. However, there are different principles that underpin the approaches of others. Barnes argues for religious differences to be addressed and taken seriously. For Homan, religious literacy can support the promotion of literacy across the curriculum. Conroy argues for a more holistic understanding of religion than national qualifications examinations allow for, and that the role of the R.E teacher is crucial for religious literacy. Smalley, on the other hand, values the experience of religious believers over critical R.E and presents a different rationale to his approach than the other thinkers.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has addressed the first research question: what is religious literacy? It has provided an insight into approaches to religious literacy in school-based Religious Education in Britain. It has acknowledged that there is not a consensus about a single religious literacy approach to the subject. This is a barrier to finding a consensus on what religious literacy looks like in the context of R.E provision in schools. Consequently, it has analysed the similarities and differences between the approaches and considered the rationale that underpins each of these.

The chapter also considered the implications and consequences for the learner and society in each approach. Each approach is distinct and should be regarded as such.

Some of the 'religious literacy approaches' content explored in this chapter could be trialled, adapted or implemented in future *RERC* curricular revisions in Scotland if religious literacy is accepted as a way forward for Religious Education in Catholic schools.

Chapter 5 will now outline the context for addressing the final two research questions: (3) Is religious literacy promoted in Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland (RERC)? (4) Is religious literacy a way forward for RERC in Scotland?

CHAPTER 5: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

This chapter will locate this study in the Scottish context. It will analyse Religious Education in contemporary Catholic state schools in Scotland. The key sources that follow will be from the Scottish curricular documents, with a focus on Religious Education in Catholic schools. The chapter will then outline some key contemporary issues in Religious Education in Scottish Catholic schools. Here, the primary source is the Scottish Government's letter, *Guidance on provision of religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools* (2011). Some relevant discussions from the academy will be utilised to address the key issues that are identified.

5.1 Contemporary Religious Education in Catholic Schools in Scotland: *This is Our Faith* and the RERC curricular documents

5.1.1 Curriculum for Excellence

Religious Education in state-funded Catholic schools in Scotland currently operates under the curricular title of *Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools*. This subject area is part of the national Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence*. *CfE* is the national curriculum used from early learning through to secondary school. It was implemented in 2010 and replaced the 5-14 curriculum which was initiated after 1987. (Humes, 2013)

CfE comprises a Broad General Education (BGE) from early years until the end of S3 followed by a Senior Phase (SP) of learning from S4 to S6. In the curriculum, there is an emphasis on inter-disciplinary learning, skills development and encouraging personal achievement. (Education Scotland, N.d (c)) *RERC* (along with *Religious and Moral Education* (RME), which is followed by non-denominational state schools) is one of the eight curricular areas and is regarded as 'an important whole-school activity.' (Ibid) The Scottish Government have

provided numerous documents to support, guide and instruct practitioners to implement *CfE*. These documents will now be analysed, alongside the curricular documents produced by the responsible Catholic bodies.

5.1.2 RERC and This is Our Faith

There are two curricular documents produced by the Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES) on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland (BCoS). These are *This is Our Faith, 2011* (TIOF) and *This is Our Faith: Senior Phase, 2015* (TIOF SP). These documents are the 'fruit of a close collaboration' between SCES and the Scottish Government. (Franchi, 2013, 468) These documents supplement the core curricular documents produced by the Scottish Government and provide a wealth of exemplary material for practitioners. These books are only available as a hard copy. No online version exists.

Like the other seven curricular areas, *RERC* has a *Principles and practice* (P&P) document, which outlines the context, rationale and approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. *RERC* also has an *Experiences and outcomes* (E&O) document, which provides the curricular content to be followed by schools. These are organised into four levels: early (pre-school), first (p1-3), second (p4-7), third (S1-3) and fourth (S3). These are guideline levels. The attainment of these may be fluid, dependent on each individual pupil's capabilities and needs. *Benchmarks: RERC, 2017* provide clarity on the national standards expected within each curriculum area at each level and are designed to support teacher judgement. All three of these documents can be accessed online.

The 'Core Learning' strands in *TIOF* are written in the 'first person style common to all the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes ("I can...", "I have" etc.).' (BCoS, 2011, 63) *TIOF* is designed to 'inform and guide teachers when they create lessons, units of work, themes, projects and programmes of work' in R.E. (Ibid) The R.E curriculum in Catholic schools in Scotland therefore has parity of curricular provision alongside other subject areas.

The *RERC* curriculum will now be analysed.

5.2 Rationale for Contemporary Religious Education in Catholic Schools in Scotland

This is Our Faith (BCoS, 2011) is a distinctive and explicitly catechetical model of Religious Education in Catholic schools. It contains a sixty-two-page exposition of the nature, purpose and framework for *RERC* in sections one, two and three. Throughout these sections, there are references to the Bible and Catholic magisterial documents to explain the curriculum's nature and rationale. *TIOF's* content is in accordance with 'Sacred Scripture and Tradition.' (Ibid, 10) This is a key indicator of its catechetical philosophy of education. *TIOF's* principles, rationale, content and methods have also been approved with Catholic Church supervision and guidance. The *BGE* curriculum (early years-S3) gained the *Certificate of Recognitio* from the Magisterium in 2011. This certificate is not an essential requirement for Catholic R.E curricula. The Magisterial approval, however, indicates the catechetical direction that the curriculum writers have taken. The *Senior Phase* document has not yet gained this approval after a five-year *ad experimentum*. It is now eight years old.

Key points from *TIOF* (2011) will now be presented. This subsection will also explore important relevant points from *TIOF Senior Phase* (2015). The Core Learning Content to be followed in the classroom will be explored in Chapter 6.

5.2.1 Catechesis and evangelisation

TIOF stresses the 'importance of being inclusive to all learners', in the opening line of the introduction (Ibid, 7). However, the 'central purpose' of the *TIOF* curriculum 'is to assist learners to make an informed, mature response to God's call to relationship.' (Ibid) *TIOF* primarily places the person of Jesus Christ at the forefront of its purpose. It aims for young people to be provided with 'structured opportunities for encounter' with him. (Ibid, 5)

An additional dimension to the aims of R.E is also presented, that of *evangelisation.* Evangelisation is a broad and rich term. The Church defines evangelisation as the 'proclamation and handing on of the Gospel.' (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 2007, 2). Evangelisation is intrinsically concerned with sharing the Catholic faith with others, particularly with those who do not believe, or have not yet been presented with its revelation.

Catechesis, on the other hand, involves nurturing, forming and deepening faith (USCCB, N.d. (a)) within the community of believers. (Pope John Paul II, 1979, 18)

TIOF is cognisant of this distinction and outlines that *all who work in Catholic schools* participate in the Church's 'twofold mission of evangelisation and catechesis.' (BCoS, 2011, 12) *TIOF* is presented within the Church's understanding that catechesis is a life-long process. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 68) Hence, there are frequent references to 'journeying in faith.' (BCoS, 2011, 15) This journey is an 'unfolding encounter with God which takes place within the context of a person's total experience of life.' (Ibid)

TIOF considers two aspects of faith development as recognised by the Church, with author's emphasis in italics:

> '…the *subjective process* of coming to, growing and living in faith, and the *objective content* of the faith, expressed in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition as a single sacred deposit of the Word of God whose authentic interpretation lies with the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church.' (Ibid, 13)

The curriculum, then, aims to fuse both dimensions. *TIOF* acknowledges that the faith one possesses is personal. This can result in a variety of responses to the phenomenon. Faith is also presented as communal and ecclesial. The Church's *Lay Catholics in Schools* (1982) is referenced to explain this: 'the Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes individual faith.' (BCoS, 2011, 13) Teachers of *RERC,* therefore, need to be 'aware of the spectrum of faith commitment among learners' to assist them on their personal 'search for meaning' and 'response to the revelation of God.' (Ibid, 12) It is thus a unique subject in the Scottish curriculum.

5.2.2 A unique subject

TIOF Senior Phase (2015, 61) draws attention to 'the unique nature of the R.E class.' *RERC* is described as 'significantly different from any other subject taught within a Catholic school.' The curricular documents state that *RERC* brings together the cognitive and the affective domains. *RERC* is regarded as 'more than an intellectual endeavour or the gathering of

knowledge and understanding, it speaks to the hearts of students.' Aspects of other curricular areas may also do this, like *Literacy & English* or *Expressive Arts*, but *RERC* is regarded as distinctive due to its spiritual basis.

Moreover, *TIOF SP* recognises that this stage of school life (S4-S6) is a time of 'personal growth' into adulthood, and thus pupils will require 'answers to life's most challenging questions.' (Ibid, 60) There is a clear emphasis on the individual personal wellbeing of pupils in *RERC*. The curriculum consciously attempts to safeguard *RERC* in the *Senior Phase* primarily for spiritual wellbeing and development. There are two pieces of evidence that demonstrates this focus.

TIOF SP explains that teachers of *RERC* are 'deployed as faith witnesses' in deliberately 'mixed-ability classes' across the country throughout their school age. (Ibid, 61) Few other subjects, aside from other 'core' areas such as Physical Education and Personal, Social and Health Education are afforded the space of mixed ability classes in secondary schools in Scotland. This shows that *RERC* is not primarily an academic endeavour.

Secondly, and linked to this, academic 'accreditation' in *RERC* is addressed. *TIOF SP* signals caution against offering national Scottish Qualification Award (SQA) qualifications during 'core' R.E time. When a link *is* possible, schools are required to reflect on how this 'affects the nature of pupil experience' in R.E. The curriculum states that the SQA nationally certificated *Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies* should not replace 'core' R.E (TIOF SP), because *RMPS* 'is essentially an academic pursuit rather than an opportunity for catechesis or evangelisation.' (Ibid, 62) There is no attention given to the relationship between the academic study of religion and catechesis. It appears the curriculum writers, instead, focus on the distinctiveness of both domains. It is possible, though, that *RERC* departments in Scotland offer *RMPS* in addition to 'core R.E', although *RMPS* is not addressed in any depth in the document.

Overall, the rationale for *RERC* focuses mostly on faith formation and the spiritual dimension of the subject area. *RERC* is a tool in the Church's mission of catechesis and evangelisation in Scotland. This is the main driving force behind learning and teaching throughout a young person's *RERC* experience.

5.3 Key issues in contemporary RERC in Scotland

The '*Guidance on Provision'* letter provides statutory guidance for non-denominational and denominational schools. This was provided by the Scottish Government in 2011 and applies specifically to state schools. It sets out four main points relating to *RERC.* These will be presented in order of importance relating to religious literacy, rather than the order in which they appear in the letter.

5.3.1 A compulsory subject

Firstly, Catholic schools are 'expected by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland to follow guidelines established by the Catholic Education Commission.' (Scottish Government, 2011, 12) This includes the statutory requirement of a 'minimum of 2.5 hours per week of R.E in primary school and two hours per week in all stages of secondary school. In all secondary stages this minimum time allocation is expected to be provided through two classes per week and enriched by additional activities throughout the school year.' (Ibid)

The compulsory nature of the subject thus highlights that it is deemed important by both the Scottish Government and the Catholic Church in Scotland. This has implications for religious literacy. Pupils in Catholic schools should experience Religious Education consistently each week from the beginning of their school experience in primary until they leave secondary school. Pupils only experience many subject areas partially during their school career. Young people are therefore provided with a space in which their religious literacy can develop throughout their time as a school pupil.

5.3.2 Teacher approval and qualifications

Secondly, the letter reaffirms the legislation that a teacher appointed to any post in a Catholic school 'shall be required to be approved as regards religious belief and character by representatives of the church.' (Ibid, 13) Moreover, for posts that impact on the teaching of R.E, 'teachers will, in addition, be expected to have obtained an appropriate teaching qualification in Catholic Religious Education.' (Ibid)

Teachers of R.E in Catholic schools should have attained the Catholic Teacher's Certificate (CTC). This applies to specialist teachers of Religious Education: those who have attained an undergraduate degree in Theology or Theology and Religious Studies followed by a postgraduate qualification in teaching, or a specialised concurrent undergraduate education degree in Religious Education. However, this also applies to non-specialist teachers who are permitted to teach R.E classes. 'Much RE in Catholic secondary schools [in Scotland] is taught by "generalist" teachers working alongside specialist teachers of RE.' (Franchi and Robinson, 2018, 494) These 'generalists', nonetheless, should be qualified to teach the subject.

Conroy (2015) criticised the arrangement that allows 'generalist' teachers of Religious Education, in his study of religious literacy in schools. This was conducted in different schools across England and Wales. He argued that there was evidence from his research that this arrangement can be detrimental for promoting religious literacy in R.E. However, the national conversation in the public square has largely neglected this dimension of learning and teaching in R.E in Catholic schools in Scotland.

Coll and Reilly (2022, 32) explain that 'The St Andrew's Foundation for Catholic Teacher Education' at the University of Glasgow is the 'sole provider' for the CTC. It is possible to study towards this qualification in other universities, however, as the University of Glasgow offers partnership pathways in other Scottish universities. There is the possibility that teachers can attain this award after entering the profession too, via the Additional Teaching Qualification [ATQ] (specialist) or Certificate in Religious Education by Distance Learning [CREDL] (generalist) courses. This demonstrates that the qualification to teach R.E in Catholic schools is provided by a highly prestigious Russell Group university, one which regularly ranks as amongst the top 100 universities in the world. (Ibid, 31)

This has implications for the levels of religious literacy that qualified teachers of *RERC* should possess. Teachers should possess a breadth and depth of subject specific knowledge and understanding which they are able to utilise when planning and delivering learning experiences. The requirements to teach *RERC* also contain personal, spiritual, moral and ecclesial elements. The requirement for 'Church approval' to teach the subject is evidence of this.

5.3.3 The right to 'withdraw'

Thirdly, the letter states that 'under section 9 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, the conscience clause advises that parents have a statutory right to withdraw children from participation in religious and moral education and religious education in Roman Catholic schools.' (Ibid, 7) Accordingly, 'where a child or young person is withdrawn, schools should make suitable arrangements for them to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity.' (Ibid) The right to withdraw therefore remains the tool through which parents may choose to exercise autonomy in the provision of their child's R.E experience, in both denominational and non-denominational settings. This can have an impact on religious literacy if parents choose to withdraw their child. If a young person was to receive any formal Religious Education in this situation, this would be done out-with school. This education may be carried out in another religious setting, so a different level, mode or type of religious literacy would be developed. It is possible, too, that a child may receive no formal education about religion if withdrawn. This may foster a deficient religious literacy. One research problem in this area is that no such data exists in relation to parental withdrawal from *RERC*.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has identified *RERC* in Scotland as a primarily catechetical and evangelical model of contemporary Religious Education. This theme is apparent throughout all the curricular documents. Key issues in contemporary *RERC* were outlined, and the opportunities and obstacles to religious literacy were considered thereafter.

The thesis will now address the third research question: is religious literacy promoted in Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland (RERC)?

CHAPTER 6: RELIGIOUS LITERACY IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

This chapter provides a critical examination of the *RERC* curricular documents. It will examine *RERC* for evidence of the religious literacy models that have been presented previously in this thesis. This is prefaced by the author's acknowledgement that an in-depth study of all curricular material is beyond the remit of this research. However, an overview of *RERC* is presented throughout this chapter, with key examples illustrated to demonstrate where areas of religious literacy are present or absent.

6.1 'Core Learning' in RERC in Scotland

An important observation is outlined from the beginning of this chapter. *RERC* is in a unique position in the Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence*. Both *This is Our Faith* (2011) and *This is Our Faith: Senior Phase* (2015) documents provide a significant amount of Core Learning and supplementary guidance for schools and practitioners- in addition to the *Experiences & Outcomes* which each subject area has. **Table 13** shows the level of material present in *TIOF*.

Table 13: RERC Curriculum content

Level	Experiences & Outcomes	Core Learning Statements
Early (P1)	16	64
First (P2-P4)	84	454
Second (P5-7)	100	456
Third (S1-2)	56	282
Fourth (S3)	28	129
S4	14	90
S5	14	79
S6	14	81
Total	**326**	**1635**

Each subject area in *CfE* contains similar numbers of *Experiences & Outcomes*. What sets *RERC* apart from other subject areas is the level of exemplary material which is provided in the Core Learning Statements under each *E & O* in *TIOF*. No other subject area has this level of material or support. *TIOF* also contains a 'Key Vocabulary' section under each *E & O*- although no definitions are provided.

This phenomenon has featured in recent academic discussion. Scholars have questioned if this level of support has benefitted *RERC*. Stoer (2020a) and Coll and Reilly (2020) both argue that because of the volume of Core Learning, *TIOF* has too much core content to be followed. It is thus viewed as problematic for schools and teachers to implement. It could also be argued that, on the other hand, teachers of *RERC* are provided with a greater level of support than teachers in other subject areas. This applies particularly to secondary schools. This is due to the range of exemplary material provided in the Core Learning Statements, which are not available to other subject teachers.

This has clear implications for the levels of religious literacy that may be fostered in *RERC*. The significant volume of Core Learning content is the vehicle through which the catechetical philosophy of *TIOF* is implemented. The remainder of this chapter will examine the content in the *RERC* curriculum.

6.2 Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and religious literacy

An examination of all *Curriculum for Excellence* documents (whether relating to *RERC*, *RME* or wider Scottish curricular issues) demonstrates that the term 'religious literacy' is absent from all curricular discourse. It does not appear in any Education Scotland guidance and is absent from *This is Our Faith* and its *Senior Phase* document. The Scottish curriculum does, however, contain evidence that other types of literacies have been considered. Education Scotland considers the development of these literacies to be important. Some examples will now be provided to illustrate this, with the author's own emphasis in italics.

In the *Digital Skills Agenda,* The Scottish Government (2016, 38) explained that 'we want to ensure that from the earliest stages of their education, children can begin to develop *digital literacy***.**' Furthermore, in Education Scotland's (2023, 153) *The Compassionate and Connected Classroom* resources, *emotional literacy* is described as a focus which underpins *CfE*'s '4 capacities' (confident individuals, responsible citizens, successful learners and effective contributors). Finally, an important note is found within the *Religious and Moral Education (3-18) curriculum review*. While no reference to religious literacy is found, the authors write that 'understanding religious and moral issues is an essential aspect of young people's *political literacy.'* (Education Scotland, 2014, 29) It is clear, then, that religious literacy has not been given any explicit consideration in the contemporary Scottish curriculum, despite other types of literacies being recognised as important.

Despite this lack of attention, there are initial signs that the development of religious literacy can be discerned in *CfE*'s aims. This has largely been neglected in the academy. However, a study carried out by von Brömssen, et al. (2020, 143) examined *RERC's* neighbouring curriculum *Religious & Moral Education* for non-denominational schools. They concluded that the aim of the *RME Experiences & Outcomes* 'is the development of students' religious and moral literacy in a very clear social reconstructionist curriculum.' The author, then, aims to contribute to this academic discussion, by arguing that *RERC* fosters a specific type of Catholic Christian religious literacy for children and young people.[11]

The *RERC* curriculum will now be studied.

6.3 Which models of religious literacy are present in *This is Our Faith* and the Scottish RERC curricular documents?

Five models of contemporary religious literacy were outlined in chapter 1 of this thesis. This subsection will provide an overview of which aspects of these are present in *RERC.*

[11] Franchi (2013, 472) commented that '*TIOF* examines deeply one specific religious tradition in order to foster a broader religious and cultural literacy.' He does not expand on this claim or support this comment with reflection on the principles of religious literacy. This chapter therefore provides the intellectual framework and academic examination of the *RERC* curricular documents to demonstrate that there is a primarily Catholic model of religious literacy is present within.

6.3.1 Religious literacy and religion

6.3.1.1 Christianity

The main consensus among scholars was that knowledge of Christianity, as the largest religion in adherents across the world and in the West, is vital in the religious literacy endeavour. (Prothero (2007), Prothero and Kerby (2015) and Ford and Higton (2015)). *TIOF* 'examines deeply one specific religious tradition.' (Franchi, 2013, 472) 278 of the total 310 *Experiences & Outcomes* are dedicated to the eight 'Strands of Faith' in Catholic Christianity (89.7% of the content). These are: Mystery of God; In the Image of God; Revealed truth of God; Son of God; Signs of God; Word of God; Hours of God and Reign of God.

Other Christian denominations are recommended to be studied to complement a broader understanding of Christianity. These include the Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopal Church at Level 2 and beyond, and the Orthodox Church at levels 3 and 4. (BCos, 2011, 17) The focus for the entirety of the *Senior Phase* content in *TIOF* is dedicated to Catholic Christianity. As such, this important aspect of religious literacy is present throughout the curriculum. Pupils are given learning experiences which are predominantly focused on the Christian faith.

6.3.1.2 World religions

A second aspect was developing knowledge of other world religions, in addition to Christianity (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Sikhism, Judaism, and Islam). (Prothero and Kerby, 2015) This approach advocates a more neutral, narrative and descriptive study of world religions. This approach is taken at primary level in *TIOF*, with a more analytical approach deployed in S1-3.

TIOF references the seminal Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* (Pope Paul VI, 1965, 2) as its rationale for teaching about other world religions, that the 'Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions', yet 'she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ

"the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)' Other religions are given a respectful and primarily descriptive exploration, yet Catholic Christianity is the focus for most of a young person's experience in *RERC*. This is to be expected in a faith-school curriculum- one which follows a catechetical and evangelical philosophy of education.

In *TIOF,* 'the proportion of time allocated to learning about other world religions is to be limited.' (BCoS, 2011, 17) This is demonstrated by the reality that 32 of 310 *Experiences & Outcomes* are dedicated to 'Other World Religions' (OWR) (10.3%). These begin at First Level and end at Third Level. No 'Other World Religions' material is present in the *Senior Phase* documents. All learning about religious traditions other than Christianity, then, will take place before the end of S3. This therefore fosters the specific type of Catholic religious literacy, by focusing entirely on one denomination during the Senior Phase.

TIOF provides guidance for when learning about other religious traditions may be suitable. The 'Abrahamic' traditions are the focus of study for other religions. Islam and Judaism are to be studied at primary school from primary 3 onwards. Exceptions may be made during important times of the year, such as religious festivals in other religions. (BCoS, 2011, 18) At secondary school, pupils will build upon the knowledge of these two religions and 'learning about one other of the six major world religions (Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism) may be relevant and appropriately challenging from S3 onwards.' (BCoS, 2011, 18) However, no OWR *Es & Os* or Core Learning is provided beyond S3. This would leave such learning at the discretion of individual schools or practitioners.

TIOF's Level 4 (S3) *Es & Os* are important, as these are the last explicit references to OWR at secondary school. Three of the six outcomes are concerned with the religious traditions; the other three are concerned with religion and social harmony.

A key example is: '*I have researched into and can identify the core values at the heart of major world faiths.'* [S3 RERC 4-26a] Pupils are required to provide their personal response to these. The personalisation of learner's responses thus supports individual pupils to articulate their learning about, and own perspectives of, other world religions.

In sum, relating to religious literacy, pupils are given the opportunity to be introduced to other religions to complement their learning about Catholic Christianity. However, it cannot be said that pupils are given a substantial depth of learning about these traditions in *TIOF*.

6.3.1.3 Theology

Studying Christian theology and its subsequent 'wisdom traditions' was deemed important for religious literacy. Ford and Higton (2015) advocated the academic study of theology, by paying particular attention to the 'practices of deliberation' within religions. A main reason for this is to allow non-believers to come to a richer understanding of religions and religious beliefs. It also allows non-believers to apprehend the reasons why believers hold certain views, opinions, or perspectives.

TIOF explains the theological sources that are to be used to 'nurture' knowledge and understanding. These sources are 'scripture, especially the four Gospels, the rest of the New Testament and the ongoing Tradition of which Scripture is a part, found in the official documents of the Church.' (BCoS, 2011, 10) These sources are indicative of the catechetical approach to teaching and learning. *TIOF* shows an awareness, thereafter, that not all pupils in the *RERC* classroom will be Catholic, or indeed Christian. The curriculum claims to provide opportunities for *all* young people:

- 'For the Christian learning, promote their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and provide opportunities to deepen faith.
- For learners of other faiths, promote an understanding of Christian belief and support reflection on their own faith traditions and spiritual development.
- For all other learners, promote respectful understanding of religious faith in general, and Christian faith in particular, and support their spiritual development.' (Ibid, 63)

The curriculum's aims therefore show a sensitivity to the academic and spiritual needs of all young people in the R.E classroom. All learners are to develop their knowledge and understanding of Christianity. They explore Catholic theology throughout their experience in *RERC*.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993) is also a source that is referenced throughout *TIOF* from Primary 4 (Level 2) onwards. This is a theological document which explains the Church's doctrine in a systematic manner. Thus, this shows the prominence of Magisterial Church teaching and theology in *TIOF*. An issue arises, though, when considering that the *Catechism* is aimed at an adult audience. The subsequent *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church* (YouCat) (2011), aimed at children and young adults, is not referenced in the document. This may support learning in *RERC* if used in the future.

The 'practices of deliberation' are explored in some areas, both in Catholic Christianity and in OWR. Two examples from S1 (Level 3) illustrate this.

The first Core Learning statement from [S1 RERC 3-24] is: '*I have researched and can describe Church teaching on social justice, in particular the sacredness of life (CCC 2258)*', followed by five key points which the Church teaches about the sanctity of life from the *Catechism.*

In OWR [S1 RERC 3-26a], two core learning statements are: '*I can give <u>two examples</u> of moral issues I have studied'*; and '*I have explored the values which lead followers of this world religion to respond in the way that they do.'*

These highlight that pupils study the rationale, principles and values behind the views which religious people hold in contemporary society. These examples show some evidence of an academic approach to religious learning in *TIOF*. However, most of the material in *TIOF* is presented from a confessional and catechetical standpoint. The examples cited could allow for both believers and non-believers in *RERC* to have some understanding of Catholic theology. An introductory understanding of theology in OWR is also possible.

This section shows the specific type of Catholic religious literacy that is evident in *TIOF*.

6.3.1.4 Islam

Key to Jones' (2015) approach was promoting knowledge of Islam, as it is deemed to be a 'strategically important subject' (HEFCE, 2008) for contemporary social and cultural cohesion

in contemporary Britain. In *TIOF*, Islam is one of the two mandatory Other World Religions to be studied (alongside Judaism).

At Primary level, the *Es & Os* explicitly reference Islamic beliefs, principles, rituals, places of worship, festivals, customs and artefacts. If the *Es & Os* for OWR at Levels 3 & 4 are applied to Islam (owing to the absence of an explicit religion to be studied in the Core Learning at secondary school), then learners will be able to develop their knowledge of Islamic understanding of 'the sacred'; moral attitudes and values; major ceremonies; practices; origins of key beliefs and core values. These topics can help learners to begin to develop their religious literacy in Islam.

Jones also recommended that insiders' perspectives of the contemporary Islamic community in Britain should be presented to learners. He argues that Islamic leaders are important in this endeavour. The perspectives of religious communities in contemporary Britain are present in *TIOF* and are addressed in section 6.3.3.2.

Overall, Islam is recognised as important in *TIOF*. There is no depth of learning about Islam due to the limited time given to OWR. Children and young people who have been educated in *TIOF* will be able to have a basic knowledge and understanding of Islamic beliefs, practices and contemporary life. Questions remain over how much depth of knowledge of Islam is necessary in the religious literacy endeavour, and whether introductory knowledge will suffice.

6.3.2 Religious literacy as a process

6.3.2.1 Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the most important elements of religious literacy. Many scholars and politicians agree that religious literacy is demonstrated through the ability to engage intelligently in religious conversations. (Presented in chapters 1, 2 and 3)

In *TIOF*, 'dialogue' is identified as a component of learning. *RERC* is to contain 'a process of continual dialogue between the life experience of the learner and the various elements of

Catholic Christian faith.' (BCoS, 2011, 10) Young people encounter these sources from the Catholic tradition and discern how they relate to their own lives. This 'dialogue' suggests internal reflection and enquiry, rather than conventional dialogue between persons.

TIOF is compiled of first person 'I' statements which provide the criteria for success. According to the *RERC Benchmarks,* achievement of a *CfE* level is 'based on teacher professional judgement, well informed by a wide range of evidence.' (Education Scotland, 2017, 3) This suggests that teacher observation of pupil dialogue and discussion is acceptable to gauge attainment of levels.

TIOF and TIOF SP contain some evidence of pupils being required to engage in dialogue in the classroom with others (the classroom teacher or peers). There is no guidance provided, though, in how pupils should engage in dialogue, what religious dialogue looks like, or methods for participating in dialogue. Further guidance such as this would benefit the promotion of religious literacy in *RERC.*

In [P7 RERC 2-21a], a Core Learning statement is: "*I have considered and discussed the meaning of the Beatitudes…'.* Following this, there are no explicit references to discussion or dialogue at S1-3 Levels 3 or 4. However, in *TIOF SP* there are a small number of references to discussion, which are a balance between catechetical propositions such as: '*I can discuss the ways in which the 'Word of God', as expressed in Scripture, affects my personal relationship with God*' [S4 Word of God]; and educational propositions such as: *'I can discuss why mathematical and natural sciences are increasingly part of intellectual formation'* [S6 Word of God].

The curriculum, therefore, contains little explicit references to dialogue. The example of the educational proposition above [S6 Word of God] is an important reference point for the presence of dialogue, as it does not require the assent of faith. More explicit references to dialogue in the curriculum would support the development of religious literacy, given the importance of this in the religious literacy endeavour.

Moreover, many of the *Es & Os* and Core Learning statements could be used for young people to engage in dialogue and discussions about religion and express their learning through conversations. However, this would be carried out through individual school or teacher planning, preparation or judgement. There are many examples like the one which follows- whereby an aspect of religious belief or practice is presented to pupils, either from Catholic Christianity or OWR, and young people are required to present their own response to this, and the responses of others:

> 'I have experienced opportunities to engage with issues of social injustice. I can describe how Church teaching in this area has affected my response and the responses of others to these issues.' [RERC 3-24a]

Pupils would be able to express their learning and their own personal responses on these topics through dialogue and discussion, although this would depend on individual school and teacher planning. A more consistent approach to dialogue is desirable in *RERC*.

It would be appropriate to conclude, then, that *TIOF* contains *potential* or *possibilities* for dialogue. More could be done in future *RERC* curricula revisions to provide guidance and structure for classroom dialogue because of its importance to religious literacy.

6.3.2.2 Critical judgement

Crucial to Wright's (1993) definition and model of religious literacy was the ability to make 'balanced and informed judgements' about religion. This critical judgement is primarily to be applied to the truth claims that religions make.

RERC's 'I' statements use command words that draw upon Bloom's Taxonomy. This is organised by 'six different domain levels: (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation.' (Lasley, 2023) Most of the Core Learning statements in *TIOF* are based on knowledge and comprehension. There is evidence that pupils are asked to 'evaluate' from S1 Level 3 onwards. Some examples are catechetical in nature, such as:

> ‘Through researching appropriate witnesses, I have explored and evaluated how people “heard” God in the past and do so today, focussing particularly on the role of Sacred Scripture…’ [RERC 3-12a]

Other examples are educational and more appropriate for non-Catholic pupils, such as:

> ‘I have explored and evaluated the relevance of the New Testament to issues in contemporary life.’ [S2 RERC 3-13a]

In addition:

> ‘I can evaluate the extent to which Jesus fulfilled Jewish expectation of the Messiah.’ [S2 RERC 3-06a]

Consequently, [S2 RERC 3-06a] is a rare example in *TIOF,* where pupils are invited to critique the truth claims of Catholic Christianity. The belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ (Messiah) is crucial to the Catholic tradition.

A second aspect where critical judgement is present is when pupils are required to form their own response to religious issues. These examples are from the Catholic tradition and include aspects such as beliefs about God’s plan for each human being [S3 RERC 4-02a]; the centrality of Easter in the liturgical year [S3 RERC 4-18a]; ‘situations which pose a moral challenge in life’ [S3 RERC 4-23a]; and social justice issues and Church teaching on social justice [S3 RERC 4-24a].

Pupils are also required to provide their personal response to OWR. Pupils will ‘*describe and evaluate different beliefs about human nature and destiny, the problem of evil and suffering, and life after death’* [S3 RERC 4-25a] and compare their own beliefs with the beliefs of the world religion studied [S3 RERC 4-25b]. Pupils are therefore required to critically engage with some aspects of different religions in *TIOF*.

A topic related to this aspect of religious literacy is internal Catholic dissent with Church teaching. McDonough’s (2009) Canadian study ‘*Can there be ‘faithful dissent’ within Catholic*

religious education in schools?' explored this issue. He framed this dilemma in a binary of educational philosophies: a 'conservative' curricular understanding, one which understands the purpose of R.E in Catholic schools as imparting knowledge of the Catholic faith; and 'progressive', starting from the experience of individual pupils in the classroom. *TIOF* sits somewhat between these two propositions, although weighted towards the 'conservative' approach. However, there is more nuance in contemporary pedagogical approaches to *RERC* in Scotland than this perceived dichotomy.

From McDonough's research in Catholic state schools, he argues that where critical capabilities are not promoted in R.E, then, pupils 'are left without any explicit, realistic academic, social or ecclesial means of criticising the Church without feeling as though they are being forced to abandon it.' (Ibid, 188) This has implications for Catholic pupils, if their learning is predominantly based on knowing and understanding Catholicism. Pupils are therefore not provided with sufficient opportunities or experiences to develop skills that would allow them to navigate any difficulties they encounter when responding to the Church's teaching. This is true for *TIOF*.

While McDonough's study focuses on 'the Church', in an ecclesial way, and 'Church teaching', often in moral terms, it would also seem appropriate for pupils to critically consider fundamental Catholic doctrines such as the Trinity, the Resurrection of Jesus and life after death. This is the type of critical judgement that Wright, and others, intend.

Following McDonough's interviews with 13 teachers of R.E, the findings showed that practitioners held apprehensive and sceptical views towards facilitating open criticism of Catholic teaching. He explained that 'there is very little, if any theoretical support for a pedagogical approach that would encourage such a thing and that there is little awareness within the school of the content that would be the curriculum of such an approach.' (Ibid, 198) His conclusion from the study is that more should be done to facilitate critical appraisal of Church teaching, because the Catholic school should be 'a significant meeting place for cultural and intellectual diversity within the Church.' (Ibid) More intellectual groundwork would need to take place between the Church and the academy to facilitate a coherent structure for such a critique.

TIOF does not contain guidance on how to approach critical engagement with Church teaching, Catholic doctrine or moral theology in the *RERC* classroom. It would be appropriate to allow pupils to critically engage with the Catholic faith, as well as other traditions, if taking a religious literacy approach to *RERC.* Critical judgement is at the core of the religious literacy framework. It would be epistemically and philosophically incoherent to allow critical enquiry into other religions, yet not to Catholic Christianity.

Overall, although most of the core learning in *RERC* is based on knowledge and comprehension, the examples from *TIOF* provided in this subsection require the skills of synthesis and evaluation. This demonstrates that some aspects of critical judgement are present in the curriculum. This is consistent with the approaches taken across the eight different curricular areas' *Es & Os* in *CfE*. It is therefore a limitation imposed on *TIOF* by *Curriculum for Excellence.* In future curricular provisions, young people could be provided with more opportunities to engage critically with religious truth claims from the Catholic faith and other religious traditions. This could be carried out in a more consistent and systematic manner.

6.3.2.3 Exploring perceived binaries and areas of multiple engagements

Ford and Higton's view (2015, 46) was that 'the proper critical edge of the academic study of Christianity (and other traditions) is… by bringing multiple engagements, multiple perspectives, the discourses of multiple traditions (religious and secular) into conversation with one another.' Dinham and Francis (2015, 14) have a similar perspective, that religious literacy 'irons out the muddled binaries and assumptions… about religion versus the secular, private versus public, and perceptions of religion as a threat or a risk to an otherwise rational modern world.' *RERC* contains evidence of this model of religious literacy being present.

In addition to the explorations, comparisons and evaluations pupils make about Other World Religions at *BGE* level (explored above in 6.3.2.2), the *Senior Phase* document contains two prime examples of this model. This is carried out through studying the area of religion and science, or 'faith and reason'. Both areas in the curriculum where this exists are in firmly catechetical *Es & Os*, such as:

> ‘I have studied Scripture and Church Teaching which reveal the nature of God and I have considered how these influence my own and others’ spiritual life and relationship with God.’ [S4 Revealed Truth of God]

Within the Core Learning content, pupils are to study: literal and metaphorical scriptural interpretations of the Creation Stories in the Book of Genesis; the theological and soteriological ‘truths’ which the Church teaches about the Genesis accounts; theological and philosophical arguments for the existence of God and how ‘*Religion and Science (Faith and Reason) can inform each other’* through exploring ‘*theories proposed from a scientific background on the origins of the Universe and humanity: Evolution and Big Bang Theory’*. It appears, then, that these could be both catechetical and educational for Catholic and non-Catholic pupils.

Pupils revisit the topic of science and religion in the [S6 Word of God] strand. They are to: *‘Evaluate the approaches and reasoning of both Religion and Science used for understanding Creation.’* The sources for this study are the Book of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and the Church’s *Gaudium et Spes* chapters 5, 6 and 13. (Pope Paul VI, 1965) From this, pupils study the relationship between the Catholic tradition and science through analysing the scientific method; discussing ‘*why mathematical and natural sciences are increasingly part of intellectual formation’*; and how ‘*technology is now transforming the face of the earth’* (GS5) by describing the ‘*positive and negative impacts of this.*’ These examples provide evidence of an engagement between religion and secular sciences in the curriculum. Pupils explore aspects of scientific subject specialist knowledge and vocabulary, and then analyse and evaluate this knowledge in relation to Catholic theology.

This section shows that there is an introductory academic engagement between Christianity and the secular sciences in the curriculum. This is the prime method for addressing religious and secular binaries and dichotomies in the *RERC* classroom.

6.3.3 Religious literacy and religious diversity

Both aspects that are explored below are deemed important in *cross-cultural religious literacy.* (Seiple and Hoover, 2022) (Barnes and Smith, 2015).

6.3.3.1 Valuing religious differences

TIOF responds to religious difference in two ways. First, the principles that underpin the curriculum. *TIOF* acknowledges that 'Catholic children should be prepared so as to live alongside others of different denominations.' (BCoS, 2011, 16) The curriculum intends to support Catholic young people to live in harmony with others from different religious backgrounds as they grow into adulthood. The curriculum writers show an awareness and sensitivity to the religious landscape at the time of its publication in 2011. This remains relevant today:

> 'In the context of today's multi-cultural and multi-faith society the Church is mindful of the need to develop in young people both a deep respect for people of faith and a recognition of the religious freedom of all.' (Ibid)

The curriculum therefore acknowledges that religious diversity exists in Scottish society, and that young people should be equipped to respond positively to this. *TIOF* explicitly addresses the 'inclusion of all children in the Catholic school' (Ibid, 9), thus reiterating this principle. This is referring implicitly to religious diversity, rather than other ways in which diversity may be apparent. The key tenet is that all students are welcomed. All pupils are 'valued, treated with respect and encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school.' (Ibid) It is evident, then, that non-Catholic pupils should not be excluded, nor feel that they are. This is crucial in the *RERC* classroom.

The second way religious differences are valued is through the curricular content. Three of the six S3 (Level 4) outcomes explicitly address religious difference in contemporary society, with an emphasis on Scotland. These include studying the '*commonality of values across major world faiths*', and their importance for the '*good of the individual and stability of society'* [S3 RERC 4-26b]; '*researching the traditions, practices and customs of major world religions*', and developing '*understanding of them'* and '*respect for people of other faiths'* [S3 RERC 4-27a]; and describing '*the place of religious practice in Scotland and in the contemporary world at large*.' [S3 RERC 4-27b] The latter *E&O* will be given further exploration.

[S3 RERC 4-27b] contains two 'Core Learning' statements: '*I have explored the ways in which religious diversity is important and celebrated within Scottish culture';* and *'I have researched some of the ways in which religious practice has an important impact on the world.'* The key vocabulary for this *E&O* is 'Religious Diversity.'

These are the final references to OWR in both *TIOF* documents. They pay clear attention to promoting knowledge, and respectful appreciation of, contemporary religious diversity. However, as this element of religious literacy is aimed at supporting citizens to live in a religiously diverse society particularly during adulthood, it would be more appropriate if these areas of study were present in the *Senior Phase* document. Young people could engage with this element of the sociology of religion as they prepare to leave secondary school. This could provide them with the knowledge, language and appropriate sensitivity to encounter religious diversity in society.

6.3.3.2 Understanding the inner coherence of religions

In chapter 3, Robinson's (2011) list of contemporary pedagogical approaches to R.E was presented. *TIOF* states that the *anthropological approach* is to be utilised when teaching about Other World Religions. The curriculum also considers 'non-religious symbols, rituals, important texts and beliefs that feature in society today.' (Ibid, 18) The anthropological approach teaches about Other World Religions 'from the standpoint of human experience.' (Ibid, 17) Robinson (2011, 168) explains that this approach should focus on 'what people do', so that pupils can 'make sense of these actions, habits, rituals and engagements.' The life experiences of believers are prioritised over primary and secondary texts. However, Robinson also argues that the anthropological approach for OWR is challenging when teaching from a particular faith standpoint because 'a non-judgemental, descriptive analysis is not possible while maintaining a faith perspective'. He adds that it 'is far beyond the resources of the working RE teacher to undertake this sort of approach' to the lives of the non-religious. Questions remain over how this approach is implemented across Scottish Catholic schools, and how successful this is.

TIOF advocates opportunities for representatives from other Christian denominations and other religious traditions to be 'invited to give personal faith witness.' (BCoS, 2011, 17) This is what an anthropological approach can look like in practice. Therefore, this aspect of religious literacy is present in *TIOF,* if a variety of primary sources of texts or media (or personal witness) from contemporary believers or religious communities are explored in the classroom.

The following subsection of this chapter will provide a similar overview of which aspects of religious literacy are absent from *RERC.*

6.4 Which models of religious literacy are absent from *This is Our Faith* and the Scottish RERC curricular documents?

This subsection will provide an overview of which aspects of the contemporary models of religious literacy are absent in *RERC.*

6.4.1 Religious literacy and religion

6.4.1.1 The Bible as literature

Prothero and Kerby (2015) advocated studying the Bible as literature from an academic standpoint. This is viewed as counter to studying biblical texts as Sacred Scripture, from an insider's faith perspective.

Most of the 'Word of God' strand's learning is dedicated to studying the Bible as God's Word, as interpreted by the Magisterium. For example, at P7 (Level 2):

> 'I know that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that I should treat it with reverence.' [P7 RERC 2-12a]

Furthermore, at S6 level:

> ‘I have studied, prayed and reflected upon aspects of scripture and I can describe how these can deepen my relationship with God and others.’ [S6 Word of God]

These examples, therefore, may inhibit those pupils who are not committed Catholics from accessing such parts of the curriculum. This is particularly relevant during times of personal growth in the lives of young people, as they prepare to leave primary or secondary school. Most of the biblical material in *TIOF* is designed to support the development of Catholic faith in children and young people.

However, there are some examples of the ‘literary genres’ (BCoS, 2011, 45) or ‘literary forms’ of biblical texts being explored in *TIOF* [S1 RERC 3:11a]. Pupils are to ‘develop awareness of literary forms in the Bible’ to give a deeper insight into ‘the meaning of Bible texts.’ Pupils are also to ‘describe the particular type of literary form found in the Synoptic Gospels’, specifically. [S2 RERC 3:11a] The backgrounds to the Synoptic Gospels are also to be studied. Pupils explore ‘what scholars suggest’ about the authors of the Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew. This includes the historical and cultural influences upon their writing, their rationale for their gospels and key themes of their work. [S1 RERC 3-13a] [S2 RERC 3-13a] [S3 RERC 4-13a]

Overall, *TIOF* presents the Bible in a catechetical and evangelical manner, and therefore does not advocate the academic study of biblical texts. Within *TIOF*, though, there are some brief insights into a more academic approach to studying the scriptures. These are present in *TIOF* (BGE), but return to a more catechetical method in *TIOF SP*. It may be more appropriate for such an academic approach to biblical study to be applied in the Senior Phase. This could allow for more critical skills to be applied, as young people are developing these skills and capabilities across their school experiences whilst preparing for assessments in National Qualifications.

6.4.1.2 Scriptural reasoning

Ford and Higton (2015, 51) advocated 'Scriptural Reasoning' approach practiced by the Cambridge InterFaith Programme. This involves interreligious study of the sacred texts of religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

TIOF has a focus on the 'Word of God' as one of its eight Strands of Faith, and references to Sacred Scripture are present throughout the other strands to complement this learning. The Christian scriptures are studied through a primarily catechetical prism in the curriculum. There is an awareness given to other religious scriptures in Primary 3 and Primary 4 (Level 1), but this is solely based on learning that the Qur'an and the Torah are sacred texts in Islam and Judaism.

Scriptural reasoning, as presented in this model, is absent from *RERC*. There may be the opportunity to engage in scriptural reasoning when comparing beliefs and values in OWR to Christianity. Additionally, it could be applied if there is a member(s) of a religious tradition who will meet with a class/group. However, this would be done through individual school or teacher planning.

6.4.2 Religious literacy and cultural studies

6.4.2.1 The religious dimensions of political, social and cultural expressions across time and place

Moore (2015) provided a comprehensive framework for her cultural studies model of religious literacy. One aspect of this was understanding the social, historical and cultural contexts of faith traditions and contemporary manifestations of religion. This study primarily applies to scriptures, although it can also apply to beliefs and practices. *TIOF*'s catechetical nature is demonstrated by one of the 'Core Learning' statements in [S3 RERC 4-11a]:

> ‘I understand that, as the Sacred Scriptures are a product of the Tradition of the Faith of the Church, the Church herself is the authoritative interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures through the Magisterium. (Dei Verbum 9 & 10)’

Accordingly, this is a narrow interpretation of the Christian scriptures through a particular lens: the Magisterium. For the outsider to the faith, this may not fulfil the criteria of understanding the history of the central texts of Christianity from a primarily academic perspective.

The second key principle from Moore’s (2015) cultural studies approach is primarily absent from *RERC*. This was advocated through taking ‘multi- and cross-discipline approaches [to religion] using social sciences.’ There is no mention of the social sciences in the *RERC* documents. There is evidence that contemporary issues of social justice and morality have been considered, but these are studied through the lenses of Catholic Social Teaching and Moral Theology. There is evidence that other academic disciplines have been considered, such as art, drama and music. [RERC 1-01a] *RERC* explores events in the history of Christianity (see Son of God Strand of Learning). However, the type of study Moore advocates is absent.

Her model is based on advocating a ‘non-sectarian’ study of religion, which she defines as presuming ‘the religious legitimacy of diverse normative claims.’ (Moore, 2014, 380) The word ‘sectarian’ is accompanied with different connotations in Scotland than in the U.S.A, particularly surrounding intra-Christian division. This study could instead be referred to as ‘non-confessional’ or ‘non-denominational’ in Scotland. Moore’s approach involves religious believers being able to assert their theological orthodoxy yet ‘recognising the factual truth that multiple legitimate perspectives exist.’ (Ibid, 381) Moore advocates a different approach than *TIOF*. In *TIOF*, ‘teachers must propose Roman Catholic beliefs and values as objectively true and eminently relevant’ and ‘relativism must be avoided.’ (BCoS, 2011, 16) It is perhaps not appropriate, now, for Catholic schools in Scotland to abandon their presentation of Catholic beliefs as valid interpretations of reality. A key point remains that parents, guardians or carers have opted to send their children to these schools, in an educational system that allows for such faith-schooling. These parents, guardians or carers, then, may ‘wish to introduce their children to a world mediated through some kind of moral/theological lens’ in the Scottish education system which has a ‘lack of diversity’ of provision. (Conroy, 2001, 554) The ramification of this decision is that children are also provided with a specific type of religious literacy in contemporary Scottish Catholic schools. This has received little attention in the public square.

Another way Moore's model is applied is through analysing the 'power and powerlessness' in religions, such as 'why are some theological interpretations more prominent than others in relationship to specific issues?' (Moore, 2015, 31) Linked to this, Stoer's (2020b) criticism of *TIOF* is relevant. He observes that 'The Church and its teaching are always portrayed in an idealised, homogeneous manner and ahistorical manner.' It would be valid for *RERC* to present Church doctrine whilst also recognising the theological, historical and sociocultural developments surrounding key examples. This is absent in *TIOF*.

This model of religious literacy is absent from *RERC*, then, across all principles.

6.4.3 Religious literacy as a process

6.4.3.1 The evolving nature of religion

Another aspect of religious literacy included understanding religious literacy as a 'fluid practice'. (Prothero, 2007, 14) This ability requires 'knowing basic information about Christianity and other religions, and that basic information changes over time.' (Ibid)

Coll and Reilly (2020) make a relevant criticism of *TIOF*. They argue that the static nature of *TIOF*, because the document is a hard copy, leaves the curriculum without the potential to be a 'living document'. They propose that the curriculum should be 'constantly' reviewed and updated 'in response to lived teacher experience, critiques, national developments, and Church teachings (encyclicals such as *Laudato Si'*).' Franchi (2013, 476) also makes a similar case. He explains that *TIOF* points in a 'firm direction', however Church teaching allows for flexibility.

TIOF, then, does not provide pupils with the opportunity to explore the evolving nature of religious traditions and contemporary developments, particularly in the Catholic tradition.

6.4.4 Religious literacy and religious diversity

6.4.4.1 Engaging critically with religious stereotypes

An important aspect of this model was developing a critical awareness of religions. This involves the ability to recognise, analyse and critique religious stereotypes. (APPG, 2015) (Dinham and Francis, 2015) *TIOF* has a range of topics to be studied in the OWR section. These support pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of those traditions. The curriculum aims to promote respect of different religious traditions and believers- this is a recurring theme in the opening sections of *TIOF.* There is also evidence that the curriculum writers aimed to relate these religions, which may be unfamiliar to learners, to Catholic faith practices. [S1 RERC 3-27b] However, no references are made to addressing, responding to, or engaging critically with any religious stereotypes. As such, this aspect of religious literacy remains absent from *RERC.*

6.4.4.2 Internal diversity within religions

A second important aspect that is absent in this area is an awareness that there is internal diversity within religions. (Biesta et al., 2019) (Moore, 2015) It is true that there is evidence of internal diversity within Christianity being explored. Ecumenical issues are presented in Primaries 6 and 7 (Level 2). We have understood that *TIOF* also recommends other denominations in Christianity to be explored, too. However, there is no evidence of internal diversity within Catholicism being considered. Stoer (2020a) also presented this criticism. He argued that *TIOF* lacks any acknowledgement that most pupils in Catholic schools do not attend Mass in their parish on a regular basis, that disagreement with Church teaching exists and the Church herself has been subjected to criticism and ridicule. So too, he highlights that there is no suggestion on how the diversity of views within the Catholic community may be addressed by a teacher or pupil. These are important obstacles in this area.

When this principle is applied to OWR, there is no depth of understanding given to internal diversity within other religious traditions such as Judaism or Islam. There is a danger of reductionism to a stereotyped and idealised portrayal of religion and religious communities in contemporary Britain and Scotland in the curriculum. This may foster a superficial understanding of these faith traditions.

This aspect of religious diversity, therefore, is mostly absent from *RERC* and does not respond to the religious landscape of contemporary Scotland.

6.4.4.3 The real religious landscape

Dinham and Francis (2015) argued that understanding the 'real religious landscape' was important for religious literacy. The research into the religious landscape of Scotland showed that a minority of the population are Catholic. A smaller percentage of those who identify as Catholic engage in public practices such as Mass attendance.

TIOF recognises that religious diversity exists in the *RERC* classroom. However, there is a consensus among those writing about *TIOF* that the catechetical approach provides obstacles to serving the needs of non-Catholic pupils in the R.E classroom. It is therefore open to criticisms of not being an inclusive curriculum. Franchi (2013, 476) argues that the curriculum can be accused of adopting what Ryan (2008) calls the '"exclusivist" model in preference to models governed by inclusion and plurality.' Franchi explains that because the Core Learning content contains *personalisation*, in that the outcomes are 'expressions of explicit personal faith commitment' [in the Catholic tradition], this 'suggests that the non-Catholic pupil (or even the non-practicing baptised Catholic) in the Catholic school would be unable to participate fully in religious education classes.' (Ibid) This point deserves sincere consideration. Teachers of R.E in Catholic schools are required to report to parents, guardians and carers on children and young people's attainment of *RERC* curricular levels like any other subject. There is the potential that the nature of the Core Learning content could disadvantage non-Catholic or non-practicing Catholics in the classroom, relative to their practicing and church-engaged Catholic peers.

Stoer (2020a) offers a similar critique. We have learned that *TIOF* states that different outcomes will be possible for all pupils across different religious backgrounds (see above, 6.3.1.3). However, he draws attention to an example: 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.'* He concludes that it is difficult to see how this outcome and others 'might be adapted by a teacher and apply to all the young people in the classroom.' Coll and Reilly (2020) acknowledge this problem, but frame their criticism in more theological terms; that young people 'must be free to find their place vis-à-vis the Church's belief' and be provided with an invitation to respond personally to the 'corporate faith of the school as Catholic.' The catechetical approach, then, provides a barrier to promoting this aspect of religious literacy. It is also apparent that there are no references to contemporary religious demographics or statistics in *RERC*, so young people are not given the opportunity to engage with the religious landscape.

6.4.5 Religious literacy and the secular

Dinham and Francis (2015) argued that religious literacy should include elements of secular life. These include understanding the practices of engagement between religion and secularity; the contemporary religious and secular landscape; non-religious 'identities'; and the nuanced understanding of the complexity of 'unbelief.' Likewise, Shaw (2020) argued for the inclusion of 'worldviews' to Religious Education, to include non-religious perspectives.

6.4.5.1 The marginalisation of the non-religious

The focus on the non-religious is marginal in *TIOF*. One issue that is evident is the lack of engagement with secular philosophical traditions, such as Humanism or Utilitarianism. There is also no explicit study of Atheism or atheist movements. *RERC* instead places the Catholic tradition at the heart of comparative studies with other religions and the sciences. The intellectual and spiritual focus is specifically on religious traditions. As the subject area is not

RME, including morality; or *RMPS*, with the inclusion of philosophy, the approach to learning is deliberate and coherent.

Stoer (2020a) points to the predominantly secular landscape of young adults in Scotland and argues that the curriculum does not 'equip young people to respond to, and learn from,' the majority who are not religious. He also claims it allows 'secular arguments to go unchallenged.' Robinson (2011) previously made a similar case, arguing that 'the refusal to countenance non-religious stances [in *RERC*] as being worthy of study hardly accords respect to all.' He references the *P&P* document, where it explains *RERC* will support pupils in their 'personal search for truth and meaning in life' and concludes that marginalising non-religious pupils in the classroom does not support this.

The *phenomenological approach* to R.E is explicitly rejected in *TIOF*. This approach 'invites students to set aside all preconceptions' to learn about religious traditions 'empathetically.' The key intention is to allow students to 'understand how the world looks through other eyes.' (Ibid) Phenomenological approaches, which were first advocated by Smart (1968), operate as 'comparative religious studies'. The teacher 'adopts a stance of neutrality to the various religions' truth claims and explores its doctrine and practices on its own terms.' (Christopher, 2020, 26)

TIOF equates the phenomenological approach with religious relativism. This presents 'all denominations or faiths as equally true.' (BCoS, 2011, 16) In *RERC,* relativism 'must be avoided' because Catholic R.E 'is confessional in nature.' (Ibid) Phenomenological studies of 'stances independent of religious belief' do not form part of the *RERC* curriculum. *TIOF*, then, follows an alternative philosophy of education to liberal forms of R.E. Liberal approaches to the subject have grown in prevalence in non-denominational schools in Britain.

It is clear, then, that *TIOF* does not fully address religious literacy and 'the secular', aside from engagement with the sciences.

Concluding remarks

This chapter's critical evaluation of the *RERC* curriculum has highlighted that *CfE* does not explicitly address the topic of religious literacy. However, there is evidence that aspects of religious literacy advocated in the academy are present in the *TIOF* curriculum. It is unlikely that the curriculum writers were aware of these religious literacy models, as many were advocated post-*TIOF* publication. There remains, however, key omissions of other aspects of religious literacy from *RERC*. It may not be possible to implement each aspect of religious literacy in a school curriculum. The *TIOF* curriculum is limited in its ability to add more Core Learning material. However, as there already exists a vast quantity of Core Learning material in *TIOF*, future curricular provisions could utilise this chapter to implement a more robust breadth and depth of religious literacy models.

The final chapter will address the fourth and final research question: is religious literacy a way forward for RERC in Scotland?

CHAPTER 7: RELIGIOUS LITERACY: A WAY FORWARD FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND?

Introduction

Chapter 3 explored the contemporary socio-religious context of Britain and Scotland. The research demonstrated that a sociological mandate for promoting religious literacy exists. Religious literacy is important for *all* young people growing into adulthood, including those being educated in Catholic schools in Scotland.

The socio-religious context showed that the 'real religious landscape' in Britain is one of changing demographics. This includes growing religious diversity- both internally in Catholicism and externally in the rise of adherents of different religions. This is combined with the decline of Christianity and rise of the non-religious population. Religious literacy was identified as an important tool to support social cohesion in a religiously diverse society. It can help citizens respond to religious stereotypes and address stigma and bigotry.

Religious literacy can therefore be an important framework to support future social cohesion, particularly to support adults and young adolescents to interpret religion in conventional and social media. This is vital in a changing technological and mass-information age. The changing modes of communication about religion is also accompanied with an increasing religious illiteracy. Promoting religious literacy is therefore a potential remedy to this.

To address the final research question of this thesis, this chapter will explore two further mandates: educational and ecclesial.

7.1 The educational mandate

7.1.1 The contemporary context

CfE and *TIOF* predate much of the contemporary discussion on religious literacy in the academy and public policy in the U.K. This subsection will demonstrate that there is an educational mandate for religious literacy to be a way forward in *future* curricular provisions-within or after *CfE*.

7.1.2 The purpose of CfE's 'Broad General Education'

The purpose of Scotland's current *Broad General Education* (BGE) [early years-S3] in *CfE* is 'encapsulated in the *four capacities* - to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.' (Education Scotland, 2019a)

The curriculum therefore aims to 'ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future, and to appreciate their place in the world.' (Ibid) *CfE* advocates a broadly 'social constructivist' approach to education. The curriculum proposes that students learn best 'through active engagement and experience, and through dialogue with other learners.' (Priestley, 2013, 16)

The four capacities 'recognise the need for all children and young people to know themselves as individuals and to develop their relationships with others, in families and in communities.' (Education Scotland, 2019b) *CfE*'s prime rationale is to promote a range of skills which will allow young adults to integrate fully into civic society, with a significant focus on relationality and skills for learning, life and work. The aims of *CfE* fuse social constructivism with academic achievement.

The promotion of religious literacy in *RERC* (particularly in the BGE), then, would allow young people to be involved in learning experiences which can form their knowledge of religion. It could also provide a platform for this knowledge to be practically expressed and displayed, through active engagement in dialogue, discussion and critiques.

Priestley and Minto's (2012, 8) study of *CfE* explored the dynamic relationship between knowledge and skills. They cautioned against approaches that 'downgrade knowledge in favour of skills development.' In place of this, they propose that 'citizens in a modern democracy need both, and it is important that skills are underpinned by knowledge.' Religious literacy has both a knowledge base to be understood, and a skill-set to be developed. It would be prudent for future *RERC* curricular provisions to strike a balance between both. The religious literacy framework provided in this thesis could be utilised to achieve this goal.

7.1.3 Future curricular provisions

Scottish state education has approached a crossroads moment. This applies primarily to the *Senior Phase,* but with wider implications for the *BGE*. The Scottish Government recently published its *It's Our Future* report- a seminal independent review of qualifications and assessments in Scotland. This review was driven by four key factors: external changes in society; dissatisfactions with assessments in Scotland (which were highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic); two significant OECD reports (OECD (2021) and Stobart (2021)) which indicated a need for change in the Senior Phase; and a longer-term dissatisfaction within Scotland about differences between the original intentions for Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) qualifications and learners' experiences of them. (The Scottish Government, 2023, 13)

The report made 26 recommendations, many of which are specific to the *Senior Phase* and National Qualifications. However, much of the wider educational reflections are valuable and relevant to *RERC*. The main recommendation was to 'Change Qualifications and Assessment in the Senior Phase in Scotland' (Recommendation 1). The prime approach advocated in the Report was to 'Adopt the SDA [Scottish Diploma of Achievement] as the new approach to qualifications and assessment. The SDA (the Diploma) should contain three elements: Programmes of Learning, Project Learning and the Personal Pathway.' (Recommendation 5) (Ibid, 100)

One relevant theme that appears in the Report was made specifically under Recommendation 22, to 'improve course progression between the Broad General Education (BGE) and the Senior Phase, and within National Qualifications offered in the Senior Phase.' This evidence suggests that soon, there will be changes made to both the national *BGE* and *Senior Phase* curricula.

This is Our Faith is the compulsory curricular model for *RERC* across both *BGE* and *Senior Phase* stages. The subject area would therefore be part of the national dialogue on curricular revision. The next curricular review is the prime opportunity, then, to implement a more comprehensive and systematic vision of religious literacy in *RERC*. This move would help to support the alignment between the principles and methods of *BGE* and *Senior Phase*, and respond to the sociological mandate provided in this thesis. If religious literacy is neglected in the next *RERC* curricular update, it would be a significant educational opportunity that is missed.

Religious literacy could be also considered in future wider discussion on Scottish education assessment, attainment and accreditation issues in R.E. This includes going beyond *RERC*, extending to *RME* and the National Qualifications *Religion, Beliefs and Values Award* (RBV) and *RMPS*. There has been no explicit consideration given to contemporary religious literacy in the existing National Qualifications' documents. Catholic secondary schools in Scotland also prepare young people for National Qualifications in Religious Education, in addition to the 'Core' *RERC* curriculum. Therefore, there is the potential to recognise the importance of religious literacy in future 'core' curricular *and* national assessment provisions.

The educational mandate shows that religious literacy can be a way forward for both core *RERC* and National Qualifications.

7.2 The ecclesial mandate

The documents produced by the Congregation for Catholic Education (now the Dicastery for Education and Culture) were examined for evidence of religious literacy in chapter 3. We recognised that religious literacy was not explicitly addressed in much detail by the Church, although *religious illiteracy* was regarded as problematic. The Church's view on pedagogical and professional development was also coherent with religious literacy initiatives. This subsection will explore the Church's philosophy of education in greater depth, to demonstrate that an ecclesial mandate exists for religious literacy to be promoted in Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland.

7.2.1 RERC as an academic discipline

RERC, through *TIOF*, is a catechetical curricular framework (see chapter 5). This framework is implemented with less nuance than the approach recommended by the Catholic Church. Since 1982, the Church has recognised the distinction between 'teaching of the Catholic religion' and 'catechesis.' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, 56) Rossiter (1982) first proposed this distinction in terms of a necessary 'creative divorce.' (Franchi, 2013, 469) The Church signalled, thereafter, that there is a 'close connection, and at the same time, a clear distinction between religious instruction and catechesis, or the handing on of the Gospel message.'[12] (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 66)

When the Congregation specifically addressed the subject of school-based R.E in its *Circular Letter*, the different aims of catechesis and R.E were outlined:

> 'Catechesis aims at fostering personal adherence to Christ and the development of Christian life in its different aspects… whereas religious education in schools gives the pupils knowledge about Christianity's identity and Christian life.' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, 17)

This shows that in dedicated Religious Education classes in Catholic schools, the educational philosophy of the curriculum should show an awareness that catechesis is not the primary purpose of learning experiences. Learning in R.E can complement catechesis, but the curriculum should follow a more intellectual framework. This may, however, be fused with

[12] 'Religious instruction' is one of the various ways that the Congregation for Catholic Education describes the subject discipline of Religious Education. Franchi (2018, 402) argues that it is 'particularly problematic when we study Church teaching on Religious Education in different languages, finding, therein, a challenging mosaic of definitions and terms which seems to defy attempts at harmony.' This thesis therefore understands 'religious instruction' as a model of Religious Education which is primarily based on educational principles, as opposed to catechesis, which has the main aim of deepening Catholic faith.

spiritual elements. This therefore highlights the nuanced nature of the Church's vision of Religious Education.

An important note is found in the *RERC P&P* document. This explains that the 'experiences and outcomes [E&O] draw on the best of current practice as outlined in Curriculum for Excellence documentation and build on previous documents emanating from the Catholic community.' The *P&P* document references twelve pieces of literature from the Church and previous *RERC* curricula in Scotland. The *Circular Letter* (2009) is an omission from this list, although the *P&P* document was written after the *Letter* and could have utilised this important piece of ecclesial literature.

The Church also previously made another important distinction; that 'the proper places for Catechesis is the family helped by other Christian communities, especially the local parish.' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 51) Catechesis 'takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime.' (Ibid, 68) The Church has therefore identified the prime site of catechesis as being carried out at home and the parish, not in the Catholic school. Catholic schools can support the mission of catechesis throughout the wider life of the school, but, according to the Church, catechesis should not be the sole aim of education in R.E.

The *Circular Letter* also explained the importance of intellectual formation in R.E:

> 'It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction [sic] in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge.' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, 17)

We have learned that *RERC* is regarded by the curriculum writers as a 'unique' (BCoS, 2015, 61) subject area in the Scottish curriculum because of its focus on Catholic spiritual and faith

formation. The Church's view, however, is that R.E in Catholic schools should be intellectually demanding, and to the same degree of challenge as other curricular areas. A religious literacy approach to *RERC* would not require diluting the focus on Catholic Christianity, or overlooking its importance in the educational mission. It would instead aim for Christianity and the 'Christian message' to be used as the means to promote an academically challenging vision of R.E. This approach would be accessible to all pupils, across different religious backgrounds.

Religious literacy, and religious literacy approaches to R.E, are more aligned to academic methods than to catechesis. Religious literacy, crucially, does not require the assent of faith, although it could prepare for the development of faith. Religious literacy approaches can make *RERC* accessible to *all pupils* due to its prioritisation of intellectual and academic aims over spiritual outcomes. Future Scottish *RERC* curricula provisions could implement the Church's distinction between the teaching about religion and catechesis through drawing upon a religious literacy framework.

7.3 Religious literacy: one approach among others

7.3.1 The curricular context

This is Our Faith already explicitly utilises various pedagogical approaches. These include the *anthropological approach* (BCoS, 2011, 18) and various *inductive* and *deductive* approaches Ibid, 59). *TIOF* also explicitly rejects the *phenomenological approach.* (Ibid, 18) The curriculum writers of *TIOF* therefore were aware of existing pedagogical approaches from the academy, and utilised or addressed these. Religious literacy, however, was not addressed.

The Church's pedagogical vision of a 'Divine Pedagogy' currently underpins *TIOF*. Two 'legitimate and complementary' approaches are to be followed. An *inductive (existential or ascending) approach* 'starts from the experiences of the student' and 'enlightens them with the Word of God' or considers 'how God is revealing himself' to us (Ibid, 59). A *deductive (kerygmatic or descending) approach* that 'describes and explains Scripture, doctrine or liturgy [and Christian witness]' (Ibid, 296) and 'then invites the student to see their relevance to life.'

(Ibid, 59) For most of the core content to be followed in *TIOF*, though, a deductive approach is evident.

TIOF therefore already implements several pedagogical methods that draw upon academic and ecclesial principles. This thesis recommends an innovative way forward for *RERC*. A further model (religious literacy) should be introduced. This is informed by contemporary research and placed within the social, religious and educational context of Catholic schools in Scotland today.

7.3.2 Implications

Religious literacy, presented in a framework of contemporary models in chapter 1 of this thesis, has little to say about spiritual or moral formation. Religious literacy is fundamentally an intellectual, academic and dialogic endeavour. If applied to the *RERC* curriculum, then religious literacy could be *one approach among others.* Religious literacy's primarily academic basis and methodology has some limitations in the context of Catholic Religious Education. There are objectives of Catholic schools and *RERC* that are not addressed by religious literacy. It would therefore be more appropriate for religious literacy to partially inform the curricular aims. This would leave room for spiritual and moral dimensions of education in Catholic schools to be addressed.

7.4 Religious literacy is a way forward for Catholic Religious Education in Scotland

7.4.1 Curricular aims

The *RERC Principles & Practice* document explains that there are currently seven different aims of the curriculum. This thesis proposes that in the next *RERC* curriculum, the following aim is introduced:

> '… to foster religiously literate young people, who can reflect, communicate, and act in an informed, intelligent, and sensitive manner towards religion and religious diversity.'

The use of the language of religious literacy would be an indication of the educational direction of the curriculum. It would allow young people to begin to understand what religious literacy is. Moreover, teachers of *RERC* could consciously focus on promoting this knowledge-base and skill-set. This aim would also reduce the need for seven aims of the curricular area. The use of the term 'religion' in the new revised curricular aims (in place of the current references to 'the Catholic faith', 'other Christian traditions' and 'major world religions') would show that the phenomenon of religion should be treated as one domain of knowledge and should not be compartmentalised. Religious literacy, in this curricular context, would mean that knowledge of different religions is not different types of knowledge. The different responses pupils would make to these faith traditions could be both intellectual and spiritual. Catholic Christianity would still take priority in this new approach. The differences between these religions are where the critical dimensions of religious literacy features. If knowledge of religion is viewed as one type of knowledge, this would allow for a more consistent philosophical and critical enquiry into religions in the *RERC* classroom.

In conclusion, a focus on religious literacy could emphasise the educational nature of *RERC*, whilst other aim(s) could highlight the spiritual and moral dimensions that remain part of the curriculum.

7.4.2 Curricular methods and content

Chapter 6 has demonstrated that there are several aspects of religious literacy that are already present in This *is Our Faith.* A complete rewrite of the curriculum would therefore not be necessary to promote religious literacy. This thesis suggests, however, that a new revised *RERC* curriculum finds a more nuanced balance between the catechetical aims that are already at the forefront of *TIOF*, and the educational philosophy that underpins religious literacy. This could be implemented through the publication of an *RERC* 'Religious Literacy Appendix'. This would provide supplementary guidance for teachers of *RERC*, alongside exemplary core learning. This would bridge the religious literacy gap that exists in *RERC*. Chapter 6 also

demonstrated that there are significant aspects of religious literacy which do not feature in the curriculum. These include key examples such as the recognition that religions continuously evolve; that religions contain internal diversity; and that understanding the real religious landscape is an important endeavour. There were also aspects of religious literacy that are briefly addressed in *RERC*, such as opportunities for dialogue and critical judgement, but more depth of these skills would be advocated in the revised Appendix.

Several religious literacy approaches were presented and analysed in chapter 4 of this thesis. The areas of overlap were also outlined. The next version of *RERC* should show an awareness of these religious literacy approaches within the classroom experiences of the curriculum. A religious literacy driven *RERC* should also consider the definition and five contemporary models of religious literacy that were presented in chapter 1. This definition, and the five contemporary models, are underpinned by contemporary scholarly research and public policy.

Concluding remarks

It has been shown that religious literacy is partially a way forward for Religious Education in Catholic state schools in Scotland. Religious literacy is already compatible with the aims and purposes of the current *CfE*. It is also important that religious literacy features in future *RERC* curriculum provisions. This is crucially relevant because of the current national review on assessments and curriculum in Scottish education. The Church's focus on the intellectual aspects of religion and R.E are also coherent with religious literacy. This chapter concludes that religious literacy can be one approach among others, because different approaches are required to promote spirituality and morality in *RERC*, which are beyond the scope of religious literacy.

CONCLUSION

Summary

The thesis aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What is religious literacy?
2. Is religious literacy important in contemporary Britain?
3. Is religious literacy promoted in Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland (RERC)?
4. Is religious literacy a way forward for RERC in Scotland?

Question 1 has been answered in chapters 1 and 4; question 2 has been answered in chapters 2 and 3; question 3 has been answered in chapter 6; and finally the main research question (4) was answered in chapter 7. Chapter 5 provided the context for questions 3 and 4 to be answered.

Recommendations

In light of the findings from this research, the following recommendations are being made for different stakeholders involved in writing future *RERC* curricular provisions:

> **Recommendation 1:** Religious literacy should be utilised as a pedagogical method in *RERC*, to complement existing pedagogies that are deployed.
>
> **Recommendation 2:** The following aim should be added to *RERC*, which should reduce the need for seven aims: '… to foster religiously literate young people, who can reflect, communicate, and act in an informed, intelligent, and sensitive manner towards religion and religious diversity.'

These recommendations are relevant to the following professional stakeholders: the Scottish Government; Education Scotland; the Scottish Qualifications Authority; the Catholic

Education Commission; the Scottish Catholic Education Service; the Bishops' Conference of Scotland; the St Andrew's Foundation for Catholic Teacher Education (University of Glasgow, School of Education); Diocesan Education groups; The Catholic Head Teachers Association in Scotland; Association of Catholic Primary Head Teachers in Scotland and teachers of Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland. The recommendations are also relevant to parents, guardians and carers of children and young people who are educated in Catholic schools in Scotland; and, finally, the children and young people who are educated in *RERC*.

Limitations

The author acknowledges there are limitations to the research. The first is that the methodology of this research involved a critical examination of relevant academia, policy, curricular and ecclesial documents. The conclusions provided in this thesis could have been further solidified by empirical research which focused specifically on the perspectives, insights and experiences of teaching staff within Catholic schools in Scotland. This would, in the first instance, focus on specialised teachers of Religious Education. This could, thereafter, extend to 'generalist' teachers of R.E and members of 'senior management' teams (Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers) in Catholic schools.

The second limitation involves the lack of available data on levels of religious literacy in contemporary Britain. This thesis could have used empirical methods to explore the levels of religious literacy that pupils possess in Catholic schools in Scotland. The research could ascertain the levels of religious literacy, which includes knowledge of: world religions; how religions interact with contemporary culture; how religions continuously evolve; internal and external religious diversity; and the interaction and relationship between religious and secular worldviews. The research could also examine the abilities of pupils to engage in dialogue about religious matters and form critical judgements about religions. This would be an important mode of study in future academic explorations of *RERC* and *TIOF*.

A final limitation is that the thesis focused specifically on the Religious Education curriculum for Catholic schools in Scotland. No consideration was given to R.E curricula in Catholic schools in other countries. The research may have been enhanced by utilising a critical comparison between *RERC* in Scotland and other curricula, in light of religious literacy and the sociological, educational and ecclesial mandates provided in this thesis.

Implications for future research and curricula

This thesis makes other recommendations, in addition to the two that address the question of this research.

Research

The author recommends academic empirical research to be carried out to:

- Ascertain levels of religious literacy, or religious illiteracy at national levels.
- Implement some religious literacy pedagogical methods in *RERC* and research the effectiveness of these strategies.

Curricula

The author recommends the following *RERC* curricula interventions, in light of the critical examination of *RERC* and religious literacy:

- More opportunities should be given to facilitate pupil dialogue.
- More guidance and structure should be provided to teachers of *RERC* to facilitate dialogue.
- More opportunities should be given to allow pupils to critically engage with the truth claims of religions.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to learn about 'Other World Religions' and other Christian denominations- aside from Catholic Christianity- in the *Senior Phase.*

Concluding remarks

Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland operates within the parameters of being state-funded by the Scottish Government, and being influenced by the Catholic Church through the Bishops' Conference of Scotland. This thesis has explored three different contexts, or mandates: sociological, education and ecclesial. This paper has specifically focused on *RERC* in relation to religious literacy, and argued that a mandate exists for religious literacy to partially inform *RERC*. Any future academic discussions, papers or dialogues; and any future educational papers, reports or policies that focus on *RERC*, should also draw upon these three mandates to engage with the wider contexts of the subject area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education (2014) *RE and good community relations.* [Online] Available at https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/APPG_report_RE_and_good_community_re.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education (2015) *Improving religious literacy: A contribution to the debate.* London: Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

Amarasingam, A., Tiflati, H. & Walker, N.C. (2021) Religious Literacy in Law: Anti-Muslim Initiatives in Quebec, the United States, and India. *Religion & Education,* 48(1), 121-140.

Barnes, L.P. (2001) What is wrong with the phenomenological approach to Religious Education? *Religious Education*, 96(4), 445-461.

Barnes, M. & Smith, J. (2015) Religious literacy as lokahi: Social harmony through disharmony. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious literacy in policy and practice*, 77-97. Bristol: Policy Press.

Barnes, L.P. (2009) Religious Education: taking religious difference seriously. *Impact,* Issue 17, 9-56.

BBC (2003) *Census 2001. Religion.* [Online] Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/uk/03/census_2001/html/religion.stm [last accessed 10.12.23]

Biesta, G., Aldridge, D., Hannam, P. & Whittle, S. (2019) *Religious literacy: A way forward for religious education?* Brunel University London & Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service.

Bishops' Conference of Scotland (BCoS) (2011) *This is Our Faith: guidance on the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools.* Glasgow: Scottish Catholic Education Service.

Bishops' Conference of Scotland (BCoS) (2015) *This is Our Faith: guidance on the teaching of religious education at senior phase in Catholic schools in Scotland.* Glasgow: Scottish Catholic Education Service.

Bishops' Conference of Scotland (2020) *The Catholic Church in Scotland.* [Online] Available at https://www.bcos.org.uk/CatholicScotland [last accessed 10.12.23]

Bullivant, S. (2019) *Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cadge, W., Seigler, C.P. & Haythorn, T. (2022) Religious literacy, chaplaincy and spiritual care. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement*, 228-240. London: Routledge.

Carey, P. & Duncan, G. (2022) *Census 2021: England no longer a majority Christian country. The National News.* [Online] Available at https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2022/11/29/census-2021-england-no-longer-majority-christian-country/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993) Vatican City: Vatican Publishing House. [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM [last accessed 10.12.23]

Catto, R. & Perfect, D. (2015) Religious literacy, equality and human rights. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 135-163. Bristol: Policy Press.

Chan, W.T.A & Sitek, J. (2021) Religious Literacy in Healthcare. *Religion & Education*, 48(1), 102-120.

Chan, W.Y.A., Mistry, H., Reid, E., Zaver, A. & Jafralie, S. (2019) Recognition of context and experience: a civic-based Canadian conception of religious literacy. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 41(3), 255-271.

Christopher, K.B. (2020) *RE as liberal education: A proposal for a critical religious education.* Thesis submission for the degree of PhD. Institute of Education, UCL. [Online]

Available at https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10105717/7/Christopher_Thesis_Edited.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

Clements, B. & Bullivant, S. (2021) To Conscience First, and to the Pope (Long) Afterwards? British Catholics and Their Attitudes Towards Morality and Structural Issues Concerning the Catholic Church. *Review of Religious Research*, 63(4), 1-24.

Clements, B. & Bullivant, S. (2022) *Catholics in Britain Survey, 2019 [Data Collection]*. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Service.

Clements, B. (2017a) Weekly churchgoing amongst Roman Catholics in Britain: long-term trends and contemporary analysis. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 38(1), 32-44.

Clements, B. (2017b) Religious change and secularisation in Scotland: An analysis of affiliation and attendance. *Scottish Affairs*, 26(2), 133-162.

Clements, B. (2018) Attitudes towards faith-based schooling amongst Roman Catholics in Britain. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 40(1), 44-54.

Clements, B. (2020) Catholics in Britain and weekly Mass attendance. *Catholics in Britain.* [Online] Available at https://catholicsinbritain.le.ac.uk/findings/catholics-in-britain-and-weekly-mass-attendance/#.Y1WYhi1Q3fY [last accessed 10.12.23]

Clines, J. & Gilliat-Ray, S. (2015) Religious literacy and chaplaincy. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 237-256. Bristol: Policy Press.

Coll, R. & Reilly, S. (2020) A living tradition. *Open House*, 290, 3-5.

Coll, R. & Reilly, S. (2022) Catholic teacher formation in Scotland. In Franchi, L. & Rymarz, R. (eds.) *Formation of Teachers for Catholic Schools: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Era. Series: Catholic Education Globally: Challenges and Opportunities*, 27-41. Springer.

Commission on Religious Education (2017) Religious *Education for All.* London: RE Council. [Online] Available at https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-

content/uploads/2017/09/Commission-on-Religious-Education-Interim-Report-2017.pdfb [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (1977) *The Catholic School.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (1982) *Lay Catholics in schools: Witnesses to faith.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (1988) *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19880407_catholic-school_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (1997) *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (2007) *Educating Together in Catholic Schools. A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (2009) *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Catholic Schools.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20090505_circ-insegn-relig_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (2014) *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (Instrumentum Laboris).* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20140407_educare-oggi-e-domani_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) (2022) *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20220125_istruzione-identita-scuola-cattolica_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (2007) *Doctrinal note on some aspects of evangelisation.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20071203_nota-evangelizzazione_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Conroy, J. C. (2015) Religious illiteracy in school Religious Education. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 167–185. Bristol: Policy Press.

Conroy, J. C. (2016) Religious Education and religious literacy – a professional aspiration*? British Journal of Religious Education*, 38(2), 163-176.

Crisp, B.R. (2015) Religious literacy and social work: the view from Australia. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 207-226. Bristol: Policy Press.

Culham's St Gabriel's Trust (2022) *Learning to Listen: Inquiry into Religious Literacy in Print and Broadcast Media.* [Online] Available at https://www.reonline.org.uk/research/learning-to-listen-inquiry-into-religious-literacy-in-print-and-broadcast-media/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

Curtice, J., Clery, E., Perry, J., Phillips M. & Rahim, N. (eds.) (2019) *British Social Attitudes: The 36th Report.* London: The National Centre for Social Research.

Cusimano Love, M. (2022) Fratelli Tutti: Lessons learned from interreligious action, and the Catholic Church. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement,* 53-65. London: Routledge.

Davie, G. (1990) Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain? *Social Compass*, 37(4), 455–469.

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

Davie, G. (2015) Foreword. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, VII-XI. Bristol: Policy Press.

Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) (2015) *Religious literacy in policy and practice*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Dinham, A. (2015) Religious literacy in welfare. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 101-111. Bristol: Policy Press.

Dinham, A. & Baker, C. (2019) *Religion and Belief Literacy: a Framework for Acting in Relation to Religion and Belief.* University of London: Goldsmiths.

Duncan, P., Garcia, A. & Swan, L. (2022) Census 2021 in charts: Christianity now minority religion in England and Wales. *The Guardian*, 29/11/22. [Online] Available at https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/29/census-2021-in-charts-christianity-now-minority-religion-in-england-and-wales [last accessed 10.12.23]

Education Scotland (N.d. (a)) *Curriculum for Excellence. Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools: Experiences and outcomes*. [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/media/lbtg5lpl/rerc-eo.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

Education Scotland (N.d. (b)) *Curriculum for Excellence. Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools: Principles and practice.* [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/media/igvjg3lc/rerc-pp.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

Education Scotland (N.d. (c)) *What is Curriculum for Excellence?* [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/about-curriculum-for-excellence/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence/ [last accessed 10.12.12]

Education Scotland (2014) *Religious and Moral Education (3-18) curriculum review*. [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/media/rqmolrbp/rme30curriculumimpactreviewrme.pdf [last accessed 10.12.12]

Education Scotland (2017) *Benchmarks: Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools.* [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/media/sjjfw5oj/rerc_benchmarkspdf.pdf [last accessed 10.12.12]

Education Scotland (2019a) *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence.* [Online] Available at https://scotlandscurriculum.scot [last accessed 10.12.12]

Education Scotland (2019b) *The purpose of the curriculum*. [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/about-curriculum-for-excellence/the-purpose-of-the-curriculum/ [last accessed 10.12.12]

Education Scotland (2022) *Developing the Young Workforce (DYW).* [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/developing-the-young-workforce-dyw [last accessed 10.12.23]

Education Scotland (2023) *The Compassionate and Connected Classroom curricular resource*. [Online] Available at https://education.gov.scot/media/umcdcdhd/nih087-compassionate-and-connected-classroom.pdf [last accessed 10.12.12]

Fetzer, J.S. & Soper, S. (2003) The Roots of Public Attitudes toward State Accommodation of European Muslims' Religious Practices before and after September 11. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(2), 247–258.

Fischer, S., Hotam, Y. & Wexler, P. (2012) Democracy and Education in Postsecular Society. *Review of Research in Education*, 36, 261-281.

Ford, D. & Higton, M. (2015) Religious literacy in the context of theology and religious studies. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious literacy in policy and practice*, 39-54. Bristol: Policy Press.

Ford, D.F. (2004) The responsibilities of universities in a religious and secular world. *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 17(1), 22–37.

Franchi, L. & Robinson, L. (2018) Religious and moral education. In Bryce, T.G.K., Humes, W.M., Gillies, D. & Kennedy, A. (eds.) *Scottish Education*, 490-496. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Franchi, L. (2013) Catechesis and religious education: a case study from Scotland. *Religious Education*, 108(5), 467-481.

Franchi, L. (2018) Authentic religious education: A question of language? *Religions*, 9(12), 403.

Francis, M. & van Eck Duymaer van Twist, A. (2015) Religious literacy, radicalisation and extremism. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice,* 113-134. Bristol: Policy Press.

Fuller, P. (2022) The elephant in the room: Buddhist religious exclusivism and prospects for covenantal pluralism. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement*, 107-119. London: Routledge.

Good, J. (2022) Religious literacy and American journalism: a charge to public service. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement,* 254-268. London: Routledge.

Grim, B.J. & Lambert, P. (2021) Religious Literacy in Business. *Religion & Education,* 48(1), 57-73.

Grim, B.J. & Johnson, K. (2022) Corporate religious diversity, equity, and inclusion as covenantal pluralism. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement,* 228-240. London: Routledge.

Grimmitt, M. (ed.) (2000) *Pedagogies of Religious Education: Case Studies in the Research and Development of Good Pedagogic Practice in RE*. Essex: McCrimmon Publishing.

Hammond, J., Hay, D., Moxon, J., Netto, B., Raban, K., Straugheir, G. & Williams, C. (1990) *New Methods in RE Teaching: An Experiential Approach.* Harlow: Oliver & Boyd.

HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) (2008) *Islamic Studies: Trends and profiles.* London: HEFCE.

Henry, A.M. (2021) Religious Literacy in Social Media: A Need for Strategic Amplification. *Religion & Education*, 48(1), 89-101.

Homan, R. (2004) Religion and literacy: observations on religious education and the literacy strategy for secondary education in Britain. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 26(1), 21-32.

Hoogstra, S. & Fretwell Wilson, R. (2022) Fairness as a path forward on LGBTQ rights and religious liberty. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement,* 416-425. London: Routledge.

Hornsby-Smith, M.P. (1989) *Roman Catholics in England.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hotam, Y. & Wexler, P. (2014) Education in post-secular society. *Critical Studies in Education*, 55(1), 1-7.

Humanists UK (2022) *Non-religious surge: 37% tick 'No religion' in 2021 Census – UK among least religious countries in the world.* [Online] Available at https://humanists.uk/2022/11/29/non-religious-surge-37-tick-no-religion-in-2021-census-uk-among-least-religious-countries-in-the-world/ [last accessed 10.12.12]

Humes, W. (2013) The Origins and Development of Curriculum for Excellence: Discourse, Politics and Control. In Priestley, M. & Biesta, G. *Reinventing the Curriculum: New Trends in Curriculum Policy and Practice,* 20-35. Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd.

Interfaith Scotland (2018) *A guide to faith communities in Scotland.* [Online] Available at https://interfaithscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Guide-to-Faith-Communities-in-Scotland-2014.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

Ipgrave, J. (2001) *Pupil-to-pupil Dialogue in the Classroom as a Tool for Religious Education.* Warwick: Religious and Education Research Unit.

Jones, S.H. (2015) Religious Literacy in Higher Education. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 187-206. Bristol: Policy Press.

Langston Bombino, C. & Carlson-Thies, S. (2022) Religious literacy and social services. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement,* 241-253. London: Routledge.

Lasley, T.J. (2023) *Bloom's taxonomy.* In *Britannica*. [Online] Available at https://www.britannica.com/topic/Blooms-taxonomy [last accessed 10.12.23]

MacDairmid, F. (2021) British media lack religious literacy. *European Academy on Religion and Society (EARS).* [Online] Available at https://europeanacademyofreligionandsociety.com/news/british-media-lack-religious-literacy/ [last accessed 10.12.12]

Marshall, K. (2022) Religious literacy in development and humanitarian relief. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement,* 186-199. London: Routledge.

Mason, D.L. (2021) Religious Literacy in News. *Religion & Education*, 48(1), 74-88.

McKinney, S. (2008) *Catholic schools in Scotland. Mapping the contemporary debate and continued existence in the 21st century. A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.* University of Glasgow.

McKinney, S., Francis, L.J. & McKenna, U. (2021) *Assessing sectarian attitudes among Catholic adolescents in Scotland.* In *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 42(1), 1-18.

Miller, J. (2014) Religion, education, community and relations: some reflections on the APPG inquiry. *Religious Education Council of England and Wales*. [Online] Available at https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Religion_education_community_relati.pdf [last accessed 10.12.12]

Moore, D. (2007) *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moore, D.L. (2014) Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: Expanding the Boundaries of Religious Education. *Religious Education*, 109(4), 379-389.

Moore, D.L. (2015) Diminishing Religious Literacy: Methodological Assumptions and Analytical Frameworks for Promoting the Public Understanding of Religion. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 27–38. Bristol: Policy Press.

Müller, K. & Schwarz, C. (2023) From Hashtag to Hate Crime: Twitter and Antiminority Sentiment. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 15(3), 270-312.

Nezirevic, L. (2022) UK's 'Prevent' strategy has 'negative and discriminatory effect on Muslim communities. *Anadolu Agency*. [Online] Available at https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uks-prevent-strategy-has-negative-and-discriminatory-effect-on-muslim-communities/2622631 [last accessed 10.12.23]

NISRA (2022) *Northern Ireland. Census 2021.* [Online] Available at https://explore.nisra.gov.uk/area-explorer-2021/N92000002/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

Nord, W.A. (2008) Taking religion seriously in public universities. In Jacobsen, D. & Jacobsen, R.H. (eds.) *The American university in a postsecular age*, 167–185. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

OECD (2021) *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future, Implementing Education Policies.* Paris: OECD Publishing.

Office for National Statistics (2015) How *religion has changed in England and Wales.* [Online] Available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/howreligionhaschangedinenglandandwales/2015-06-04 [last accessed 10.12.23]

Office for National Statistics (2022) *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021.* [Online] Available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021 [last accessed 10.12.12]

Orchard, J. (2020) Does RE still matter? *Journal of Religious Education*, 68, 271–287.

Parker, S. (2020) Religious literacy: spaces of teaching and learning about religion and belief. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 41(2), 129-131.

PEW Research Centre (2010) *Forum on Research on Religion & Public Life.* [Online] Available at https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/09/28/new-pew-forum-on-religion-public-life-survey-explores-religious-knowledge-in-the-us/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

PEW Research Centre (2017) *The changing global religious landscape.* [Online] Available at https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

Pope Francis (2020) *Fratelli Tutti: On the Fraternity and Social Friendship.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html [last accessed 10.12.12]

Pope John Paul II (1979) *Catechesi Tradendae*. [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html [last accessed 10.12.12]

Pope Paul VI (1965) *Dei Verbum: dogmatic constitution on divine revelation.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html [last accessed 10.12.12]

Pope Paul VI (1965) *Gaudium et spes: pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Pope Paul VI (1965) *Gravissimum educationis: declaration on Christian education.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Pope Paul VI (1965) *Nostra aetate: declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Pope Paul VI (1975) *Evangelii Nuntiandi.* [Online] Available at https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html [last accessed 10.12.23]

Priestley, M. & Minty, S. (2012) *Developing Curriculum for Excellence: Summary of findings from research undertaken in a Scottish local authority.* University of Stirling.

Priestley, M. & Minty, S. (2013) Curriculum for Excellence: 'A brilliant idea, but. . .'. *Scottish Educational Review*, 45(1), 39-52.

Prothero, S. & Kerby, L.R. (2015) The irony of religious illiteracy in the USA. In Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 55-75. Bristol: Policy Press.

Prothero, S. (2007) *Religious literacy: What every American needs to know – and doesn't.* New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Religious Education Council of England and Wales (2017) *The State of the Nation: A report on Religious Education provision within secondary schools in England.* [Online] Available at https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Free%20Resources/SOTN%202017%20Report%20web%20version%20FINAL.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

Robertson, D.G. (2022) Religious Literacy as Religion Literacy: A Response from the UK. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 34(5), 475-483.

Robinson, L. (2011) Contemporary approaches to Religious Education. In McKinney, S. & Franchi, L. (eds.) *A Companion to Catholic Education,* 162-180. Herefordshire: Gracewing.

Rosie, M. (2022) Scotland's Catholics, a distinctive community? *Scottish Affairs*, 31(3), 366-381.

Rossiter, G. (1982) The need for a creative divorce between catechesis and religious education in Catholic schools. *Religious Education*, 77(1), 21-40.

Russell, R. & Farley, H. (2022) Less than half of England and Wales population Christian, Census 2021 shows. *BBC News*, 29.11.22. [Online] Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63792408 [last accessed 10.12.23]

Ryan, M. (2008) Including students who are not Catholic in Catholic schools: Problems, issues and responses. In McKinney, S. (ed.) *Faith schools in the twenty-first century*, 30-46. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.

Sandberg, R. (2011) *Law and religion.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scotland's Census (2023) *Scotland's Census 2022- Rounded population estimates.* [Online] Available at https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-rounded-population-estimates/#section8 [last accessed 10.12.23]

Scottish Executive (2005) *Analysis of religion in the 2001 census: summary report.* [Online] Available at https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2005/02/analysis-religion-2001-census/documents/0029047-pdf/0029047-pdf/govscot%3Adocument [last accessed 10.12.23]

Scottish Qualifications Authority (N.d) *SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work.* [Online] Available at https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/skills_for_learning_life_and_work_framework_final.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

Sedaca, N.B. (2022) Religious literacy and diplomacy. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement*, 200-214. London: Routledge.

Shaw, M. (2020) Towards a religiously literate curriculum – religion and worldview literacy as an educational model. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 41(2), 150-161.

Smalley, P. (2018) Reflections on the progress of developing religiously literate citizens in England. *Professional REflection: Theory and practice,* 36(1), 58-63.

Smart, N. (1968) *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion.* London: Faber and Faber.

Smith, D.W. (2018) Phenomenology. In Zalta, E.N. *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy,* Summer 2018 Edition. [Online] Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

Soules, K.E. & Jafralie, S. (2021) Religious Literacy in Teacher Education. *Religion & Education*, 48(1), 37-56.

Stewart, W.C., Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (2022) Covenantal pluralism: Toward a world of peaceable neighbourhoods. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement*, 21-37. London: Routledge.

Stobart, G. (2021) Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective. *OECD Education Working Papers*, 253. Paris: OECD Publishing. [Online] Available at https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/upper-secondary-education-student-assessment-in-scotland_d8785ddf-en [last accessed 10.12.23]

Stoer, J.E. (2020a) This is our faith. *Open House.* [Online] Available at https://openhousescotland.co.uk/news/this-is-our-faith--02-11-2021 [last accessed 10.12.23]

Stoer, J.E. (2020b) *Using the resources of the Catholic theological tradition to develop a new approach to Catholic religious education. PhD thesis.* University of Glasgow.

Sumption, M. & Walsh, P.W. (2022) EU Migration to and from the UK. *The Migration Observatory.* [Online] Available at https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/eu-migration-to-and-from-the-uk/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

Taylor, P. (2009) Religious literacy matters. *The Guardian*, 19.06.09. [Online] Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/jun/19/religion-interfaith-tolerance-blair [last accessed 10.12.23]

The Scottish Government (N.d.) *Faith and belief.* [Online] Available at https://www.gov.scot/policies/faith-and-belief/ [last accessed 10.12.23]

The Scottish Government (2011) *Curriculum for Excellence- provision of religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools.* [Online] Available at

https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2011/02/curriculum-for-excellence-religious-and-moral-education/documents/curriculum-excellence-religious-moral-education-pdf/curriculum-excellence-religious-moral-education-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/Curriculum%2Bfor%2Bexcellence%2B-%2Breligious%2Band%2Bmoral%2Beducation.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

The Scottish Government (2015) *Census 2011 equality results: analysis, part two.* [Online] Available at https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2015/03/analysis-equality-results-2011-census-part-2/documents/00476602-pdf/00476602-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00476602.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

The Scottish Government (2016) *Enhancing learning and teaching through the use of digital technology: a digital learning and teaching strategy for Scotland.* [Online] Available at https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2016/09/enhancing-learning-teaching-through-use-digital-technology/documents/00505855-pdf/00505855-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00505855.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

The Scottish Government (2019) *Scotland's People Annual Report: key findings, 2019.* [Online] Available at https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/09/scottish-household-survey-2019-key-findings/documents/scotlands-people-annual-report-key-findings-2019/scotlands-people-annual-report-key-findings-2019/govscot%3Adocument/scotlands-people-annual-report-key-findings-2019.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

The Scottish Government (2023) *It's our Future: Report of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment.* [Online] Available at https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/09/scottish-household-survey-2019-key-findings/documents/scotlands-people-annual-report-key-findings-2019/scotlands-people-annual-report-key-findings-

2019/govscot%3Adocument/scotlands-people-annual-report-key-findings-2019.pdf [last accessed 10.12.23]

Thomas, P. (2020) Britain's Prevent Strategy: Always Changing, Always the Same?. In Busher, J., Jerome, L. (eds.) *The Prevent Duty in Education,* 11-31. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan

Turner, B.S. (2012) Post-Secular Society: Consumerism and the Democratization of Religion. Gorski, P., Kim, D.K., Torpey, J. & VanAntwerpen, J. (eds.) *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society*, 135-158. New York: New York University Press.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB] (N.d. (a)) *Evangelisation and catechesis.* [Online] Available at https://www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis [last accessed 10.12.23]

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. [USCCB] (N.d. (b)) *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship.* [Online] Available at https://www.usccb.org/fratelli-tutti [last accessed 10.12.23]

von Brömssen, K., Ivkovits, H. & Nixon, G. (2020) Religious literacy in the curriculum in compulsory education in Austria, Scotland and Sweden - a three-country policy comparison. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 41(2), 132-149.

Wakelin, M. & Spencer, N. (2015). Religious literacy and the media. Dinham, A. & Francis, M. (eds.) *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 227-236. Bristol: Policy Press.

Walters, J. (2022) Religious literacy and higher education. In Seiple, C. & Hoover, D.R. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement*, 165-176. London: Routledge.

Weller, P. (2005) *Time for a change: Reconfiguring religion, state, and society*. London: T & T Clark International.

Woodhead, L.J.P. (2016) The Rise of 'No Religion' in Britain: the emergence of a new cultural majority. *Journal of the British Academy*, 4, 245-261.

Woodhead, L.J.P. (2017) The Rise of 'No Religion': Towards an Explanation. *Sociology of Religion*, 78(3), 247-262.

Wright, A. (1993) *Religious education in the secondary school: Prospects for religious literacy*. Abingdon: David Fulton Publishers.

Wright, A. (1996) Language and Experience in the Hermeneutics of Religious Understanding. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 18(3), 166-180.

YouGov (2023) *How Brits get their news,* 23.10.23. [Online] Available at https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/how-brits-get-their-news [last accessed 10.12.23]

Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church (2011) USA: Ignatius Press.

Zuckerman, P., Galen, L.W. & Pasquale, F.L. (2016) *The Nonreligious: Understanding Secular People and Societies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.