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THE TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS IN TERMS OF CONCEPT METHODOLOGY

Shirley Elizabeth Kerr

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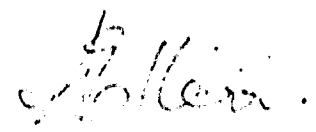
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Johannesburg 1977

I, Shirley Elizabeth Kerr, hereby declare that:

1. This dissertation is my own unaided work;
2. That neither this dissertation nor any part of it has been submitted for a degree in any other university.



ABSTRACT

'Teachers need to be aware of the key concepts, which, when related to each other, form the principles of a subject or academic discipline ..... Piaget's work (like that of J.S. Bruner) has highlighted the central position which is occupied in thinking and learning by concept formation ... Thus Piaget has indicated to teachers the outstanding need for them to first of all identify the key concepts within a subject and then devise means of helping to develop them. It is regrettable that in so many academic fields, including theology, very little thought and work has been expended on this crucial task.' [1]

The writer's experience as a lecturer at a College of Education has shown that many students training to be teachers have apparently held a negative and distorted attitude to the subject, Religious Instruction, in spite of the fact that they have been taught Religious Instruction for twelve years as a school subject, and in most cases this has been supplemented by or is supplementary to religious teaching in the home and at church and synagogue. In many cases, students were ignorant of Biblical facts and unable to see any meaningful relevance underlying them. This led to the conclusion that more effective ways of teaching the subject should be sought; that the practice of regarding Religious Instruction as a subject 'apart' should be questioned, and wherever possible and applicable, the results of research in Education, Psychology, Theology, Biblical Studies and other related subjects should be taken into account.

In view of the many different ways in which Religion is understood, it was necessary to define the way in which the word was used in this dissertation, and to state what is meant by a religious concept; to consider what is meant by Religious Instruction as a subject in the context of the school rather than the church, and to state certain criteria for selecting key concepts within the framework of Religious Instruction as a subject in the school curriculum.

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1. M. Grimmitt, What Can I do in R.E? Essex Mayhew McCrimmon Ltd.1973 pp.11,37

Key concepts were selected in the field of Biblical Theology as being most pertinent to the approach to the subject followed in South Africa, but they were defined in such a way as to be applicable in a wider and more general context.

In view of the fact that in Concept Methodology, concept and method are integrally linked, methods used in teaching Religious Instruction in the Primary School were investigated in order to determine what deductions could be made concerning concepts taught and to what extent change in existing methods was necessary. This information was gained from two sets of College students who handed in written reports of their observations on the teaching of Religious Instruction during the periods during which they were assigned to schools for Teaching Experience.

It was decided in addition to conduct a broadly based test in the form of a questionnaire in senior classes in three Primary and three High schools and in six classes of first-year College students. This test would attempt to determine the main sources of religious knowledge, understanding of selected concepts and ability to derive concepts from Biblical material.

The field investigation showed that the school plays a disappointing role in the religious understanding and development of the child; that it does not contribute significantly to the development of religious concepts; that if it is to justify the continued existence of Religious Instruction in the curriculum on educational grounds, changes would be needed in the understanding of the subject, attitudes to it, and the focus, organisation and handling of the material to be taught.

The writer concluded that although some teachers have expressed criticism of the existing syllabuses as being repetitive and uninspiring, a change of syllabus, however desirable, would be a long drawn-out process, involving many political, ecclesiastical and theological problems. It is also the type of solution which entails conveniently 'passing the buck'. The writer believes that it is possible for teachers to be encouraged and assisted to reappraise and

rearrange the material in the existing syllabuses in the light of the proposed key-concepts and their resulting network of related concepts. In this way the material in the syllabus would be taught but in a way in which it would be more meaningfully suited to the cognitive and religious development of the child, and would encourage in understanding of Biblical concepts rather than a temporary memorising of Biblical facts and events.

It is recognised that much experimental work in the classroom is necessary and that the suggested scheme might require many modifications.

TO MY LATE FATHER, ERNEST SILVERTHORNE,
WHO BEGAN AND MY HUSBAND, DAVID, WHO
CONTINUED TO GIVE UNSTINTINGLY EVERY
PRACTICAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT
IN MY EDUCATIONAL ENDEAVOURS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who is involved in education is aware that education, like most other human activities, is subject to change. Sometimes change is superficial, and appears to be dictated by fashion rather than by demands resulting from considered educational research and thinking. On the other hand, changes in society or in the understanding of a subject which new research and findings bring about often necessitate a long hard look at what is being taught and achieved. As in the world of fashion, it is not unusual for past educational trends to be rediscovered and treated as entirely new developments. Often the 'New Look' is in fact a rather 'Old Look' and those whose career in teaching has spanned a few decades can be heard to greet 'new' developments with a remark about the 'wheel turning full circle'.

It is probable that the attitude towards change in the teaching of religion is more conservative than in other subjects, one of the reasons being that there is a certain degree of diffidence about meddling with 'God's Word' and 'God's Truth'. And the subject of religion has an extremely long history. It has survived a great deal.

During the past ten years the subject, Religious Instruction, has been accorded increasing status by the Transvaal Education Department. More time and lecturers have been allocated to it in Training Colleges for white students; all English speaking Universities now offer courses in Biblical Studies and the number of teachers who can count it as a major subject in their degree has grown; specialist Inspectors have been appointed. In spite of these positive developments, the writer's interest in re-examining the teaching of Religious Instruction was prompted by an impression gained from working with First-year Training College students that there has not been a corresponding increase in enthusiasm for the subject or in knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Further interest in research into the subject was generated by a Physicist who posed the question, 'In my subject there are certain basic concepts.

Once these have been truly mastered, most other concepts are applications of them and can be derived from them with little trouble. What are the basic concepts of your subject?' It is recognised that there may be a great deal of difference between the disciplines of Religion and Physics. Nevertheless the writer felt it worthwhile to explore the possibility of seeing the subject, Religious Instruction, as a whole, rather than a collection of items of Biblical information and stories, and to consider whether there were any basic concepts, the understanding of which would generate an understanding of other related concepts.

The idea of concentrating on the basic concepts of a subject is by no means new. In 1932 A.N. Whitehead wrote

> Whatever be the detail with which you cram your student, the chance of his meeting in after-life; exactly that detail is almost infinitesimal; and if he does meet it, he will probably have forgotten what you taught him about it. The really useful training yields a comprehension of a few general principles with a thorough grounding in the way they apply to a variety of concrete details. In subsequent practice the men will have forgotten your particular details; but they will remember by an unconscious common sense how to apply principles to immediate circumstances. Your learning is useless to you till you have lost your text-books, burnt your lecture notes, and forgotten the minutiae which you learnt by heart for the examination. What, in the way of detail, you continually require will stick in your memory as obvious facts like the sun and moon; and what you casually require can be looked up in any work of reference.[1]

Complementary to this emphasis on the basic ideas of the subject has been the work of educational psychologists like Piaget, Inhelder, J.S. Bruner and others in their research into the way in which children acquire concepts and develop them. Peter H. Martorella(1972)[2] is amongst those who record attempts in the U.S.A. to apply learning by concepts to a variety of subjects. In his book, Concept Learning, he and other contributers described work in the fields of Mathematics, the Communication Arts, Science and Social Studies. The

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1. A.N. Whitehead, The Aims of Education and Other Essays, London, Ernest Benn, 1959, p.41

2. Peter Martorella, Concept Learning, Scranton. Intest Educational Publishers, 1972

writer has found no mention in his work or that of other writers attempting to treat Religious Studies in the same way. One of the reasons for its absence from American educational research is no doubt because Religion does not form part of the School Curriculum. In England, Grimmitt (1973)[3] referred to the need for research in stating the key concepts in the subject of Religion, and a few articles have appeared on the subject in various issues of the journal, 'Learning for Living'[4] At the time the writer began this investigation no work had been published which systematically tackled this problem.

It would appear that much attention has been and is still being given to Religious Education in the United Kingdom. The word, 'change' features often in books and articles. Existing curricula are constantly being subjected to critical investigation and re-evaluation in the light of social and theological changes taking place in England. In 'New Movements in Religious Education' (1975) the editors attempt to review the main developments in the field of Religious Studies during the past decade and it is significant that in their section, 'Suggestions for Further Reading', they made the following comment:

> Since 1965 there have been literally hundreds of books published on this subject. This in itself is something new, an indication that there is a widespread feeling that change is due. This volume is an attempt to bring change into perspective.[5]

Whereas much benefit can be derived from examining developments in the approach to the subject in England, there are many respects in which the situation in South Africa is significantly different from that in England. It cannot be assumed that our problems are identical to theirs, nor that trends and proposed solutions are necessarily applicable or relevant to our situation.

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3. M. Grimmitt, What can I do in R.E? Mayhew-McCrimmon, Great Wakering, 1973
4. 'Learning for Living' London, SCM Press, May 1973, Spring 1976
5. N. Smart, Editor - New Movements in Religious Education, London, Temple Smith, (1975)

Where disquiet regarding the teaching of Religious Instruction in this country exists and especially in English-speaking schools in the Province of Transvaal, it is seldom backed by research but is rather a feeling expressed here and there in conversation in the lecture room and the staff room in a random way. Evaluation of the subject and its value is gathered incidentally. There is no evidence at this stage of any major upheaval in thinking about the subject as there is in the United Kingdom. This may be because the authorities are reasonably satisfied with the status quo, or because those who are critical, tend to voice their criticism in passing, not feeling strongly enough about the subject to wish to initiate any rethinking or action. It may also be because there have been no comparable social changes in our society. Sometimes doubts about the validity of the content of the syllabus and the way it is taught are felt by teachers who would not call themselves 'religious' and lack the confidence to voice their instinctive reactions to the teaching of the subject, because they feel that the fault may lie in themselves and their own doubts.

In view of the fact that little literature on the subject has been published in South Africa, the writer felt it worthwhile to investigate some aspects of the teaching of Religious Instruction in English-speaking schools in the Transvaal, and to investigate the possibility of applying teaching by concepts to the subject, Religious Instruction. Although it was felt advisable to keep in mind South African conditions and problems, it was hoped that some of the findings would have a wider application.

It was necessary to examine the subject, Religious Instruction, from the point of view of educational psychology, some aspects of the philosophy of religion, and theology, in order to formulate concepts inherent in the subject. It was also necessary to investigate some of the religious concepts, knowledge and attitudes held by pupils and students and to gain some idea of the extent to which the school contributed towards them. The controversy as to whether Religious Instruction or Religious Education is a more appropriate name for the subject has been ignored. The term

Religious Education is used to refer to the subject taught in schools in England, and Religious Instruction when referring to the subject taught in schools in the Province of the Transvaal in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPT

2.1 The nature of a concept - some definitions

In the field of educational psychology and philosophy there is not complete agreement as to the definition of a concept. Disregarding the philosophical controversy, Bruner et alia (1962) have stated:

> We have found it more meaningful to regard a concept as a network of sign-significate inferences by which one goes beyond a set of observed criterial properties exhibited by an object or event to the class identity of the object or event in question, and thence to additional inferences about other unobserved properties of the object or event.[1]

Goldman (1964) quotes W.E. Vinacke's summary of what characterises concepts as follows:

a. Concepts are not direct sensory data but something resulting from elaboration, combination and interpretation of sensory data.

b. Concepts depend on the previous experience of the organism.

c. Concepts are responses which tie together, or link, or combine discrete sensory experience.

d. It may be inferred that such ties or links are symbolic in nature, the same responses standing for a variety of data. This response is usually a word.

e. On the side of internal processes of the organism, concepts represent selective factors.[2]

It may be noted that Vinacke's definition does not allow for the 'open' nature of the concept, as does that of Bruner et alia when they speak of 'additional inferences about the unobserved properties .... '

---

1. Jerome S. Bruner, Jacqueline J.Goodnow, George A. Austin, A Study of Thinking: New York, Science Editions Inc., 1962, p.244

2. Ronald Goldman, Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.12

According to John Jaromilek (1966) 'Concepts may be regarded as categories of meaning. Attaching meaning beyond sensory impression to abstract symbols is what is meant by conceptual thought'.[3] He goes on to say: 'Concept development is largely an information sorting, discriminating process, including in the category all associations and relationships that belong and excluding those that do not'.[4]

Using the language of sets in mathematics, we might say that concept formation is the process of combining selected elements of experience or knowledge into open sets, where there is a specific rationale for the juxtaposition of the elements. The combination of these elements should be reproducible, and therefore not arbitrary. For purposes of communication, the concept is 'Named', that is, it is given a symbolic representation, which is either verbal or non-verbal, in accordance with the representation chosen by a particular culture or group within a culture according to its collective experience of the concept. There is evidence that children form concepts before they learn to speak, and there is also evidence that blind, deaf and mute children form concepts. Lack of language does not prevent the process of conceptualising, but it does hinder the communication of the concept. For a concept to have currency amongst the members of a group, it must be able to be identified in a verbal or non-verbal manner by members of the group concerned. Examples of non-verbal identification are: in terms of sound e.g. a wail signifying sorrow; touch e.g. a handshake, signifying agreement or friendly relations; sight e.g. a totem representing a deity, the yield sign, bushmen paintings, mathematical or musical symbols, written words; smell e.g. incense, representing the offering of prayer to the deity; bodily movement e.g. a dance, representing joy, worship, etc. When the identification is verbal, it is in terms of those appropriate sounds or combination of sounds

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3. John Jarolimek and Huber M.Walsh, Readings for Social Studies in Elementary Education. Toronto. The Macmillan Company. p.208

4. ibid p.209

which form the words of the particular language used by the group to Name the concept. The word 'Name' will be used in this dissertation to signify any one of the verbal and non-verbal types of identification agreed upon within a culture.

1.2 Concept Formation in the Intellectual Development of the Child

A great deal of Piaget's work is devoted to the development of the child's concepts of the world around him, and much of his research concerns concepts which belong to the physical world i.e. space, time, number, etc.. He has interpreted the results of his experiments as showing the stages by which the child interacts with his physical surroundings, builds up information about it, categorises his information, reclassifies it as his perception and experience develop, and ultimately reaches the stage of 'formal operations' where he manipulates the information in an operational way, which involves the ability to think reversibly in the abstract.

It is important to note that this process takes place within society; that the child's interaction with an eventual conceptualisation of his environment is not that of an isolated individual, but that of an individual-within- a-society, where somewhere along the line there is a meeting point between his experience and that of the culture within which he develops. Not only this: his culture generally determines what he is to experience. Hereby he is given the clue to the classification of his experience, and also to the evaluation of his experience. It is the culture which determines which experiences are to be valued and which are not of great consequence in its particular society. The child learns, but society directs, classifies and evaluates the learning experience, both formally and informally. In the words of Bruner et alia (1962) , 'His personal history comes to reflect the traditions and thought-ways of his culture for the events that make it up are filtered through the categorical systems he has learned'.[5]

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5. Bruner et alia, op.cit. p.10

Not all the child's concepts derive from his own direct encounter with the physical world. But all his concepts are based on an interpretation of an encounter with the physical world or relationships, personal or impersonal, within it.

According to Piaget, the process whereby individuals arrive at concepts and the stages or phases through which they pass in the process of conceptualising are the same for all people. He defines them as:

1. the sensori-motor phase, lasting until about 4 years of age;
2. the intuitive or pre-operational age from 4 to 7 or 8 years of age;
3. the concrete operational phase from 7 or 8 years of age lasting till the child is 11 or 12 years old;
4. the operational phase which begins when the child is 11 or 12 years old and continues into adulthood. This is the final phase in conceptual development.

Various criticisms have been levelled at the work of Piaget. He has been taken to task for his research methods, the smallness of his samples, his seeming disregard for statistical methods. Nevertheless to date there has been no overwhelming evidence to invalidate the main trend of his findings.

1.2.1 Concept Development in the Religious and Moral Thinking of the Child.

Various studies have confirmed the existence of the stages or phases in conceptual development, the most pertinent for this dissertation being that of Ronald Goldman(1964)[6], who showed that the cognitive aspect of the religious development of the child followed a similar pattern to that of his cognitive development in other fields. It is necessary to emphasise the word 'cognitive' here, since, as Grimmitt, 1973, has pointed out, 'Goldman's tests ... made demands on the purely cognitive skill of making sense of a number of archaic thought forms'.[7] As yet the 'religious

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6. R. Goldman, Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965
7. M. Grimmitt, What can I do in R.E? Great Wakering, Essex Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1973, p.44

development' of the child, (or anyone elses for that matter), in all its possible dimensions of the meaning of the word 'religion' has neither been clearly defined nor studied. We might say that it has only been incidentally written into the biographies of 'religious' people, within the framework of what is accepted as 'religious' or 'spiritual' development or growth by a particular group. Goldman, however, does point out from some of the case histories which formed part of his study, that there are some interesting cases of individuals with low I.Q. ratings and consequently one would infer inferior cognitive ability, but with high religious motivation, who achieve a more mature rating on his experimental material than those of whom superior cognitive ability might be expected in view of their higher I.Q. levels. On the other hand, there are also cases where pupils with a high I.Q. level, and minimal religious motivation score extremely well in his tests. He does not draw any fixed conclusions from this evidence. Perhaps one could say that some cognitive ability is necessary in the development of the understanding of religious ideas, but that motivation plays a very significant role.

Research amongst cultural groups other than western ones has confirmed Piaget's stages of intellectual development, although the average age level at which members pass from one phase of development to another may not be the same.[8]

In the field of moral thinking Piaget has propounded the theory that the child passes through various phases. The conclusions which he draws from his experimental work is that the child's moral thinking is developmental in its nature. Whether or not the phases which he postulates are definitive or not is open to question. Norman Bull's research (1969) described in his 'Moral Judgment from Childhood to Adolescence'[9] has confirmed that moral development occurs in developmental stages, but has shown

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8. J.S. Bruner, The Relevance of Education, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971, Chapter 2

9. N.J. Bull Moral Judgment from Childhood to Adolescence, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.

evidence for the existence of other basic stages. He questions the overall philosophical structure which Piaget has built around the results of his research, but not the fact that the child passes through stages in his moral development.

Thus regarding the cognitive development of the child, it is known that the child assimilates information in various ways, for the most part involving the senses, and categorises the details of his experience. The resulting categories are Named in accordance with the labels resulting from the collective experience of the society in which he grows up. It may be assumed, with some justification that in all children the process of conceptualisation is the same viz. it follows the schema of assimilation - accommodation - adaptation described by Piaget; that the child passes through certain defined stages in his progress towards intellectual maturity; that the child does not necessarily leave one stage behind completely when he passes from one stage to another and that the ages suggested by Piaget for each stage are very flexible and depend on intellectual ability and cultural background ... a child's passage through the stages may be compressed or drawn out depending on intellectual, educational and cultural factors.

From the point of view of this dissertation, what is important is (a) the concept as the ordering and organisation of a set of details of experience, information or knowledge and (b) the culturally accepted description (Name) of that set by means of ritual, name or some other way recognisable within the group of people which sees a particular pattern in the details.

1.3 Types of Concept

There is no limit to the number of concepts which exist in any society and the ways in which by various permutations and combinations of their elements new concepts may be formed. Concepts may be classified in many ways. A concept may become a subset of any number of different sets according to its classification i.e. grouping together with a certain group of elements according to a particular scheme or rationale. The variations possible under 'types of concept' are limitless.

The writer proposes to define 'types of concept' in two ways.

1. According to the process by which the initiate acquires the concept.
2. According to whether the concept consists of a set of elements recognisable by observation or a set of observed elements to which an evaluation or interpretation is added.

1.3.1 Experience - meaning - Name type concepts

In this type of concept the elements of the set forming the concept are experienced prior to classification and Naming. The distinguishing features of the elements of the open set of the concept are experienced, sorted, classified and the resulting meaning is symbolised, that is Named, usually by means of a word. The concepts may be relatively simple and become progressively complicated, but the process of learning is the same. A simple example is the one often cited in the text-books. The set containing the elements round, hard, non-bouncing, can-be-bitten, sweet-tasting,red,green, or yellow, but not purple or orange .... is Named an apple. Other elements will be added to the set, but from the point of view of the learner, as soon as sufficient elements are known so that he can distinguish the concept from other similar concepts, he may name it. A more complicated example is the concept of a city, where the difference in the set of elements which separates the concept of city from that of town, village and other similar concepts is much more complicated to recognise and requires more experience, knowledge, understanding and discernment to distinguish. From the point of view of the learner, the learning process begins with knowledge or experience of some of the elements to which new elements are added until the set becomes distinctive enough to be Named. When the learner has too little experience, or has not realised the essential elements which comprise the set of the concept, he may make a mistake in Naming. An example of this is a two year old child who, having seen a guitarist playing his instrument on the television, went to the kitchen and fetched the egg-slicer. The elements, strings pulled tightly and parallel across a structure, had not given her sufficient

critical elements correctly to Name the concept, guitar.

1.3.2 Name - experience - meaning type concepts

In this second type of concept, at a stage where a child understands that a Name signifies some thing, process or event, and that very often a Name is a word, he may be confronted with a Name with which he can, at that stage, associate no element. For the child, the set is an empty set, consisting of no elements. The child learns the meaning of the Name by a two-fold process; he adds elements which he learns from his experience are members of the set, and he eliminates members which he realises from experience and being taught or informed are not members of the set. For example, a two year old child may be given the Name, computer, in answer to the question, 'Where has daddy gone?' 'Computer' to the child at this stage is an empty but open set. The child begins to add elements to the set according to his experience and the information given in answer to his questions. The elements are ' the place where daddy goes when he is not at home','the place where daddy works', ' the place where daddy gets money','the big building where there are lots of machines with switches and lights', ' the machine which prints lots of paper which I draw on and take to nursery school', ' the machine which does hard sums', etc. He continues to add elements until he has sufficient information and maturity to grasp the full meaning of the Name. As he adds new elements, so he also discards elements which he learns do not fit in with the concept, 'Computer'. He associates the computer with a place where daddy gets money, but he learns that a bank is not a computer and vice-versa. The computer is machinery which works according to lots of lights and switches, but not all machines which function by lights and switches are computers. The computer does hard sums, but it is different from an electronic calculator which also does hard sums.

Bruner et alia (1962) refer to the 'empty category' as 'a means whereby we go beyond the convential groupings we impose on the segments of nature we have encountered.

It is a way of going beyond the range of events one encounters to the sphere of the possible or even in the phrase of the philosopher Nelson Goodman(1947), to the "counterfactual conditional" - events that could be but which are contrary to experience'.[10] They are thus pointing to a set of concepts where the Naming precedes the experience or the verification of reality by experience. They go on to show that the empty category may be of two types. A concept may be postulated to exist on the grounds of certain evidence, although at the time its existence is postulated there is no experience upon which its existence is based. If this concept exists in a verifiable field, it may later be proved to exist, or not to exist. An example of this is the postülation of the existence of the neutrino in the field of Nuclear Physics, and the subsequent and as yet inconclusive, attempts to verify its existence by experiment, in which the Nuclear Physics Department of Wits University played a significant role. On the other hand a concept in this 'empty category' may have only a mythical existence like the half-horse, half-man, known in Greek mythology as a centaur. It may be mentioned that a concept of the latter type builds on elements of other concepts known in experience.

Bruner's 'empty category' type of concept classification is a useful one when it comes to a concept like 'God'. There is no agreement as to the origin of religion in man - whether there exists in all men a 'God-shaped blank', or whether religion is altogether culturally created and acquired. We are only in a position to make observations about that which is culturally acquired, especially when we are examining the subject from an educational point of view, but it must be acknowledged that the area which we are examining may be far from the whole picture. From the point of view of that area of religion which is culturally acquired, it would seem that the concept God is learned first as a Name, and that the meaning of the Name is acquired according to experience and interpretation of experience, within a group which are agreed as to its meaning.

The word 'God' may be presented to the child in various

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10. Bruner et alia, op.cit p.14

ways and circumstances and he has to fit it into his framework of information, knowledge and understanding of his world. The word may be introduced and used with reverence, as a swearword, in the context of worship or frustration, in stories, in explanations, in threats. By a process of assimilation and elimination in accordance with life experience, formal and informal teaching, the child gradually fills meaning into the 'empty category' or discards the word as meaningless, or rejects the meaning which he understood the word to have, replacing it by new meanings.

Having distinguished two types of concept according to whether experience and meaning precede the Name, or whether the Name precedes the experience and meaning, it will be useful to distinguish two classes which may occur within both of these categories.

1.3.3 Class 1 Certain concepts consist of a set of elements which are descriptive; there are no interpretative or evaluative elements in such a set. These concepts will generally tend to be described as 'factual','concrete' or 'scientific'.

Class 2 Some concepts include amongst their elements certain elements which imply evaluation or interpretation. This class of concept will include abstract ideas and ethical concepts. Very often concepts begin as Class 1 concepts, but as elements are added - in the words of Bruner et alia quoted on p.6, '.... thence to additional inferences about other unobserved properties of the object or event' - they can be classified in Class 2 as well. For example, the concept, spoon, consists of a set of elements which define its distinctive shape, purpose, use, materials from which it may be made. When elements relating to its role in hygiene, progress of man and civilisation are added it may become a Class 2 concept, since these elements are evaluative and allow spoon to acquire a symbolic meaning in addition to its descriptive or functional meaning.

Hick(1973) mentions this process when he says, 'We find instead that all conscious perceiving goes beyond what

the senses report to a significance which has not as such been given to the senses.' [11]

1.4 What is a Religious Concept?

First of all it will be necessary to consider what we mean by Religion and a religion. At this stage we will avoid the controversial discussion of definitions of Religion which is a question widely debated amongst philosophers and theologians; we will also avoid the debate on the origin of religion. Although these topics are very pertinent to the subject, they do not lead to a self-evident conclusion.

To attempt to clarify what we mean by Religion in this dissertation, we will again turn to the language of Mathematics for an analogy. A statistician is quoted as saying, 'Given any number of points, I can postulate any number of equations of lines which will join those points.'

By analogy, let us suggest that in the domain of human experience of normal human beings there are a number of points called basic human experiences. In the words of Edith F.Hunter (1961)

> All over the world from time immemorial, the same great themes have demanded attention; ourselves and the process of birth, growth, sickness and death; our human feelings and ways of living together; the natural world outside of us; the forces that are felt in the world and that seem to control it; questions and wonderings about how this great drama began, how it will end and what, if anything, it means.
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> From culture to culture and from age to age, the perspective from which men have looked upon this drama and the concepts in which they have expressed their understanding and feelings about it, have differed and have changed. But the broad outlines of the realities that have goaded people on to wonder, and the human nature that impels us to want to express our ideas and feelings, are universal and relatively changeless. [12]

It is important to realise that although individuals experience some or all of these basic human experiences, they experience them as members of a group - that of family, society, tribe or nation. Returning to the mathematical analogy, a number of equations can be formulated which unify, link or 'make sense' of the points representing basic human experiences. These equations may differ with regard to domain, axes, origin (i.e. point of reference) and dimension.

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11. J. Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths, London and Basingstoke, The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1973, p42

12 Edith F; Hunter, Conversation with Children, Boston Beacon Press, 1961, p.4

Up till now in our discussion there is no means of distinguishing a philosophical 'solution' to the data from a religious one. In order to do this, we shall refer to the 'six dimensions in religion' which Professor Ninian Smart of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Lancaster, uses to distinguish religion, viz. the doctrinal, mythical, ethical, ritual, experiential and social. Let us assume that if an interpretation of life occurs in these dimensions then it is a religious interpretation, and that the particular interpretation occurring within these dimensions is a religion. By 'Origin' in the analogy, will be meant that idea/god/gods/value/values/experience according to which the adherents relate all values and experiences. Thus a religion relates the basic human experiences mentioned above to its chosen origin within the six-dimensional framework named by Smart.

To what extent there are points or areas of coincidence between one religion and another, depends mainly on the relationship between their origins (i.e. central reference points) and the nature of their origins.

It is interesting to note that John Hick(1973)[13] in his Chapter 'The New Map of the Universe of Faiths', suggests that a Copernican revolution is needed in religions so that each will not see its own Origin as the equivalent of the centre of the 'religious universe' and explain and evaluate all other origins with reference to its own. He believes that in the light of the new awareness of the world faiths of each other, the time may come when they will see themselves in relation to the true Origin, but at present each one tends to identify its own origin with the true Origin.

For a concept to be considered a religious concept, it is defined and used within the framework or criteria of a particular religion. Certain concepts will be common to many religions, others may even be unique to a particular religion.

A concept may be used in many different categories. For example the concept 'bread' may occur within the category of

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13. Hick, op.cit

food, or economy, or that of religion. If we return to the original definition of a concept as a set of elements of experience, the inclusion of elements such as size, shape, consistency, taste, colour, etc.enables us to define the concept 'bread' within the category, food. If we include other elements such as cost, production, distribution, subsidy, we use the same concept within the category, economy. If we add further analogical and symbolic elements such as staple food, staff of life, 'I am the bread of life', 'This is my body', 'They met together for the breaking of bread ..', bread expresses a religious concept. But it is only its use within the set 'religion' and the addition of evaluative, interpretive and analogical elements which make it a religious concept.

To answer the question whether any concepts are inherently religious concepts rather than religious-by-use involves once again philosophical questions such as the origin of religion and the nature of God. Confining our inquiry to Biblical religion only, scrutiny of the words making up the content of a theological word book such as Vocabulary of the Bible (1958)[14] shows that only a few concepts are not of the type religious-by-use. The exceptions include God and possibly Holiness. Any adherent of the schools of philosophy which see the origins of religion in man's psychology or sociology would not regard these concepts as inherently religious, whereas those who see the origin of religion in God would say that they are. We will conclude that a concept is religious if it is used within the framework of a religion or religions, and includes evaluative and interpretive elements within the six dimensions stated by Smart.

1.5 Concept and Language

Hick (1973) says,'Our concepts are social products having their life within a particular environment'.[15] It is important to discuss the relationship between concept and language for the following reasons:

1.5.1 Although it is not necessary to formulate a concept in words, nor is it necessary to use words when manipulating concepts in the mind (i.e. thinking) it is necessary to use

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14. Edited. J.J von Allmen, Vocabulary of the Bible C1958 Ninth Impression 1967,London,Lutterworth Press
15. Hick, op cit, p.41

words when communicating a concept. Thus language is important in teaching, and a fortiori, in teaching by means of concept methodology. In his studies of the development of the child, Piaget regards language as important, but has found evidence that private, non verbal signifiers precede linguistic signs. Flavell (1963) summarises Piaget's views on the subject in the words: 'Thought is nonetheless far from being a purely verbal affair neither in its fully formed state, nor, above all, in its developmental origins'.[16]

As a result of his experiments and observations on the use of language by young children, Piaget (1959)[17] distinguishes 'two fundamentally different modes of thinking'. He describes them as directed or intelligent thought and undirected or autistic thought, and describes them as follows:
Austistic thought is categorised as non-communicable thought. It has the following characteristics:

1. It is subconscious; i.e. the aims it pursues and the problems it tries to solve are not present in the consciousness.
2. It is not adapted to reality, but creates for itself a dreamworld of the imagination.
3. It tends not to satisfy truths but to satisfy desires.
4. It remains strictly individual; as such,it is incommunicable by means of language.
5. It works by images in order to express itself, has recourse to indirect methods, evoking by means of symbols and myths the feeling by which it is led.
6. It remains individual and uncommunicated, tied to imagery, to organic activity and even to organic movement.

Directed thought is categorised as communicable thought. Its characteristics are:

1. It is conscious, i.e. it pursues an aim present in the mind of the thinker.
2. It is intelligent i.e. it is adapted to reality and tries to influence it.
3. It admits to being true or false in the sense of empirical or logical truth.

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16. J.H. Flavell, The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget New York, van Nostrand, 1963 p. 155
17. J. Piaget, The Language and Thought of the Child Third Edition 1959. London Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd pp 43-46

4. It can be communicated by language.
5. It is socialised and guided by the increasing adaptation of individuals one to another.

A further comment o. directed thought which Piaget makes is that 'Intelligence, just because it undergoes a gradual process of socialisation, is enabled through the bond established by language between thoughts and words to make an increasing use of concepts.'

It is interesting to note that Piaget refers to 'modes' of thought, and does not imply that the child in his intellectual development passes from one to the other, leaving the more primitive autistic mode behind. In a footnote he notes that there is interaction between the two modes of thought. 'Autism calls into being and enriches many inventions which are subsequently classified and demonstrated by intelligence.'[18]

He illustrates adult autistic thinking by showing how an adult may arrive at what he conceives to be an ideal solution to a problem without taking into account sequence of thought and numerous logical problems and questions which may arise when he attempts to communicate his solutions - whether to himself or someone else. It is when he directs his thinking. towards another party by means of the spoken or written language that he is in a position to establish and test its validity.

There are some interesting parallels between autistic thought and some of the characteristics of religious experience. In both experience and will predominate and the experiences and beliefs of the individual come to the fore. Both make use of images, symbols and myths. In directed thought may be seen some of the characteristics of religious doctrines or theology as opposed to religious experience. In the case of the former, experience is verbalised, classified and 'socialised'. It is orientated towards the group rather than the individual. If we examine the six dimensions of religion mentioned earlier, the experiential and the mythical would seem to be more closely related to the mode of autistic

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18. J. Piaget, op.cit p.45

thought and the doctrinal, ethical, ritual and social to that of directed thought, although it would be unwise to make the line of demarcation between the two too rigid.

These two modes of thinking - autistic and directed - may give a clue to two types of definition given for religion. The one class of definition emphasises the individual and his search for meaning, and the other emphasises the doctrinal and ritual elements.

The conclusions which we may draw from the above are:

1. Verbal language is not necessary for concepts to be formed and for thinking to take place.
2. Verbal language is necessary for the communication of concepts, although concepts may be communicated to a limited degree by means of non-verbal language.
3. The two modes of thinking which Piaget deduced from his study of the language of children below eight years of age may give a clue to the modes of religious thinking. They may also give a valuable clue to the type of religious thinking which we may expect from children at various ages.

1.5.2 The past few decades have seen a great emphasis on linguistic analysis in philosophy, to the extent that, in its most extreme form, its more radical exponents are prepared to discard all use of language which can not be subjected to the 'Verification Principle'. This has placed a big question mark against disciplines like those of theology and ethics, and in attempting to answer the challenge of this question, theologians were forced to examine the use of religious language very carefully. One of the results of this examination has been a clearer awareness of the way in which language is used in religion and of the logic of religious thinking. Another result has been that the entire validity of religious language and hence religion has been questioned and sometimes denied. The question whether it is possible to speak of God has become very pertinent.

The field of theoretical linguistics is a growing one, and one which has implications for the disciplines of philosophy and psychology amongst others.

Whatever the implications of linguistic analysis, it may be stated that each discipline uses language in a distinctive way. Ian Ramsay (1957) uses the method of

language analysis to show the distinctive use and interpretation of religious language in the Bible and in the formulation and understanding of Christian doctrine.[19] Whatever criticism may be levelled against his work, it is clear that, provided we do not hold the view that religion is completely invalidated as a result of its not being able to stand up to the 'Verification Principle', for the purpose of teaching Religious Instruction it is necessary to be aware that language is used in a distinctive way in a religion, just as it is in Science. To understand a religion the student needs to recognise and understand the language of that religion just as he needs to become familiar with the language of a branch of science, e.g. Physics, where a familiar word like energy is used in a specific and precisely defined sense, the meaning of which has to be understood and learned apart from its common use.

Taking cognisance of the fact that language is used in a distinctive way in religion may avoid the type of misunderstanding which Helen Keller (1954) records in The Story of My Life.

> At that time (when she was 8), a dear relative who was also an earnest Christian, tried to tell her about God, but, as this lady did not use words suited to the comprehension of the child, they made little impression on Helen's mind. When I subsequently talked with her she said: "I have something very funny to tell you. A. says God made me and everyone out of sand; but it must be a joke. I am made of flesh and blood, am I not?" Here she examined her arm with evident satisfaction, laughing heartily to herself. After a moment she went on: "A. says God is everywhere, and that He is all love; but I do not think a person can be made out of love. Love is only something in our hearts. Then A. said another very comical thing. She says He (meaning God) is my dear father. It made me laugh quite hard, for I know my father is Arthur Keller."[20]

Summarising the effects that the emphasis on linguistic analysis has had on theology and religious thinking in the West, we may conclude:

1. It has raised again very pertinent and basic philosophical and theological questions such as the nature of reality and the possibility of speaking at all of God.

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19. Ian T. Ramsay, Religious Language . London, SCM Press 1957
20. Helen Keller, The Story of My Life. New York, Doubleday 1954 p.311

2. It has forced a very careful analysis of religious language and highlighted the vague and often meaningless way in which words have been and still are used by those involved in Religious Education. William B. Williamson(1970) analyses and often scathingly attacks the vague concepts and imprecise language used by those who draw up R.E. curricula and formulate statements of their aims in the United States.[21]

3. It has shown that a clearer awareness that language is used in a distinctive way in religion and some understanding of the way in which it is used may help to clarify the teaching of the subject. This topic will be examined later.

4. It may be pertinent to mention that it is in the scientific and technological West that the problem of religious language is an issue, and that it is mainly the Judaeo-Christian religion that has come under attack in this way.

1.6 Concept, Culture and Language

Roger W. Brown(1962) defines culture as 'All those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational and non-rational, which exist at any time as potential guides for the behaviour of man.'[22]

It is important to examine briefly the relationship between culture, concept and language for the following reasons:

1.6.1 One of the main subjects of study in RI in South Africa is the Bible. The original languages of the Bible are foreign and the cultural eras within which its events took place are far separated from ours both in time and type. Furthermore some of its concepts are not part of the conceptual framework of the modern western European child.

1.6.2 A child grows up in a particular society developing concepts as he grows. It may be accepted that the conceptual development of the child and the stages through which he passes may well be the same for all children regardless of cultural differences. At the same time his society or culture gives him:

1. A specific Name often peculiar to that society by which to refer to the concept.

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21. William B. Williamson, Language and Concepts in Christian Education. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. 1970

22. Bruner et alia. op. cit. p.304

2. Some evaluation of the concept (e.g. awe and respect for the cow as a religious symbol amongst Hindus; regard and respect for the cow as an economic and status symbol amongst many African tribes).

3. Certain cultures may be deficient in certain concepts, which may be of the concrete or abstract type. For example the whale may be unknown to inland African tribes; the concepts 'good' and 'evil' are not used amongst the Japanese, who speak of 'duty' and 'non-duty'.

Language is one of the chief means whereby concepts and thus culture are communicated. In his article on 'Language and Categories' Roger W. Brown (1962) shows how differences in culture between one cultural group and another are often proportional to the linguistic differences between them. He goes on to say:

> When the notion of language is expanded in this way it is a truism to identify language areas with cultural areas. For language is nothing less than an inventory of all the ideas, interests and occupations that take up the attention of the community The study of semantics, in this extended sense, cannot be distinguished from the general study of culture.[23]

In order to serve the various areas of interest in the community, language may be used in different ways - poetical, factual, narrative, religious amongst many others. In a dynamic culture new ways of using language are constantly being devised e.g. advertising, computer, scientific language.

Religion is one of the areas that falls within a culture, both shaping the culture and being shaped by it. It is associated with a body of concepts, beliefs, values and acts which is handed on within the culture by its members in the process of educating their young. It is at the same time one of the determining factors of the culture in that it moulds and evaluates beliefs, practices, values and attitudes of the members of the culture. The influence of the religion on the culture will depend on the nature of the particular culture and the religion associated with it, but the two are mutually dependent. Each can properly be understood only in relation to the other.

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23. op cit. Appendix by Roger W. Brown p.311

It is necessary to examine this relationship and to return to it later because it has a bearing on the question whether it is the task of the school to teach Religion or a religion in its RI syllabus. In England, for example, in the light of the gradual change in society from one that was largely homogeneous to one that is multi-cultural and multi-religious, the emphasis is on teaching Religion rather than a religion viz. Christianity. According to Prof Ninian Smart (1968)[24] pupils are to achieve an understanding of the nature of religion itself as a distinctive way of interpreting experience, and to emerge with 'certain capacities to understand and think about religion.' There is a danger of developing a tendency to concentrate on the individual's experience and to ignore its cultural dimension or the cultural milieu within which the experience takes place. The change in emphasis in RE is, however, related to the cultural change in the country itself, demonstrating again the close link between religion and culture.

Another reason for taking into account the importance of culture in the teaching of RI is that significant cultural changes have been, and still are, taking place in the West. The words secular, scientific, and technological are often associated with these changes. These changes have had their effects on the religion of the West. The problem of RI is not only that of teaching Biblical concepts within a foreign cultural milieu which is, in itself, difficult enough as missionary history has shown, but of teaching Biblical concepts within a dynamic and rapidly changing culture which is in the process of being moulded by unprecedented developments in science and technology.

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24 Ninian Smart. Secular Education and the Logic of Religion London, Faber and Faber 1968

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPT METHODOLOGY

1.1 Out of the ferment in educational philosophy and methodology of the past few decades has come a realisation by some educationalists that many of the experimental methods have failed to improve the pupil's grasp of the subject. Little comment has been made on the 'improvement' in the child himself where, in child-centred pedagogy, he has been the centre of attention. Presumably the reason is that this is even less measurable by any form of assessment than is his grasp of a subject.

This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of trends in education over the past few decades, but one point which might be worth investigating is the possibly worthwhile effect on the child and his development as a person of having mastered certain skills and concepts pertaining to whatever subject he is studying regardless of his initial interest and motivation. Bruner (1971) does mention this when he says, 'Let curriculum consist of a series of prerequisites in knowledge and skill, to be mastered with a built-in regard in increased competence as the learner goes from one step to the next.'[1]

A team of researchers from the University of Lancaster has recently published a report (1976)[2] comparing the results of children taught by more conventional methods with those of children in school where more 'modern' and experimental teaching styles are used. The editor is careful to warn that the results should not be taken out of their context and used to justify abandoning experimental methods, but they do show that pupils taught by the orthodox methods on the whole produced equally good, and very often, better results than the others.

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1. J.S. Bruner - The Relevance of Education, London George Allan & Unwin Ltd - First published in Great Britain, 1972

2. N. Bennett et alia - Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress, London - Open Books, 1976

There has been what might be called a return to a more careful balance between child-centred and subject-centred pedagogy by some educationalists in the USA and the UK. On the one hand the child-centred aspect remains in that research has resulted in a deeper knowledge of the conceptual development of the child, and consequently information and ideas can be tailored to match this development. On the other hand is the realisation stated by Jerome S. Bruner (1960) in the 'Process of Education' that it is both desirable and possible for children to be taught the fundamental structure of a subject. In his book he quotes a letter from Inhelder commenting on certain experiments in which children use mathematical and scientific concepts. 'These examples lead us to think that it is possible to draw up methods of teaching the basic ideas in science and mathematics to children considerably younger than the traditional age.'[3] He reiterates this contention at various points in 'The Relevance of Education' (1972)[4].

Wayne L. Herman, Jnr (1963) as a result of an experiment conducted on 'Developing Social Science Concepts in the Kindergarten' where kindergarten children were required to study New York as a harbour, concluded:

> Kindergarten children bring a background of knowledge with them to school; they gather information in many ways; can deal with ideas over long periods of time; use the tools of the social scientist; transfer their understandings in approaching new situations.

He states, '.... children in the kindergarten can begin to develop social science concepts that are being dealt with by scholars' (The writer's emphasis)[5]

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3. J.S. Bruner - The Process of Education, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1960, p44
4. ibid, passim
5. Wayne L. Herman Jnr - 'Developing Social Science Concepts in Kindergarten,' Social Education, 27:253-56 May 1963. Reprinted in Current Research in Elementary School Social Studies, Editor W.L. Herman Jnr

Peter Martorella (1972) has discussed experimental work and learning schemes based on concept learning amongst various age groups in the subjects of Mathematics, Communication Arts, Science and Social Studies.[6]

'Conceptual approaches' stated John Jaromilek (1969) 'are intended to provide a framework or design for the building up of meanings from facts to concepts to generalisations.'[7] In commenting on the teaching of social studies in the USA he remarked :

> The basic idea is to focus instruction on a relatively few fundamental concepts that have high transfer value and that help to explain or predict social or natural phenomena. Specific subject matter is selected to illustrate particularly well the concepts under study and to permit the application of certain methods of inquiry.' [8]

In 'What can I do in RE?' Michael Grimmitt (1973) made a similar point when he said: '.... teachers need to be aware of the key concepts which, when related to each other, form the principles of a subject or academic discipline.'[9] He went on to say:

> Piaget's work (like that of J.S. Bruner) has high-lighted the central position which is occupied in thinking and learning by concept-formation ... Thus, Piaget has indicated to teachers the outstanding need for them to first of all identify the key concepts within a subject and then devise effective means of helping pupils to develop them. It is regrettable that in many academic fields, including theology, very little thought and work has been expended on this crucial task.' [10]

All these statements imply that a subject can be broken down into component parts entailing a structure of concepts, detailed material illustrative of the relevant concepts, skills, and methods appropriate for handling the concepts.

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6. Peter H. Martorella, Concept Learning, Scranton, Intext Educational Publishers, 1972
7. John Jaromilek - Conceptual Approaches: Their Meaning for Elementary Social Studies. Reprinted from Social Education 31:534-536, 1966 in Readings for Social Studies in Elementary Education.ed. John Jaromilek and Huber M Walsh - Second Edition, London, Macmillan 1962
8. ibid
9. Michael Grimmitt - What Can I Do In R.E? - Essex Mayhew-Mc Crimmon Ltd p.11
10. ibid p.37

'Subject matter is more than a list of facts about persons, places and events. To "know a subject" is to be able to state or use at least some of the major ideas and characteristic ways of thinking that belong to that field.'[11]

2. Problems in Attempting to Establish what is meant by the 'Subject', Religious Instruction, in the School Situation

Before it is possible to identify any main concepts, it is necessary to discuss and reach some tentative conclusion as to what is meant by 'Religion' as a school subject. From an examination of syllabuses and literature written on the subject in this country and the United Kingdom, it can be seen that there has been a wide range of interpretations as to its meaning. At one extreme in South Africa, 'Religious Instruction' has been narrowly interpreted by some as instruction in that interpretation of Christianity held by proponents of Christian National Education and generally associated with so called Afrikaans Calvinism. At the other extreme there have been those in the UK who have held a definition of religion which has allowed practically anything to be studied under the heading, 'Religious Education', and where teachers and pupils have had difficulty in recognising anything distinctively religious about the subject. 'Religion' has also been comprehensively understood as including all religions without allowing priority to the Christian religion. The problem is that no clarity has been reached as to the relationship between religion, religions, theology, Biblical Studies, Biblical Knowledge, Christianity, Christian doctrine and Religious Instruction. Each of these subjects has its own conceptual structure.

Perhaps the subject Religious Instruction can be compared with that of General Science or Nature Study as they occur in the Primary School syllabus. Elements of Physics, Botany, Chemistry, Zoology and Biology are offered. Observation is encouraged and certain experiments are carried out, which are regarded as illustrating important aspects of the 'characteristic ways of thinking' pertaining to subject, although, strictly speaking, there is no such subject as Science or Nature Study.

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11. Doris J. Hill: Teaching: The Inside Story: Board of Christian Education. United Presbyterian Church USA 1967 p.28

At secondary school and university level a specialised branch of science e.g. Physics and Botany etc. is studied, and while the dependence of one branch of Science upon another is recognised no such subject as 'Science' is offered at the university.

There are a number of factors which contribute towards the ambiguity of Religious Instruction as a subject in the school.

2.1 The Right of the School to Teach Religious Instruction

2.1.1 The Education Authority

Not all education authorities are agreed that Religion in any of its forms should be included in the curriculum. In the United Kingdom and South Africa, amongst other countries, there is a legal requirement that the subject be taught in State schools, but this is by no means a universally held opinion amongst educationists of other countries.[12]

2.1.2 Parents

Surveys taken from time to time in those countries where teaching of RI is statutory have shown that parents are in favour of the subject being taught. At the same time, however, in spite of uncertainty about their own beliefs and practices, they can be more sensitive about what is taught in RI than in other subjects, and are inclined to react strongly to what is taught in the RI lesson. This can be a factor in inhibiting the teacher's approach until it becomes colourless, unimaginative and conservative. These factors result in many books written on Religious Instruction during the past few decades containing a negative assessment of the handling of the subject.

In the writer's experience parents have reacted negatively to a variety of approaches and statements made in the context of the RI lesson. The following represent a few:

> God will cut your hands off if you take something that doesn't belong to you.
>
> It is possible that the story of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden may not be historically true. It may be a parable.

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12. Harold Holmes; Religious Education in the State School, Edinburgh, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962 Chapter 3

> It took millions of years for man to develop into the form in which we know him today.

In one instance parents and clergy reacted to the evangelistic approach of a high school teacher who, in the words of the Principal 'turned his laboratory into a church'. In another case, the teacher's approach was interpreted by parents and rabbis as being anti-semitic. In both cases the Headmasters and Education Authorities took drastic action.

2.1.3 The Churches

In no other school subject is there a body which offers systematic teaching to the same children who are being taught in the school, covering a similar area of subject matter, and at the same time claiming to be the superior and recognised authority over the content and interpretation of what is taught. The Church, in the form of various demonimations and sects, claims prior right to the religious education of its young members. The denominations require both knowledge of the teaching and commitment to it, and each is inclined to regard its interpretation of Christian teaching as definitive or at least sometimes superior to that offered by other denominations. Examination of the education programmes of churhces often brings to light a similar confusion regarding what is to be taught in their Sunday Schools as is found in the subject RI, with a mixture of elements of theology, Bible Knowledge, doctrinal and ethical material placed in no coherent framework, and often imitating the current educational fashions in methodology.

The main difference between what is taught in the school and in the church lies not only in what is taught, but in that the Church need have no hesitation in pressing commitment to its teaching, that its teaching takes place within a worshipping community of committed believers, and that no one is obliged to subject himself to its teachings.

2.1.4 Society

The school is faced with several problems:

a. It caters for those who represent a far wider spectrum of belief than does a denomination, in that amongst the pupils in a school are members of many Christian denominations and sects, as well as those who belong

to a non-Christian religious group, and those who have no religious affiliation at all.

b. Teaching takes place within a community constituted for educational purposes and not by virtue of religious commitment, nor for worship, regardless of whether or not the majority of the staff are committed to the Church through one of its denominations.

2.1.4.1 Relationship of School and Church to Society

A further difference between the school and the church is that, although both exist within society, the former, unless it is a church school, has been set up by the society of which it is a part - it is both in society and of it. It may go so far as trying to improve the society of which it is a part, but will not judge or oppose it. Edward de Bono (1972) maintains that :

> Education has always considered its duty to be the passing on intact of established ideas. Education has never regarded it as its duty to question these ideas, alter them, or even provide tools for changing them.[13]

Although there are those who would make the same criticism of the church, the New Testament maintains that the church is 'in the world but not of it'[14] In 'rendering unto God what is God's',[15] it may see its task prophetically as one of opposition to society and of teaching and encouraging its members to refuse to conform to certain aspects of society.

2.1.4.2 Heterogeneous Society

A further problem is posed by the nature of the society in which the school and church function. If the church finds itself in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, its task is clear even though it may not be easy. It continues to live its life of worship and teaching, makes whatever missionary overtures it sees fit to those outside its ranks and the necessary internal adjustments to embrace its members of various cultures. It may change its approach

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14 John 17: 17-19
15 Matthew 22 : 21

in a multi-cultural or missionary situation, but it will not change its message or the content of its teaching.

The school, however, when it is a State institution, is committed to serve the whole of the society within which it exists. The society may be homogeneous and mono-cultural or heterogeneous and multi-cultural. There are a number of possibilities and variations within these extremes. A minority religio-cultural group may be found in an otherwise mono-cultural society. In this case the school will generally reflect the main cultural patterns and values of its society. Its function is not entirely cognitive ... it also aims to impart certain attitudes and values which belong to the effective and volitional areas of learning. In a homogeneous society, the school may feel no compunction in duplicating and supplementing the work of a dominant denomination with little regard for any minority group. It may see its role as that of an active agent in propagating a particular set of values and attitudes associated with the denomination, or dictated by it.

It is when the society is multi-cultural and multi-religious that the problem becomes greater and increases in complexity as the balance between majority and minority groups becomes less one-sided. The problem is approached in various ways. One is to separate children into schools catering for their cultural groups (as has been done in South Africa).

It is interesting to note however, the various grounds of separation, which are hardly consistent. In some cases the separation is on linguistic grounds (English and Afrikaans) and in others it is racial and cultural (African, Coloured an and Indian).

Sometimes the criterion chosen for distinguishing a separate cultural group results also in a coincidence with a religious distinction e.g. in Afrikaans speaking schools most children are associated with one of the Dutch Reformed Churches and by far the majority belong to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Church. In English speaking schools the majority of the children have some affiliation to one of the

major Christian denominations, and in many areas there is a substantial Jewish minority group. In the African schools, religious divisions are between Christian and tribal religions and various syncretisms of the two. A phenomenal multiplicity of Christian and 'Christian' denominations and sects is represented amonst the children and teachers. Amongst the Indian group three world religions are represented, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, and in the Coloured community all the Christians denominations including a high proportion of members of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Church as well as a considerable number of Muslims.

Each of the groups (English, Afrikaans, African, Coloured and Indian) falls under a separate education authority and syllabuses are drawn up accordingly. In all cases the RI syllabus is designed from the Christian point of view. The task of drawing up a common national RI syllabus for all groups catering in some way for the multi-religious and multi-cultural background of the pupils would be challenging in the extreme, and something which to the writer's knowledge, has never been contemplated. As it is the existing syllabus for Transvaal English and Afrikaans speaking pupils has presented a number of problems and there is often a great difference in the ways in which each group interprets and uses the syllabus. The difficulty in compiling an appropriate syllabus may be illustrated by the fact that RI is the only subject in the Primary School in which the syllabus has not been revised recently.

In conclusion, therefore, there is a very real problem in knowing how to interpret the word 'religious' in the the term Religious Instruction in a multi-religious situation. This is solved in South Africa by understanding 'religious' to mean 'Christian', whereas in the United Kingdom, where the society has comparatively recently become multi-cultural, the word 'religious' is understood in a wide and inclusive sense, and although the groups representing other religions are still in a small minority compared with the Christian groups, the aim is that Religious Education should not be exclusive in its implications.

2.1.5 Evaluation

The school is the only formal institution which offers instruction in subjects like Mathematics, History, branches of Science, Geography, etc. In most academic subjects formal instruction carries through to a certain level at the end of which some form of assessment is made upon which a decision is based as to whether a required standard has been reached. This is not always the case in 'Skill' type subjects. RI, however, generally seems to be regarded as falling somewhere between an academic subject and a 'skill'. Very seldom is there any form of evaluation. Derek Webster (1976) comments,

> Religious education has never taken the problem of evaluation seriously- and obviously there is that within the subject which is not to be empirically assessed - but the effects of this have been a failure to develop instruments which gauge results and an uncertainty about what can be measured. Yet when the other areas of the school curriculum subject themselves to the discipline of objective product evaluation religious education cannot be excused without impairing the claim, decisive for its inclusion on the time-table, that it is educative.'16

2.1.6 The Teacher

In the light of the above, it is hardly surprising that many teachers would prefer to avoid teaching the subject. What is taught is subjected not only to the scrutiny of the education authority, but also to that of parents and the churches. If the teacher is a committed Christian he has to steer a delicate course between his role as an educationalist appointed by the State and one who is committed to the Mission of the Church, which he may understand in an evangelical light. In addition he faces teaching a subject which, as has been mentioned previously, is ambiguous in its content and aims.

Speaking of the situation in the UK, Derek Webster (1976) sums up the reasons for a 'dearth of students' coming forward to train as specialists in RE as follows:

> Religious education no longer understands itself and has little insight into its role within educational and ecclesiastical communities.

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16. Derek Webster. Theory in Religious Education: Criticism and Prospect. Learning for Living Spring 1976, p.89

> Part of the reason for this is that current approaches, however different in aims, methodology and organisation, have given insufficient thought to the relationship between on the one hand religious education and on the other Christian theology, education and religious studies. One of the worst results of this has been a denial to teachers of clarification of those norms necessary for day to day school work.[17]
> (The writer's emphasis)

3. What is meant by the 'subject' Religious Instruction in the School?

Much of what has been said in the previous paragraphs regarding RI as a school subject has been negative or inconclusive. Problems and ambiguities have been pointed out and while it must be admitted that the debate is likely to continue indefinitely some attempt will be made to narrow down the possibilities and offer a tentative definition of RI as a school subject.

A subject generally comprises specific areas of knowledge and a set of associated techniques, methods and skills. Although these may be expanding and may overlap with a related subject or subjects, it is possible to determine or define which areas belong to the subject and which do not. The dividing line between one subject and another may be arbitrary and what is offered in a University syllabus under one subject may, in another University, occur in the syllabus of another subject.

Learning involves interaction between teacher, subject and pupil. The mode of thinking appropriate for this interaction is 'directed thought' as described in the previous chapter (p.19) as thought which pursues an aim, is adapted to reality, admits to being true or false, can be communicated by language and is socialised. The word 'subject' can be applied to those areas of religion which can be formulated and communicated in terms of directed thought, rather than those which can better be classified as 'austistic' experience and thought. The phenomena inherent in areas of the content of many subjects particularly religion and the arts may represent autistic thinking and experience e.g. mysticism, conversion and other viarieties of religious experience, forms of human behaviour studied in psychology, aspects of the arts -

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17. ibid., p.85

music, dance, etc. However any attempt to communicate these phenomena involves directed thought.

Many of the religious experiences described by William James (1902)[18] are of an autistic nature. The attempt to communicate them orally, symbolically or in writing brings them into the area of directed thought. When directed religious experience in the form of ritual, oral tradition or holy writings becomes codified, classified, analysed, conceptualised, it becomes that set of concepts known as theology. All can experience religion in its autistic form, regardless of age, intelligence, training, and religious persuasion. Writers on mysticism and mystic experience show that for the mystic the lines of demarcation between one religion and another, and between one branch or denomination of a religion and another are very ill defined. It is usually because most mystics are attached to a particular religious group that they interpret their experiences within the theological framework of that group - i.e. they relate them to the origin and points of reference of that religion. In some cases, the experiences give rise to a new phase of directed thought or to a new system of directed thought, and thence to a new Religion. This can be said of Muhammed's experience in the desert and the Buddha's meditation under the Bo-tree. The relation between autistic religious experience and religious experience in its directed form, viz theology, is analagous to the process of concept formation described in Chapter 2, paragraph 1.2. It happens in the case of most religions that there is an intermediate stage between the two mentioned above, and this is the stage where myth, narrative and ritual are used to direct the religious experiences of individuals within a particular religious heritage.

Dr Happold (1966) is one of the writers who maintains that the mystical dimension of religion offers modern man a way out of his spiritual dilemma. He sees it as offering an

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18. William James, Varieties of Religious Experience Collins Fontana Library, London & Glascow 1960 First published 1901-2

intersection between various areas of life within the individual, and between individuals and groups of people. At the same time he makes no effort to play down the importance of the cognitive side of religion. The ideas for his book[19] took their origin in his efforts to teach 'philosophy' to his Sixth Form boys in a course that was 'designed to give my boys an intellectual basis for religious faith'[20] He quotes Philip Toynbee's analysis of the religious dilemma of modern man and his solution that man 'must wait - on God or whatever it may be ....', but goes on to say 'But surely, side by side with that, there is the call to think, to analyse, to try to understand.'[21] '..... at least there must be some working hypothesis.'[22] He is thus stressing the importance of both the autistic and the directed dimensions of man's thinking and experience. But for an educationist directed thinking must dominate.

Within a religious community as opposed to an educational community, the search may be for members to share the experiences of the 'saints'. The community becomes the custodian of the experiences of its 'saints', and to be a member of the community in the fullest sense of the word member, is to commit oneself to the search for the experience as it is understood by the community, to be open to the experience, and to take a part in the transmission of the experience through whatever means are available - ritual, word-of-mouth, sacrament, written word.

Theoretically, the ideal believer might combine personal religious experience with commitment to the tenets and way of life of the religion and a theological grasp of its doctrines. This would involve all levels of learning - affective, volitional and cognitive. The history of religions shows that these characteristics seldom occur in one person or together in the history of one religion at a particular time.

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19. F.C. Happold, Religious Faith and Twentieth-Century Man Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1966.
20. ibid p.8.
21. ibid p.11
22. ibid p.12

In contrast to this, the teacher's task in respect of his pupils falls (but not entirely) exclusively into the cognitive area of learning. In Doris Hill's words quoted on page 29 of this Chapter - 'The pupil needs to be able to state and use at least some of the major ideas and characteristic ways of thinking that belong to that field.'

It is interesting to note that the believer becomes part of the subject, 'religion'. He studies it, as it were, from the 'inside'. This does not necessarily apply to one who studies it as a subject in a school or university.

To summarise the answer to the question 'What is meant by the "subject" Religious Instruction in the school?' - it may be said that any aspect of religion to which directed thought as defined above, can be applied can fall under this heading, and that it is left to the educational authority to decide which aspects are most suitable, basing the decision on sound educational grounds, although as Bruner (1972) pointed out, politics can seldom be excluded from any decision of this nature.[23]

4. Criteria for choosing basic ideas

Without at this stage having made any decision as to the way in which Religious Instruction will be understood for the purpose of this dissertation certain criteria will be discussed which should be met in selecting the basic ideas of any subject.

4.1 The concepts should be amongst those which are being dealt with by scholars in the subject concerned

Wayne Herman (1963) made the point that children at kindergarten level can begin to develop the concepts dealt with by scholars in the Social Sciences.[24] Bruner (1960) stated: 'There is a continuity between what a scholar does on the forefront of his discipline and what a child does in approaching it for the first time.'[25] Elsewhere he commented "emphasis on structure and principle help narrow the gap between "advanced" knowledge and "elementary" knowledge.'[26]

23 Bruner - op cit Chapter 6
24 Herman - op cit p.p. 253-256
25 Bruner - op cit p.27
26 Bruner - op cit p.23

It is common knowledge that in all subjects there nas been a knowledge explosion as a result of research, the application of new methods and technology in research and in communication. New subjects have come into being, or new branches have been added to old subjects. 'Old' subjects have undergone a complete revision and been renamed - 'The New Mathematics' or 'The New Science'. It has never been easy to determine what is worthwhile in the new, or to know how best to integrate the new and the old. It also remains a question in some cases as to whether the new is really new and not a revamping of some fashion that has gone out of date, and been discarded.

The knowledge explosion has affected the fields of Biblical Studies ·d theology and related subjects as much as any other subject. At times this has been the result of research in the field itself, at others it has been the result of being able to apply unprecedented technological developments in other fields, and there have also been a number of developments arising from the need to re-examine Biblical and theological subjects in the light of developments in other fields of knowledge such as the sciences, Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy and Politics. In many quarters reservations have been expressed about some of the 'way out' theories of 'way out' theologians, but even accepted findings which add to the understanding and significance of the Bible have been very slow, or have failed altogether, to find their way to the 'man-in-the-pew' or the 'child-in-the-desk'. The channels between those on the forefront of the various component disciplines and 'those approaching the subject for the the first time' have been almost completely blocked. Derek Webster (1976) found '.... this century's seminal theologians partly responsible for breaking the monopoly of Christian theology in religious education.' He went on to say, 'Karl Barth isolated children beyond the church and encouraged a divorce between training in the church and education in society. Rudolph Bultmann virtually excluded himself from discussion by adopting a view of education that is clearly tendentious - it was simply a pertinent interpretation of the kerygma. Paul Tillich's blue print for education only had

value in a theonomous society where God is the 'prius' of all other truth. Emil Brunner was explicit in holding that 'religious instruction' had nothing to do with education. The old joke "When is a school not a school? ..... When it is a Sunday School" 'became true'.[27]

Thus far attempts to formulate a 'New Religious Instruction' have been tentative and experimental, and certainly they have not been received with anything like the initial enthusiasm which met the New Mathematics.

4.2 <u>For a concept to be regarded as a basic concept, understanding should lead to the understanding of a network of other concepts related to it or derived from it</u>.

Once the basic concept has been mastered a number of other concepts should fall into place. An example of this in another discipline is the Conservation Law in Physics, from which a number of other laws can be derived, and which has numerous applications which are far better understood in relation to this basic law than as separate phenomena.

4.3 <u>A basic concept should be capable of being presented meaningfully at different levels of intellectual development and maturity</u>.

Herman (1963) stated:

> ... the basic concepts of each area of knowledge would be taught at every stage in the education of children, beginning with the first experiences of school and continuing up college and the graduate school. Facts and information would be presented at each level, not for the inherent value of their information, but rather because they exemplify or illustrate the larger basic concepts in some way. The outcome of a curriculum organised in this fashion has been labelled a "spiral curriculum", since big ideas would be visited again and again by the child in his high school career, with each visit adding more meaning as the idea is investigated in greater depth and breadth.' [28]

It is interesting to contrast this 'spiral curriculum' idea with the concentric syllabus used in RI in the Transvaal Primary schools. In the latter, what is 'visited again and again' is the same set of facts, details and events, and

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27 Webster, op, cit., p 85
28 Herman op cit., pp 253-256

regrettably the idea, if recognised and presented, is not developed systematically and purposefully. The writer refers to the execution and not necessarily the initial intention of the syllabus.

A'pupil's-eye' view of this is expressed in an unsolicited comment arising from three children discussing 'how far' they were in RI. Two of the children were in Grade II and Standard II respectively, which follow the same 'circle' of the concentric syllabus and the third was a Standard III pupil, following the complementary'circle' of syllabus material. They each made competitive comments and comparisons on which story they were 'up to' and the Std II child commented, 'It must be hard for teachers. No one quite knows where to begin in the Bible because it just goes round and round.'

4.4 <u>The concept should allow for further development and be applicable under broader conditions than those under which it made its first appearance</u>

The consequence of understanding a concept in one field should be the ability to apply it to other circumstances in the same field, to apply it to another related field of study, or to understand a similar concept in another discipline. Bruner (1960) has concluded that 'understanding of fundamental principles and ideas ..... appears to be the main road to adequate "transfer of training"'[29] He also stated that 'at its best a learning episode reflects what has gone before it and permits one to generalise beyond it.'[30]

In Religious Instruction one of the words often emphasised is 'relevance' in the sense of application of what is learned to modern life. Whenever the writer has posed the question to classes of students as to what they regarded as making the difference between a good and an indifferent teacher in the subject, the reply has been some variation of 'He/she talked about our lives and problems.' 'The teaching was relevant to our lives,' In other words, there was some ability to apply concepts understood in the setting of another day and age to the present.

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29 Bruner, op cit, p.23

30 ibid p.46

4.5 The concepts should be conducive to presentation at various levels of the intellectual development of the child in terms appropriate to that level of development

On the one hand the writer's personal experience and that of many others has shown that what normal children are capable of in their attainment in thinking, skills and insight very often exceeds our expectations by far. Two boys, (aged 10 years and 7 years) who had rejected Sunday School as 'too babyish' (it's just to keep you busy') had an hour long spontaneous discussion with an adult following a TV programme showing a BBC interview with Solzynitzen.. After asking the necessary questions to fill in what they had not fully understood, they made the following unsolicited comments on their understanding of Solzynitzen's views on the weakness of the West in regard to its attitude to Russia.

10 year-old: "It's as if the West has been hypnotised."

7 year-old: "Russia is like a four-pound hammer hitting a piece of wood."

Although this might be an exceptional incident and not reproducible in the classroom, it, and other similar incidents bear out views quoted earlier in this chapter that children are capable of grasping mature concepts if they are suitably presented.

On the other hand, the futility of presenting advanced concepts in a way which is completely untailored to the age group concerned has been demonstrated by many a graduate student teacher in his first encounter with a class, and by many a missionary beginning his work amongst people of a foreign culture.

4.6 Flexibility

Basic concepts should be capable of presentation in a number of ways. It should be possible to teach them through a variety of methods. They should not be the victims of dogmatic and rigid statements about their nature and the way they should be taught.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter the advantages of teaching by identifying the basic ideas of the subject have been discussed.

Mention has been made of the problems, unique to this subject, in coming to a conclusion as to what comprises Religious Instruction as a subject in the school curriculum. Certain suggestions have been made as to criteria to be used in defining a subject and the distinction between autistic and directed experience and thinking has been emphasised.

Five criteria have been mentioned which will be kept in mind in choosing basic concepts of the subject, RI.

CHAPTER 4

The Selection of Basic Concepts in Religious Instruction

1. Response to different classes of Concept

Two classes of concept were defined in Chapter 2. In respect of these, the following observations may be made.

1.1 Cognitive Response

The response to a Class 1 type concept is purely cognitive; the concept is acknowledged or accepted, and becomes part of the learner's cognitive store.

1.2 Affective and Volitional Response - Faith and Belief

The response to a Class 2 type concept, however, is not purely cognitive. It involves the volitional and affective dimensions. The possibility exists of the learner rejecting the interpretive or evaluative elements of the new concept. This possibility is remote when the concept is learned by a member of the culture within which the interpretive concept occurs, but it exists to a greater or lesser degree when the concept is acquired by a member of a foreign culture, or amongst members of foreign cultures where alternative interpretations may be offered.

The response to the Class 2 type concept then, entails a volitional and affective response as well as a cognitive one, and besides acknowledgement or acceptance it includes a response of belief (an acknowledgement and acceptance of the interpretative elements of the concept) and/or faith, namely a decision whether to make this concept part of the learner's framework for living. The belief/faith response may be far less conscious in a member who has been brought up within the culture within which the interpretative and evaluative elements are derived, to the extent that he may be unaware of any difference in his response to the two classes of concept.

Religious concepts were defined as being of the Class 2 type, where experiences and concepts are interpreted in relation to an Origin and occur within the six-dimensional framework defined by Smart, *in the Schools Council Working Paper.* The appropriate response to religious concepts is belief/faith - unbelief/'unfaith'. Whether the teaching of religious concepts takes place within the believing community of the church, or a neutral community of the school the appropriate response, apart from understanding, falls within the spectrum of belief and faith. It is belief/faith which determines the interpretative elements

which relate concepts to the Origin, and belief/faith which responds to the resulting network of concepts and relationships. Hick(1973) states that, 'Faith ... is the interpretative element within what the religious man reports as his experience of living in the presence of God. But whether that experience is veridicial or illusory is another question'[1]

Thus faith (to be discussed more fully later) will be taken as one of the basic concepts.

1.3 Response involving Commitment

There is a further reason for regarding faith as a key concept In any religion there is a dividing line of belief which separates the adherent to that origin and associated set of evaluating principles and concepts which we have called a religion, from non-adherents. Admittedly in the case of some religions the dividing line is much less clear-cut than in others. Within a religion there are degrees of commitment so that some adherents possess what we may call an 'externalised' rather than an 'internalised' faith, but nevertheless (for census purposes and filling in Immigration Forms, etc) identify themselves with one religion rather than another.

However rational or irrational are the grounds for the believer's identification with one set of beliefs rather than another and however much it is the result of birth and culture rather than conscious decision, nevertheless, what separates members of one religion from another is belief/faith. The belief/faith criterion is a basic concept in the discussion of religion and can be understood and taught from any point of commitment or non-commitment. Any individual can stand outside the belief/faith framework of some religions, and at the same time, inside the belief/faith framework of another religion. Thus it is possible for both the 'believer' and the 'unbeliever' to understand the basic concept, faith, in the most general sense in which it is being used in this paragraph.

1.4 The distinction between a 'proof system' and a 'belief system'

One of the problems in teaching Religion in the scientific and technological milieu of the West is that pupils and students

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1. John Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths, London and Basingstoke, The Macmillan Press, Ltd 1973, p51

have tended to expect all things to be verifiable within a 'proof-system' and to expect the proof to be established in material or Greek-logic terms. One of the important educational purposes in teaching RI may be to make a clear distinction between a 'proof-system' and a 'belief-system' and to show those areas in religious and non-religious subjects where each applies.

2. Origin

It is the Origin and its relation to the experiences of life and the way in which the experiences of life are interpreted in relation to it which gives life the distinctive meaning which, when seen in the framework of doctrine, rituals, etc. has been defined as religion in this dissertion. It is for this reason that Origin will be discussed as a basic concept.

3. The relationship between the Origin and the believer

A third basic concept will be the distinctive relationship or association between the Origin and the believer in relation to all the basic elements that make up life.

4. Flexibility

In the previous Chapter one of the criteria for regarding a concept as basic was flexibility. It is to meet this criterion that the three concepts mentioned above have been formulated in general terms which can be used in the discussion of any religion, and might meet the requirements of those who approach Religious Education from a broader, more pluralistic point of view.

5. Reasons for choosing basic concepts within the framework of Biblical Theology

For the purpose of this dissertation it has been decided to define the basic concepts in terms of Biblical theology rather than in a wider context for the following reasons:

5.1 A basic discipline and transfer of training

If Bruner's contention concerning the effectiveness of transfer of training is correct, once the essentials of one religion or religious discipline have been grasped, it is easier to grasp the essentials of another. It has been the writer's experience that orthodox Jews, well versed in the tenets of their own religion, achieved far better results in the formal study of

the Christian religion than nominal Christian and Jewish students.

Peter Ackroyd (1971) pointed out that 'Just as no one religion can be studied in isolation, so too any general study of religion which is engaged in without particularisation will be vague; it must, if it is to be realistic, lay stress on the realities and problems of one or more particular theological systems'[2]

Alan T. Dale (1972) remarked

> I know no better introduction if it (the Bible)is properly read, to understanding how to think and live religiously. And this, more than anything else makes me convinced that it has a genuine place in religious education which has been rightly defined as "to help pupils have a religious view of life and to make up their minds on religious questions"[3]

5.2 Religion and Culture

There is a strong interaction between religion and culture. Religion is one of the determining factors in culture and is in turn shaped by the cultural setting within which it finds itself. Thus it is best understood in its appropriate cultural setting and heritage. It is therefore suggested that the religion which should be studied in depth is that religion which predominates in a particular culture. In white South Africa this is the Christian religion which, in turn, can only be fully understood in the light of its Old Testament and Jewish origins. Hence, the decision to study basic concepts as they occur in Biblical Theology would provide some common basis for Jewish and Christian students.

5.3 Common Ground Between Judaism and Christianity

D.G. Attfield (1973) suggested that the Apostles' Creed be used as the basis of a 'creed-centred' Religious Education, in the hope of showing 'how the study of this particular religion (Christianity) can be seen as an educational study, as opposed to being a form of professional, vocational or scholarly training'[4] 'It is suggested', he went on to say 'that religious

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2. Peter Ackroyd. 'Theology and Education' a paper published by Christian Education movement, Annandale, London 1971
3. Alan T. Dale, The Bible in the Classroom, OUP, London 1972, p4
4. David Attfield, 'Creed-centred Religious Education', Learning for Living, May 1973, p.12

education best begins from and should be built up around a particular core of subject-matter. This core consists of the principal ideas of orthodox Christianity. .... the creed demarcates effectively religious language and the theological domain'[5] The writer feels that it would be difficult, but not impossible, to present the creed in a concept-spiral type curriculum in the lower classes, but it would also tend to exclude Jewish students from RI, although it must be admitted that this has already happened to a large extent in the Transvaal as a result (or in spite of) the present curriculum, where the Jewish religious authorities have provided an alternative course to be completed by their pupils during RI periods.

5.4 Denominational Differences

Emphasis on the Bible does away to some extent with the problem of doctrinal and denominational differences. One of the main problems, however, is the division, often within the denominations between the so-called 'liberal' and 'fundamentalist' interpretations of the Bible. It is hoped that focussing on the right questions in Biblical Theology might draw the attention away from the more peripheral issues which often attract more attention than they deserve and effectively sidetrack pupils and teachers from the main issues.

5.5 Relationship to the Existing Syllabus

In the Transvaal both the Primary and High school syllabuses are solidly based upon the Bible. Any radical suggestion regarding a reformulation of the syllabus which deviated too far from this would stand no chance of acceptance. So any conceptual approach must be based on the Bible.

At the same time after eight years of working amongst Teacher Training College students who have in theory received a minimum of 12 years of Religious Instruction in the schools, apart from any other teaching through church or Schule, the writer has concluded that the majority have very little basic knowledge of the Bible apart from a residue of the more familar Old and New Testament 'stories' and many have built up considerable antagonism or indifference to it.

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5. ibid p.13

The writer is of the opinion that an attempt to present the Bible within the conceptual framework of Biblical theology could eradicate some of the misconceptions, establish principles of understanding and could hardly achieve less than is being achieved under the present circumstances.

5.6 Pluralism and Secularisation

Pluralism is not a foreign concept to the Bible.

5.6.1 The religion of the Bible, whether one is speaking of the Old or the New Testament, was hammered out in the midst of other religions. One could say that it was born, nurtured and broughtto maturity in a pluralistic society or societies. The Bible may therefore be more significant than is generally recognised to those who prefer the wider approach to Religious Education.

5.6.2 Secularisation may be viewed simply as another cultural milieu. The history of the people of God as recorded in both Testaments takes place in many different cultural settings. The religion which unfolds in and through the history is always seen in the light of or in contrast to a foreign cultural setting - a point which may be very relevant in our study of Biblical religion in a secular environment.

5 6.3 In the experience of the writer pupils and students have shown a far greater interest in 'other' religions than their own, even though their knowledge of their own religion is far from adequate. Whatever the reasons for this, their interest could in part be catered for by more in-depth study of the religious concepts alongside which the Biblical ones developed and alongside which they stand in contemporary life.

5.7 The Bible and the Church

The assertion is made by some churchmen that the Bible can only be understood within a believing and worshipping community. Without denying the validity of this point of view, it is worth quoting Alan Dale's (1973) answer to this argument

> I believe that the Bible is not a private document but one of the great public documents of the world. It is not the private possession of any community. Most of it was spoken out on public streets and open to the world. What it records was not done 'in a corner'. I find it significant that serious readers who are not church members have seen some of its truth more clearly than those who are; and as I read the history

> of religious communities I am not impressed by their objectivity in their Biblical studies. I think that the Bible is most truly to be understood 'in the open air of the world'. Its news is public news and its truth is public truth.[6]

6. Context in which basic Concepts will be defined

In view of the decision to interpret the basic concepts in terms of Biblical theology, 'faith' will be discussed in both a wider philosophical sense and in the sense in which it can be defined from its illustrations in the Bible. 'Origin' will be understood as the God the record of whose revelation is contained in the Bible, and 'the distinctive relationship or association between the origin and the believer' will be understood to be the Covenant as described in the Old and New Testaments.

One of the few subjects where one can begin with a single concept and thence systematically build up the whole edifice of the subject is Mathematics. By contrast the three basic concepts chosen here are interdependent and can only be developed in relation to each other. There is no particular order in which other concepts can be derived from these three basic concepts. Building up a theology is more like putting together a jig-saw puzzle, having been given a key to match the shapes, rather than building a 'family-tree of knowledge' from a pair of generating parents.

The concepts will be discussed beginning with the most 'concrete' concept, Covenant, and ending with the most complex and least concrete concept, God.

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6. Alan T.Dale, op cit p.4.

CHAPTER 5

The Concept, Covenant

1. The Covenant

It is this concept of the relationship between God and his people which gives its uniqueness to the Judaeo-Christians religion. At the same time it describes God and it defines man, and sets the relationship between the two. It is the theme which links the material of the Bible.

1.1 Is the concept amongst those which are being dealt with by scholars in the subject concerned?

It is significant that D.J. McCarthy's 'Survey of Current Opinions on the Covenant' 1973 [1] is published in the series 'Growing Points in Theology'. His 16 page bibliography on the subject which, he says, ... added to that in (my) Treaty and Covenant will provide a fuller survey of the literature pertaining to the question of the Old Testament Covenant than anything else I know of'[2] shows the importance of the concept and the extent to which the work of scholars has a bearing on it. He states 'Covenant is so important in the Scriptures that in the form "testament" it has provided the title for the book, but it is so complex an idea that we have our problems in understanding it.'[3]

Walter Eichrodt related all his Chapter headings according to their relationship to the covenant and stated in his preface ' ... in the face of all objections, the 'covenant' has been retained as the central concept, by which to illuminate the structural unity and the unchanging basic tendency of the message of the Old Testament. For it is in this concept that Israel's fundamental conviction of its special relationship with God is concentrated'[4]
And he went on to say,

> .... every expression of the Old Testament which is determinative for its faith rests on the explicit or implicit assumption that a free act of God, consummated in history, has raised Israel to the rank of

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1. D.J. McCarthy Survey of Current Opinion on the Covenant Oxfod, Basil Blackwell 1973
2. ibid p.90
3. ibid p.1
4. Walter Eichrodt - Theology of the Old Testament, Vols 1&11 Translated from the German, Sixth Ed.1959 London SCM Press p.13

> the People of God, in whom the nature and will of God are to be revealed. The word 'covenant', therefore, is so to speak a convenient symbol for an assurance much wider in scope and controlling the formation of the national faith at its deepest level, without which Israel would not be Israel. .... the covenant is not a doctrinal concept, with the help of which a complete dogma can be worked out, but the characteristic description of a living process, which was begun at a particular time and at a particular place, in order to reveal a divine reality unique in the whole history of religion.[5]

Further confirmation on the importance of the idea, covenant, is found in 'A Theological Word Book of the Bible' in the following words

> The idea of Covenant is fundamental both to OT and NT. The religion of Israel had its origin in the Covenant under Moses, while Jesus came to initiate the New Covenant sealed by the covenant sacrifice of his death. The Church named the two components of her Scriptures from the covenants they record, at least from the end of the second century.[6]

Similarly the article on Covenant in 'Vocabulary of the Bible' states. 'Thus in the OT covenant has a significance the importance of which cannot be exaggerated'[7]

Colin Alves (1957) in his book, 'The Covenant', designed to 'make possible the study of the Old Testament in the course of one school year' stated, 'This obviously necessitates a selective approach, yet the passages selected for reading have been carefully chosen for their unity of theme, a theme which is not only fundamental to the OT but is the link between Old and New - God's covenant with man'[8]

Another theologian who stresses the central importance of this concept is Miskotte (1967), who said,

> If it sometimes appears as if the one object to which the testimony of the Old and New Testament is related is equivalent to what the pagans and the philosophers call"God", and thus there is the danger that Jesus Christ will be viewed Docetically, then the only way in which

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5. ibid p.14
6. Ed Alan Richardson A Theological Wordbook of the Bible 10th Impression 1969, First published 1950, London SCM Press p. 54
7. Ed. J - J von Allmen Vocabulary of the Bible ninth impression 1967, First published 1959, London, Lutterworth Press, p 65
8. Colin Alves The Covenant, First Printed 1957, Reprinted with corrections 1963, Cambridge University Press p.v.

> preaching and instruction can be radically freed from this danger will be through a right understanding of the covenant in the Old Testament. In preaching, the idea of the covenant must become a witness to the covenant itself as it remains in force in all its unity and plenitude'[9]

McCarthy (1973) shows that there is still a great deal of ferment amongst scholars regarding many aspects of covenant, and he is not in full agreement with Eichrod's scheme. He would probably show that aspects of Alves' work are out of date according to the latest works of scholars, but the centrality of the concept is not in question and it is valid to conclude that it is an alive and vital issue amongst scholars.

1.2 Understanding a basic concept should lead to the understanding of a network of other concepts related to it or derived from it

1.2.1 The Scriptures

As has been stated in quotations included in the previous section, to understand covenant means to understand the idea which gives the Scriptures their unity, and links the Old with the New Testaments. It thus gives a perspective from which the selection and theme of the scriptures may be examined.

Covenant describes the relationship between God and man and highlights three areas of concepts.

1.2.2 The nature of God is revealed in the acts of God as he deals with man in and through history; this implies the concepts of election, revelation and salvation.

1.2.3 The nature of man: man's response to God can be seen in ethics, ritual and worship. McCarthy (1973) acknowledged the importance of the covenant idea in the OT ethic but criticised attempts to ignore other elements.

> We do better justice to the richness of the OT ethic if we allow for the independent working of the wisdom tradition with its awe before the mystery of God and creation (e.g. Job 28), of the cult with its direct experience of the divine and of community, of the mere majesty of Yahweh, and so on.[10]

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9. Cornelis H. Miskotte When the Gods are Silent, Original Dutch edition 1956, English translation 1963, London, Collins p. 117
10. McCarthy op cit p.68

1.2.4 The Nature of the relationship between God and man involves concepts like grace, sin, righteousness, love, faith, salvation, salvation history, law, forgiveness, worship, ritual, sacrifice, all of which are basic to the understanding of the Scriptures.

1.3 A basic concept should be capable of being presented meaningfully at different levels of intellectual development

1.3.1 Concrete and secular

Although the etymology of the word 'b^{e}rit' is disputed amongst scholars it is significant that all the suggestions as to the original meaning allow the word to be placed in the category of 'concrete' and 'secular', where 'concrete' is understood to have a slightly wider meaning than material or tangible. (A contract may be an abstract concept, but is very concrete in the parties involved, in the terms of the contract and the means of drawing up and ratifying it.)

In its Biblical use it is typical of the Class 2 type concept where the addition of certain evaluative and interpretative elements in respect of the origin turn an originally secular concept into a religious one.

This point is relevant from the point of view of teaching since it allows the teacher to follow the accepted pedagogical formula of moving from the known to the unknown, the concrete to the abstract.

1.3.2 Relationship

Basic to the idea of covenant is that of relationship. The religious concept (i.e. the elements of interpretation which give it its religious connotation) derives from a concept involving relationship between people illustrated by relationships within the family, marriage, between friends, alliances between nations, etc. It is on the level of personal relationships that children first begin to function, and on which a large part of adult life is conducted. The concept can be presented first in personal terms and later as an idea which ultimately at the level of Biblical scholarship reaches the level of complication and sophistication indicated in McCarthy's book on the subject.

For this reason the concept 'covenant' was chosen in

preference to 'salvation history', since both the latter concepts are at a level of abstraction which presents problems to children at the earlier stages of their intellectual development.

1.3.3 The concept is not simple in that it does not allow a single line of development

This point has two implications for teaching.

1.3.3.1 As the child develops intellectually he can respond to the challenge of an idea that is of the type that cannot be easily exhausted. It can be presented in varied ways suited to the appropriate level of interests and intellectual capabilities.

1.3.3.2 This illustrates the point that interpretation and emphases change and develop within the Biblical period itself. The pupil can examine how this happens, under what circumstances and within what limits the changed interpretation happens (i.e. there is an opportunity to distinguish between what is fixed and what is variable). It is hoped that this kind of study might help the pupil consider the possibility of how the Biblical concepts may be relevant in the 'secularised' and so-called 'post-Biblical' or 'post-Christian' era.

1.4 The concept should allow for further development and be applicable under broader conditions than those under which it made its first appearance

This point has been partly covered in paragraph 1.2. However, if one considers here the aspects of this concept which have particular relevance to contemporary life and the interests of the pupils, the following aspects may be considered.

1.4.1 Relationships between people

The concept of covenant is particularly rich in its implications for human relationships - personal relationships within the family, marriage, between friends, and even political or international relationships. Whatever the trend as regards relationships within a detribalised, secularised, and in some cases, post-Christian era, it is pertinent to study relationships within a covenant relationship. This study may offer a perspective from which developments in relationships in a 'permissive age' may be viewed. It also enables those who live in the latter type of society or in a society which is developing towards 'permissiveness' a basis for understanding

both historical and contemporary communities which still live according to a covenant pattern of relationship. The bearing of this concept on marraige might be particularly worth studying at the appropriate age and level of development of the pupils.

1.4.2 Understanding the concept 'God' in other religions

The concept, covenant, provides an interesting and vital vantage point from which to discuss different conceptions of God - the different conceptions held of the God of the Covenant that occur within the Bible itself, the difference between the God of the Covenant and other gods, whether of the Biblical era or of contemporary non-Christian religions, and even concepts of God held by some modern Christians and Jews. How close is Tillich's 'ground of our being' to the God of the Covenant? Harold Goldmeier (1976) significantly subtitled his article 'A report on attitudes of conservative Jewish parents who may believe in God but not the Covenant' and said

> In traditional Judaism, belief in God must be accompanied by commitment to the Holy Covenant that exists between man and God. The concept of this relationship does not hold forth among parents. Judaism has for them become a matter of personal preference often based on what is convenient and comfortable. They do not consider the Covenant which established the Jew's obligation to live by the Law, to pattern his values and conduct his behaviour in accordance with the Law. .... Parents describe being Jewish a 'feeling'..... Traditional guidelines and rationale do not determine parents' conduct. It is the doing that is important to them, and not the relation of behaviour to any higher order or Holy Covenant.[11]

1.4.3 Other uses of covenant

Philip H. Phenix (1974) makes interesting use of the concept convenant in connection with education, as illustrated in the following quotation:

> A discipline is simply a set of procedures for insuring that the kinds of intersubjectivity that will be developed are responsible to evidence and are available to public scrutiny by all those who will enter into the covenant of the discipline. Every discipline is a covenant, a particular kind of agreement about procedure. Once those procedures are adopted, one can enter imaginatively into the subjectivity of other persons.[12]

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11. H. Goldmeier, 'Changing views of God among Jews' Religious Education Vol LXXI No 1(1976) pp 57-67
12. P.H. Phenix, 'Religion in Public Education: Principles and issues,' Religion in Public Education, New York: Paulist Press. p. 67, 1974

1.5 Flexibility

Where teaching from the Bible is concerned, two main ways of approaching the subject have been dominant - working from the Bible to 'life situations' or beginning with 'life situations' and working towards the Bible. One of the main problems in both approaches seems to be that there is a tendency for the instruction to end where it began, that is, either in the Bible or in life. Seldom are the two effectively linked. A Biblical concept lends itself to both approaches. The wide range of related and derived concepts offers an equally large number of channels through which to approach the concept. This is similar to the theme-teaching which became so popular after Goldman's research. One of the problems in theme-teaching, however, has been that it has not occurred within a sufficiently well-defined theological framework, and although a theology can be detected behind theme-thinking,[13] it is implicit rather than explicit, with the result that both teachers and pupils can be quite unaware of it.

Provided the concept is well understood, both with regard to its place in the theological framework and its place in the 'learning hierarchy', the way in which it is taught is probably of minor importance. Depending on the interest of the pupils and the capabilities and personality of the teacher, the conventional 'scripture' approach could be used, as could an approach through themes, integrated studies, the phenomonology of religion or an experiential approach. However, any approach requires an adequate and non-superficial understanding of the concept. There are no 'short-cuts'.

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13. D.M. Hull, 'The Theology of Themes' Scottish Journal of Theology' Vol 25 No1 February 1972

CHAPTER 6

The Concept Faith

1. The meaning of faith

Belief/faith may be regarded amongst the characteristic ways of thinking belonging to the field of religion. But Monk et alia comment,

> Faith - for many persons one of the most familiar of religious terms - is also one of the most easily and consistently misunderstood. Paul Tillich comments, 'There are few words in the language of religion which cry for as much semantic purging as the word "faith". It is continually being confused with belief in something for which there is no evidence, or in something intrinsically unbelievable, or in absurdities or nonsense. It is extremely difficult to remove these distorting connotations from the genuine meaning of faith.[1]

The authors suggest that in order to clear up some of the misunderstandings surrounding many people's understanding of the concept, faith,

a. faith should be distinguished from belief
b. that faith be distinguished from knowledge
c. the object of our faith be clearly identified

1.1 Belief and faith

Belief may be called the cognitive element of faith. Belief is the response to a concept which entails interpretative elements and involves assent to that concept without commitment to the concept and its implications. On the other hand, a response of faith to such a concept occurs on the volitional, affective and cognitive levels; it involves commitment and affects the behavioural pattern of the one who has faith.

It is possible to have belief without faith, but the reverse is not true. As Penelhum (1971) commented, 'Having the cognitive side of faith alone without it affecting life and values may mean .... we hesitate to say that the person who has it has faith at all'[2]

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1. Monk et alia *Exploring Religious Meaning*, New Jersey Prentice Hall, Inc 1973 p.174
2. T. Penelhum *Problems of Religious Knowledge*, London & Basingstoke, MacMillan 1971 p.134

Hicks (1973) also points out that belief and faith have often been confused. He says,

> In the Catholic tradition deriving from St Thomas, and no less in the Protestant orthodoxy that supervened upon the Reformation movement faith has been quite explicitly defined as believing on God's authority certain truths, i.e. propositional truths that He has revealed. This response is one of belief rather than faith. .... whereas the Bible itself, and other writings directly expressing the life of faith, are full of men's encounters with God and men's personal dealings with the divine Thou ...[3]

One of the objectives in teaching RI, therefore, will be to clarify the distinction between faith and belief and to show what each entails in respect of one or more religious systems. In view of the fact that belief and faith cannot be taught and that only the objects of belief and faith can be clarified and the responses to them defined, there should be no question of the teacher attempting to persuade pupils towards a particular direction of belief, although it must be recognised that this has often been attempted.

Furthermore, if religion is shown to operate in the domain of belief and faith, it should be possible to avoid using Religious Instruction for purposes of propaganda if the latter is defined as 'teaching beliefs as though they are facts.'

1.2 Distinguishing faith from knowledge

The relationship between faith and knowledge and between faith and reason has always been open to debate. There is first of all the question of whether and how faith should be verifiable. On the one hand there are those who, like Hick(1973) argue that faith is reasonable. He explores the possibility

> .... that the cognition of God by faith is more like perceiving something, even perceiving a physical object, that is present before us than it is like believing a statement about some absent object, whether because the statement has been proved to us or because we want to believe it.[3]

On the opposite side Ayer (1946) stated,

> The theist, like the moralist, may believe that his experiences are cognitive experiences, but

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3. J. Hicks, God and the Universe of Faiths, London and Basingstoke, The MacMillan Press Ltd 1973 pp 37,38

> unless he can formulate his 'knowledge' in propositions that are empirically verifiable, we may be sure he is deceiving himself.[4]

On the question of faith and reason, Penelhum (1973) holds the view that faith is optional, but not irrational.[5]

Then there is the question of whether faith precedes knowledge or vice versa. Wil m Lynch (1973) argues strongly for the former. '(Faith) is so from being external or irrelevant to knowledge that it is often the very internal shaper of knowledge'[6] He goes on to say, 'Faith, therefore, is required to move into the step after step process of rational knowledge. And all rational and scientific knowledge follows faith in sequence'[7] He thus sees faith as an integral part of knowledge and preceding it.

From the point of view of teaching Religious Instruction it is important to distinguish between what is knowledge, that is what can be known in terms of what is open to verification, and what is a matter of faith, that is, involves a response of commitment to the interpretative elements of knowledge. It is also important to understand the ways in which various types of knowledge can be verified.

Thus in RI the historical and archaeological aspects of Biblical studies are important in so far as they may throw light on the historicity of events, and to avoid the unnecessary use of typology and allegory in interpretation. It is important to understand whether the interpretative elements of a concept occur within the framework of myth, parable, fact or event (history); to what aspects of religious understanding the principle of verification applies and what principle of verification is applicable under what circumstances. Faith focuses on the interpretative elements rather than the original story, fact or event because the interpretative elements give

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4. A.J. Ayer Language, Truth and Logic 2nd Ed New York Dover Publications Inc 1946 p.120
5. T. Penelhum op.cit p.17
6. W. Lynch Images of Faith. An Exploration of the Ironic Imagination, Indiana , Univ of Notre Dame Press 1973. p.50
7. Ibid p.61

the latter their distinctive relation to the Origin and the ultimate relationship of faith is to the Origin. Faith is the integrating factor between believer, event and Origin.

1.3 Identifying the object of faith

The ultimate object of belief and faith is the same. This will be the Origin to which we referred earlier, and according to which concepts and events are interpreted, and according to which the ideal believer (person of faith) relates and lives all aspects of his life. In the case of the Judaeo-Christian religion this is God, the record of whose dealings with man is found in both Testaments. According to Hick(1973) 'The cognitive/non cognitive issue centres upon the metaphysical surplus, viz the reference to God, by which the religious statement exceeds the historical one'[8] Penelhum(1973) uses these words, 'For the whole of life can, if we elect to do this, be seen as an ongoing encounter with God. To see it as this is to have faith'[9] The writer suggests that if the resulting relationship is static, the word 'belief' is more appropriate, whereas if it is dynamic, the word 'faith' can be used. Penelhum's statement has two important implications. To see life as 'an ongoing encounter with God' means interpreting life in a particular way. 'If we elect to do this' implies an act of the will which chooses a particular interpretation.

Does the concept, faith, fulfil the requirements for a basic concept?

2. The concept should be amongst those which are being dealt with by scholars in the subject concerned

Philosophy. The question of faith and its relation to knowledge is, and always has been, of concern to philosophers. The most recent manifestation of interest and a possible challenge to faith in the field of philosophy has occurred in the assertion by some linguistic philosophers that any statement which is not capable of verification is meaningless.

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8. Hick op. cit. p.3
9. Penelhum op.cit. p.17

Theology. Faith is a pertinent issue amongst theologians in several fields. The relationship between religion and faith, and, in the eyes of some theologians, the emergence of the latter as the heart of the matter is dealt with in the writings of Karl Barth and many other theologians influenced by him. Daniel Jenkins (1962)[10] strongly contrasts religion and faith and sees the task of the church as that of leading its members through religion to faith. Similarly Nels Ferre (1963)[11] highlights the importance of faith and sees in it the meeting point of world religions.

Questions of faith and concerning faith are often behind the nihilism expressed by theologians in the 'God-is-dead' type theology, and wrestling with the issue has led to various types of 'New Theology'. Theologians like Holloway(1972)[12] Ferre(1963)[13] and Miskotte(1956)[14] have attempted to meet the challenge of unfaith in restatements of Biblical Theology.

3. Understanding a basic concept should lead to the understanding of a network of other concepts related to it or derived from it

The article on faith in 'A Theological Wordbook of the Bible' (1969) refers to articles on knowledge, righteousness, truth and obedience as related concepts.[15] Weiser(1961) points out that the line differentiating faith from the concept, hope, is a very fine one.[16]
The nature of God, the relationship between God and man, between Christ and man, between man and history - past, present and future (thus eschatology), the concepts of revelation and interpretation and those of sin and righteousness are all understood in relation to faith.

Apart from an understanding of Biblical religion, a general grasp of the concept, faith, enables a pupil to understand the meaning of life. 'The purpose of religious faith is to confirm in man the ineradicable conviction which he

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10. D. Jenkins Beyond Religion London SCM Press Ltd 1962
11. N. Ferre The Finality of Faith New York Harper & Row 1963
12. R. Holloway Let God Arise Oxford A.E. Mowbray & Co Ltd 1972
13. Ferre op cit
14. C.H. Miskotte When the Gods are Silent London Collins 1967 Original Dutch Edition Amsterdam Holland 1956
15. A. Richardson (ed) A Theological Wordbook of the Bible London, S.C.M. Press, 1957 p.76
16. R. Bultmann and A. Weiss. Faith, London Adam & Charles Black 1961

already possesses that his life has meaning'.[17] Thus it is important to understand the concept in its wider connotation in any discussion of religion or religions either from a philosophical or a theological point of view.

4. A basic concept should be capable of being presented meaningfully at different levels of intellectual development

4.1 The secular or 'profane' origins of the word

As in the case of 'covenant', the philology of the Hebrew word most frequently translated 'faith', viz the stem, 'mn, is uncertain. Two factors are important in contending that this is a concept which can be presented at various levels.

4.1.1 First, the origins of the word which Weiss maintains as most likely the ones from which it is derived occur at the level of the concrete. In its profane use the word is used of a child's mother, nurse, attendant, guardian, foster father; in its passive participial form, 'of a child wrapped' i.e. carried on its mother's hip and in its reflexive form as indicating 'firm, certain, reliable, usually in respect of things'. 'None of the verbal stems for words signifying faith is of specifically religious origin and their use in religion seems to have arisen out of profane roots'.[18]

4.1.2 Concerning the Hebrew use of language in general, Weiss (1961) makes the point,

> Moreover the nature of the Hebrew genius demands that this relationship between concept and reality should be seen not as an abstraction of logical thought, but always as a practical experience drawn from life. Thus in the formal concept what belongs to it is conceived, felt and experienced each time together with it, and in this way the logical relationship invariably involves also a practical relationship with life. The particular meaning in any given case can be extensified or extended according to the strength of the demands or the acuteness of the power of observation.[19]

This suits ideally the development in the thinking of the child which proceeds slowly from the concrete to the abstract.

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17. Holloway op cit p.80
18 R. Bultman and A. Weiss op cit p.3. passim
19. Ibid p.6.

That which is felt and experienced in the relationships which illustrate faith are well within the experience and understanding of the child.

4.2 Development of religious meaning and implications of the word

The words which in their final New Testament development were translated 'faith' and 'trust', and gave rise to the Greek construction, 'pistuein in', with its profound religious meaning and centrality in the Gospels and Pauline writings began as secular or profane words. In tracing the meaning of the root 'bth' (usually translated 'trust'), Weiss shows how the meaning changes from a fairly crude and concrete use 'especially in the early passage in Judges 18:7, 27' to the profound sense in which Isaiah uses it to mean 'strength ... which issues from the relationship with God.'[20]

This gradual development from secular to sacred, from immediate concrete experience to a religious interpretation of experience enables the teacher to work from 'where the child is'. This educational procedure has already been followed in theme teaching, which allows the teacher to make full use of the child's secular experience, but the weakness in the link with theology in theme teaching has already been noted.

In conclusion, the words used for faith have a secular origin, in which they are used in a concrete sense, but fully developed as they are in the Old and New Testaments, become the subject for deep philosophical and theological inquiry and relate to profound religious experience.

5. The concept should allow for further development and be applicable under broader conditions than those under which it made its first appearance

There are many situations outside the field of religion to which the concept 'faith' may be relevant. Perhaps we can say that just as faith had its root in secular experience, so there are many 'secular' applications of faith; or that faith has application in many secular situations.

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20. Ibid p.6

5.1 Human relationships

One of the most obvious fields where faith is applicable is that of human relationships on all levels. Apart from the importance of faith in 'normal' relationships, Freud discusses its importance in psycho-analysis. Lynch(1973) makes the statement that human society is faith itself.

> And I do not mean thereby that religious belief, that is to say belief in God, makes society. To say, rather, that belief in God has a body, and that body is the belief men have in each other, and that this consitutes human society, comes much closer to what I mean. And it leaves faith less external to life.[21]

5.2 Faith and Education

If one defines faith in one sense as 'moving on to the unknown', it may be a very important idea in the process of education. In words of Bruner(1960) 'At its best a learning episode reflects what has gone before it and permits one to generalise beyond it'[22] As yet, nothing is known about the process whereby an individual takes the step which leads to a new discovery or even gains insight for himself into something which he has hitherto not seen or understood. Flavell(1963) describes certain of Piaget's conclusions in the following terms, 'It was an act of creative inspiration when Piaget hit upon the idea ...' and 'there was an analogous happy insight in connection with ...'[23] Lynch(1973) says, ' ... for I am finding it easier and easier to equate faith and imagination .... But the new dreamer, or the recompenser of reality is one who dares to forge a new hypothesis and slowly match it to possibility'[24]

A conversation between the writer and a seven year old boy went as follows:

The boy was unusually quiet.

Q. Are you a tired boy or a thinking boy?

A A thinking boy.

Q What are you thinking?

A. Oh, you don't think. You just sit and be quiet and look around you and then something comes to you and then you say it.

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21. Lynch op cit p.57
22. Bruner op cit p.49
23. Flavell op cit p.415
24. Lynch op cit p.119

One wonders how close this analysis is to the process of creative thought, or to the attitude of faith which Jesus expected from his disciples in times of persecution.[25]

If one accepts the childs definition of thinking as 'being quiet and waiting for something to come to you', the process would seem to have similarities to what happens, as far as man can report it, in revelation or religious insight. In learning in general, and perhaps we can speculate, in revelation as we see it recorded in the Bible, relationships are 'discovered' or uncovered' between objects, ideas, events, which were not previously seen to have been related. This discovery or discernment leads to the enlarging of an existing schema, or the initiation of a new schema. The material for the new learning experience can be presented, the members of the set of the new experience can be favourably juxtaposed, but nothing can enforce understanding, insight, or new discoveries. Can we call 'being quiet and waiting for the thing to say' faith? Is it not here that the block to learning so often occurs? Can it be postulated that when a child has not seen the relationship between A and B and has been made to feel uncomfortable about his failure by teacher/himself/ his lack of results, this results in his inability to proceed to the next stage in the learning process i.e. the relationship between A,B and C and also in his losing 'faith' that a solution will occur? Fears and insecurity may annul his 'being quiet' The fears and insecurity are themselves the opposite of faith.

In his 'Process of Education' Bruner (1961) makes some interesting comments on the subject of intuition. He refers to Webster's definition of intuition as 'immediate apprehension or cognition' where 'immediate' is contrasted with 'mediated' apprehension or cognition that depends on the intervention of formal methods of analysis and proof. 'Intuition implies the act of grasping the meaning, significance or structure of a problem or situation without explicit reliance on the analytic apparatus of one's craft. The rightness or wrongness of an

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25. Luke 12:12

intuition is finally decided not by the intuition itself but by the usual methods of proof!.[26]

He goes on to show how intuition has been most emphasised in mathematics and physics, but points out that the same process may be at work when the historian selects what is relevant, or when the poet revises his poem, relying on his own, or a critic's intuitive judgement as to which is the better version. Where Bruner uses the word 'intuition' in connection with the historian's selection of material, Baillie (1939) uses the word 'faith'to refer to both the vantage point and the selection of material by the historian. 'I believe that a historiographer who writes without faith produces bad history. I believe that faith is quite essential to sound historiography'.[27]

Lynch 1973[28] sees a close relationship between faith and the imagination. He uses examples from literature of all types to illustrate his understanding of faith and uses the words 'An exploration of the ironic imagination' as a subtitle to 'Images of Faith'.

From the above examples it may be concluded that there is continual interaction between faith, the sacred and the secular.

Bruner (1961) makes the point concerning intuition that 'Unfortunately, the formalism of school learning has somehow devalued intuition'.[29] The writer is tempted to make a similar point concerning the formal instruction in religion given by church and school. Some indications of this appear in the results of the writer's research described in a later chapter.

Should RI not have a valuable educational role to play in developing the concept faith which is so closely linked to intuition and imagination? While acknowledging that it is no more possible to teach faith than it is to teach intuition, it is possible to show from examples what faith is and how it

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26. Bruner op cit p.60
27. J. Baillie, Our Knowledge of God Reprinted 1959 First Ed 1939 London OUP p.188
28. Lynch op cit
29. Bruner op cit p.58

has had its outworking in the lives of men and women.

6. The concept should be conducive to presentation at various levels of the intellectual development of the child in terms appropriate to that level of development

In his images of faith, William Lynch (1973) postulates an account of the development of faith, drawing on literature richly to illustrate the various stages.[30]

He divides the development of faith into four stages which he names as follows:

a. childhood
b. the unexpected
c. building a present moment
d. the movement through endless possibility

a. Childhood. Lynch relates the beginning of faith to promises. 'Perhaps we can say that it (faith) comes into force ... as soon as promises begin to be made to it. These promises need not always be spoken.' He goes on to say, 'Expectations, therefore and the keeping of the image of what is promised before the mind, is one of the most powerful forces in man and in faith.'[31] Another aspect in the nature of the faith at this stage is 'omnipotence' Lynch notes that the first form of faith a child develops is a faith in his own omnipotence. His wishes are identical with reality. Without this first faith, illusory though it be, the child could not survive.[32]
He also describes the child's faith as absolute, without doubt or despair. Its focus is on one aspect only and this becomes the whole. But faith must be educated, 'especially if it is so strong'[33]

b. The unexpected. It is the unexpected that provides the opportunity for faith to be educated and move towards maturity. The child learns that it cannot always have its own way. There is a clash of wills. The mother, who initially is the main figure associated with promises, has to deny the child's wishes. Faith has to grow and develop in circumstances which seem to oppose its growth. 'Even as the whole history of the Jews, the

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30. Lynch op cit
31. Ibid pp 125,126;
32. Ibid pp. 61 - 63 passim
33. Ibid p.111

child is not moving into a world of opposites, a world where he must begin, in faith, to master the coexistence of the unexpected and the expected and where ecstasy meets its opposites.' [34]

Lynch goes on to illustrate this process in the development of faith, this gap between the expected and the unexpected which only faith can bridge, from the book of Job, the history of the Jews, and the holocaust, the death and resurrection of Jesus. The response to such situations can be one of faith or of hopelessness. Past, present and future are significant in this stage of faith. (It can be mentioned that in the previous stage the child has only a very brief past, an all-significant present, and no concept of the future within which to develop his concepts). 'One looks back upon the past in order rightly to read, imagine and compose the present, and the present has the power to create the future, since an attitude in the present of faith or hopelessness affects what the future will be.'[35]

c. Building a present moment Lynch points out that 'Questions about the meaning of life are usually asked by those who do not see the meaning for the present'.[36] It is the present set of seeming contradictory circumstances or ideas that the 'grower-in-faith' has to make sense of, and where faith is required. The type of religion which offers hope for the future only with no clue as to an understanding of the present is not compatible with the whole tenor of the Scriptures. Thus the present may be a time of movement, wrestling, doubt and conflict, but it is the crucible out of which faith is produced. Lynch maintains that faith cannot start with serenity, although it 'moves into serenity and the forging of one of its images.' [37]

d. The movement through endless possibility. When faith has matured as a result of its encounter and wrestling with the unexpected, it finds a new range of infinite possibilities both outside and within man himself which are 'far removed from childhood images of faith. But the child's vast images are flooding us in suddenly real and unexpected forms.' Faith at this stage, however, is limited by belief in system, order and the rationality of the universe. The person mature in faith

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34. ibid p.126
35. ibid p.134
36. ibid p.140
37. ibid p.152

can choose endings to forms of endlessness, with only one caveat.: 'The limitation of infinite possibility is the promises of God, the covenant of God'. 'Here is a binding of infinite possibility but not of the unexpected. For faith knows that the promises will be kept, but in what form it does not know'.[38]

Joanna Klink's (1972) account of the growth of faith is less detailed and uses different terminology, but her conclusions are very similar.

> The process of becoming a human being is deeply interwoven with the coming into being of faith'. ...'For faith, too, consists of a birth, a breaking away from the bonds with which man is bound at first, a turning away from concentration on one's own self and a trusting self-commitment to the Other. That is why a distinction is made between religiosity and faith ..... If one wanted to make a clear distinction between the two, one might call religiosity the desire directed towards oneself, the urge to return to the primitive union of the embryo and the magical hope for a God who will satisfy us and fulfil our desires. Faith is to relinquish all this, and to turn towards reality, to give oneself up to God and to accept one's own responsibility'.[39]

The writer finds in the epistomology of faith outlined above interesting analogies with other disciplines, especially those related to the psychological development of the person.

The cognitive development of the child as outlined by Piaget shows the child at first unable to distinguish any difference between himself and the world around him. Gradually the distinction unfolds itself. The child impinges on the world of objects and people and they in turn impinge upon him. He learns to master his environment as the result of many encounters between the 'expected' and the 'unexpected'. He constantly modifies his schemata until he has a working knowledge of his world. But there is no limit to his mastery over it other than the nature of the world and his humanity in it.

The Psychologist, Harris (1970)[40] uses the terms Child, Parent, Adult, to describe the psychological development of people towards maturity. He is not discussing the cognitive development alone, but his terms could apply to the cognitive area as well as more widely. He speaks of the 'Child' in terms

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38. Ibid 155 paasim
39. J. Klink Your Child and Religion. ndon SCM Press Ltd 1972 (Translated from the Dutch fourth impression 1971) pp 15-17 passim
40 T.A. Harris The Book of Choice, New York, Jonathan Cape Ltd 1970

comparable to those used by Lynch. He uses the term, 'Parent', for the authoritarian, definitive and static elements in a person's make-up. His 'Adult' is the mature person who, in new circumstances, has been able to resolve within himself the conflict between Parent and Child (the expected and the unexpected) and form a synthesis between what is best in them in the light of the present. His definition of the terms are not related in any way to chronological age.

Returning to Lynch's epistomology of faith, it is probably the first three stages described by him that are most pertinent to the child's development during his school years. The relationship between these stages and the chronological development of the child is very uncertain and may, if studied, turn out to be very variable.

a. Childhood. The relationshipsin the home and with parents especially the mother are of ultimate importance, and lie outside the sphere of the teacher. But the statement, 'faith comes into force ... as soon as promises begin to be made to it' may have implications for the teacher as well. Promises are made in the Scripture which are part of his teaching material.

> The faith of parents is contagious without their ever consciously speaking about it. But the true spark of faith, which can leap over the experience of life, is the story of the love of God which has become a human reality in Christ .... In human terms the experience in life of contact and fellowship is a condition of being able to come to faith in God. And yet the strange story of Jesus brings to the fore another and completely different possibility.[41]

The teacher is in a position to tell this story which '... signifies more than the greatest love of parents for their child, and more than any religious education'[42] as it stands recorded in the Bible, together with the interpretation which the Bible gives, and in doing so may be academically true to his subject matter, regardless of his own commitment to it. The writer is aware that any subject, whether it be in the sciences or the humanities, will be more effectively taught by one

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41. Klink op cit p 28
42 Ibid p.29 passim

enthusiastically committed to its tenets and ways of thinking, but it is necessary to work within the limitations of the given framework of the subject, namely that it is by law a compulsory subject which all teachers are required to teach.

b. The stage of the unexpected is particularly important in teaching Religious Instruction. Belief, unbelief, faith, doubt, rebellion, hopelessness, fury (described by Lynch as faith betrayed) all lie within the spectrum of faith. The heroes of the Bible and the writers of the Biblical records have not themselves been afraid to face the implications of an encounter between the expected and the unexpected, both in their positive and in their negative implications. (It is sometimes as difficult for man to accept what 'too good to be true' as it is for him to accept what is 'too bad to be true'). Moses prayed to be struck dead rather than continue to carry the unasked burden of his leadership of the Israelites; Job called upon God from the depths of his doubt and despair as did the Psalmist; the writer of Ecclesiates was not afraid to give vent to his cynicism and doubt. Jesus asked God why he had forsaken him. Teachers have often become self-imposed Bible censors and ignored the 'dark' side of faith as it is written in the Bible, preferring to teach it as a Readers Digest success story.

Similarly the reaction of some 'religious' people to the encounter with the unexpected in developments in the sciences (especially the question of creation and evolution), technology and Biblical Criticism has been to flee rather than face and 'compose and recompose' schemata into which to fit the evidence. The writer does not assume that all scientific discoveries or developments are valid, nor that all the findings of modern Biblical scholarship are acceptable on academic grounds. But she does believe that the challenge of the 'unexpected' must be faced as honestly as possible, and that conclusions should follow and not precede the investigation. Children are especially good at sensing fear, evasion and lack of honesty - all of which imply lack of faith and are destructive of faith, both that of the teacher and the pupil.

7. Flexibility

The concept. 'faith', is a broad and deep concept, relevant to

practically all types of life situations and richly illustrated in the Bible, its deepest sense being trust in and commitment to God which is never without its outworking in daily life. Provided the Biblical theology is clear and not allowed to be lost, the concept lends itself to any teaching method.

CHAPTER 7

THE CONCEPT ORIGIN

1.1 The concept, origin, in general terms

The third basic concept, origin, has been described as that idea or being according to which the experiences, facts, concepts and relationships of life are related and thereby give meaning to life for those committed to it. What differentiates origin in a non-religious ideology from that in a religion lies mainly in the dimension of ritual in the sense of prayer, meditation and worship.

The origin requires the full identification of the believer with it in terms of will, emotions, behaviour and intellect. Thus the Buddhist seeks Nirvana by submitting himself to the eight-fold path of righteousness. The Hindu seeks total identification with Brahman; the Muslim complete submission to Allah. Each aims to identify or submerge every aspect of his life with what he understands to be the origin.

All religions have an origin, and the concept can be used to identify what is at the heart of each religion. It can be used to enable understanding of the distinctive view of life which each religion gives. But the relationship between the origin of one religion and another is an open question which belongs to the field of Philosophy of Religion.

1.2 The concept,origin,in Biblical theology

The concept of origin relevant to this dissertation is the concept God, according to Biblical theology. The first question is whether the word, concept, is appropriate for one who in the Bible is always described and understood in terms of personality, personhood, relationship and the analogy of human relationships. It may be better to talk of the concepts of God rather than the concept, God.

It is for this reason that although origin is of primary importance in the discussion of religion, it is only being handled after a discussion of the concepts, covenant and faith. The latter concepts embrace the idea of relationship, the nature of particular relationships especially that between God and man, man's responses to that relationship and other related religious

concepts. These help to set the stage for understanding and responding to what the Bible means by God. Miskotte (1967) says,

> Not as if the covenant were a locus by itself or a theme for a particular occasion. When we speak of the covenant we are speaking of God, his character, his attitude, his action. What we see and understand of this - in God's relationship to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to Israel, to David shows a glory that points back to the glory of God's nature ... we must rather say that it directs our attention to the shomer ('keeper') himself, in order that we may see that he is different from all other divinity, that we may see that he is what Jesus the Messiah is, and that Jesus, the 'one who was sent' and 'the coming one' is the 'very stamp of His nature'. (Heb 1:13)[1]

1.2.1 Relationship.

The Bible shows God to be in a continuous ongoing dialogue with his people and vice-versa. The nature of their God may be misunderstood or crudely conceived, but his relationship is never questioned. But for any origin to be truly origin, its existence cannot be questioned. God is only known in a relationship of commitment, just as one human being is only truly known by another in a relationship of commitment. Casual inquiry and casual and intermittent relationships do not enable one person to know another nor man to know God in the sense of the meaning of the Hebrew word 'to know'.

1.2.2 Revelation and Religious Experience

There can be dialogue between man and God only if God initiates it. This is inherent in the nature of God. The Bible shows God using men's minds, questions, beliefs, experiences, the phenomena of nature, the history of nations, and religious and cultural paraphernalia of men, in order to enter into dialogue. Men interpret these interactions as 'religious experience'. Thus the concepts 'revelation' and 'religious experience' are related to the God of the Bible.

In this connection in his Chapter on 'The Unutterable Name', Miskotte (1967) makes the point

> If the 'Name' has taken on the full significance of 'revelation', the principle reason for this is

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1. Miskotte op cit p.117

> that this Name YHWH is more than the godhead, because it has become less than the godhead. The whole conception of 'revelation' simply cannot be maintained if 'one' God is not acknowledged and recognised as the Godhead. If we 'start with' a primary experience of the 'godhead', and then within the realm of this general experience proceed to bring out the particular, secondary features of 'our' God by putting in our own shadings, this results in a denial of all 'revelation'. .... Just as we never come to an encounter with Jesus by starting with the 'Christ-spirit', so we never find a determinative, central, monarchic place for YHWH as long as we start with a general concept of the 'godhead'. The Name, the revelation, is concentrated in a proper name. It is also the bolt that bars the way to the theoretical kind of 'monotheism'[2]

And Eichrodt (1959) says,

> Moreover by his own act of bestowing a name on himself God chooses to be described as the definable, the distinctive, the individual. In this way the faith of Israel sets its face against both an abstract concept of deity and a nameless 'ground of being'. Both the intellectualist and the mystical misunderstandings of God are rejected.[3]

1.2.3 Growth in men's understanding of God

The Bible records the experiences of nations and men in the light of their understanding of God's dealings with them. The God who acts through the judges may be the same as the God whom Jesus calls 'abba', but there is a great difference between Deborah or Samson's understanding of God and that of Jesus or Paul. Richardson (1950) says

> There is development, or perhaps we should rather say deepening, in the various conceptions of God at different stages of Hebrew history. ... Throughout the Biblical records it is the same God to whom the testimony points, even though in places the testimony may be expressed in primitive and (in the light of later insight) distorted ways.[4]

1.2.4 God and History

God is a god of history. He is the living God who reveals himself in and through history. He acts in history and is Lord of all history. 'This conception of God as the God of history is the differentiating characteristic of the Biblical

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2. Ibid p.122
3. Eichrodt op cit p.206
4. Ed Richardson op cit p.90

understanding of God, marking it off from the God of Greek philosophy on the one hand, and from the Gods of the nature-religions of the surrounding tribes on the other.'[5]

It was out of the realisation that God was the Lord of history that Israel recognised Him as creator.

1.2.5 Ethics

God is known by what he does (as interpreted by faith) and he requires of man that his response in turn involves acts which demonstrate his faith. Ethics falls into the category of man's response to God, and is not a set of laws or rules 'for the sake of man's own soul' or for 'the sake of the community', although these may well be the by-products of man's response to God.

1.2.6 Anthropomorphism

In the Bible God is spoken of in unashamedly anthropomorphic terms, a fact which has caused embarrassment to more 'enlightened' minds which have not grasped the significance of the Bible's way of speaking of God or the singular nature of the God of the Bible. God is spoken of in terms of the analogy of various human relationships - marriage, family, covenant, kingship, shepherd. His action is recognised in human experiences, dreams, events, moral dilemmas and demands, natural catastrophes, national disasters, joy and tragedy. His demands are concrete and they are made in terms of the thought world (or cultural era) of those upon whom they are made. 'The "Covenant" declares that the Lord became man with men, not in spite of his deity, but because of his deity.'[6] Miskotte (1967) continues

> The one Object, the one Life, the sublime, sovereign God cannot possibly become manifest except through revelation, that is through incarnation, through becoming man, entering into the existence of human life, acting in the dimension of human history, making himself known in actual events - whereby man then meets a greater fellow man, a greater hand, a greater face.[7]

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5. Ibid
6. Miskotte op cit p.119
7. Ibid pp 127, 128

1.2.7 Jesus

Little mention has been made of Jesus in the preceding pages. The writer believes that if the conceptions of God as they are set out in the preceding paragraphs are understood, they lead to an understanding of Jesus. One point which may be worth mentioning is that it has been the experience of teachers that when children are too soon confronted with the statement 'Jesus is God' a great deal of confusion results. This may be a statement which a child should be allowed to make when he is ready to do so - when the ground for an understanding of God has been prepared. The writer is aware that this is a controversial question and detailed discussion of it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The discussion of the ways in which the concept, Origin, conforms to the criteria chosen in Chapter 3 follows:

2. The concept should be amongst those which are being dealt with by scholars in the subject concerned

Many of the writings of modern theologians are directed towards the problems of belief in God in a secular age, and therefore involve discussion of the nature of God. The works of Barth, Bultmann, Tillich and Bonhoeffer popularised by Robinson, the latter's own writings and those of van Buren and the exponents of various types of 'God-is-dead' type theology such as William Hamilton, Altizer, Ogden and Alistair Kee all focus in one way or another on the nature, validity and significance of the concept, God. At the same time, theologians like Miskotte and Holloway believe that distinguishing, teaching and preaching the God of the Bible rather than the misconceptions that seem to get handed down by tradition is what is needed in the present age when, 'The Gods are Silent'.[8] Discussion amongst scholars revolves around the meaning of sacred and secular, transcendence and immanence, the interpretation of events particularly the 'Christ event', and the meaning of religious language.

One point that seems worth noting is that however outrageous and heretical the conclusions of the 'New Theologians' may seem

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8. Miskotte op cit p 62

to the 'orthodox', each one had its beginnings in orthodoxy. Atheism and orthodoxy can only be described in terms of belief in God. Compulsory classes in atheism in communist Russia have no meaning without a description of the concept which is rejected. Religious conflicts, either within the Christian faith or involving non-Christian religions, which have influenced the course of history cannot be understood without understanding the concepts around which the conflict was engaged.

It is interesting to speculate where the end point would be if a student began, not with the orthodox Christian belief, but with the 'final' conclusion of one of the modern theologians. How would it be determined which one to follow? One can only guess at the results but the process seems to have a great deal in common with modern revolutionary thinking that manifests itself in many fields including politics, and which seeks to sever itself from its historical origins. Lynch proposes that faith is free to choose its ancestors rather than deny any ancestry, or reject an unwanted ancestry.. It is not suggested that 'orthodox' ideas of God do not need careful examination, and that 'superstitious and wholly inadequate ideas of God'[9] which may be wrongly associated with orthodoxy should not be removed. It is postulated, however, that theological ancestors are necessary and that they be sought in Biblical theology.

David Attfield (1973) in arguing for a creed-central religious education contends that 'two main religious questions face a modern man and putting children in a position to tackle t' . intelligently will determine the shape of religious education as set out below. First comes the fundamental choice before a modern person between acceptance and rejection of any general religious world view. Second comes the option between the New Theology and traditional theism. In appraising religion an educated man today must choose between the traditional concept of God as the personal creator of the universe, a bodiless spirit, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient,, and a group of alternative not ons being currently offered as a viable substitute'[10]

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9. Miskotte op cit p.62
10. Attfield D. 'Creed-centred Religious Education.' Learning for Living May 1973 p.13

Strawson (1969) remarks

> If the aim of all education is to arouse an attitude of interest in one's surroundings, this will include asking about the meaning of common words. What is the meaning of God? Here is a question which will tax the resources of the most advanced thinker; yet at the same time, a question which can be meaningful to every stage of understanding. At least part of the function of the teacher is to help his pupils to appreciate the meaning of the word 'God'. This requires the removing of a lot of superstitious and wholly inadequate ideas of God 'up in the sky', a magnified father-figure','an awe-inspiring judge, who is only concerned with noticing our faults'. It would certainly appear to be necessary for the teacher to have thought deeply about God before he tries to interpret the notion of the divine to any group of children.[11]

3. <u>The concept should lead to a network of other concepts related to it or derived from it</u>

It is not necessary to discuss this point at length. In the first paragraph of this section the concepts revelation, religious experience, history, anthropomorphism (implying incarnation) and ethics were mentioned amongst others. Concepts of sacred and secular, transcendence and immanence are relevant here.

By definition the concept, origin, is the concept which links the believer with every point of life.

4. <u>A basic concept should be capable of presentation at different levels of intellectual development and maturity</u>

The discussion of this point in respect of God is far more complex and tentative than it is in respect of the other concepts, faith and covenant.

It was suggested earlier in this dissertation that Bruner's 'empty set' might be a useful type of concept classification for the concept, 'God', where the category is given a Name before there is any concrete experience to associate with the Name. It was postulated that 'by a process of assimilation and elimination in accordance with life experience, formal and informal meaning, the child gradually fills meaning into the 'empty category' or discards the word as meaningless or rejects the meaning which he understood the word to have, replacing it by other meanings', and the example was given of a child acquiring the concept,computer.

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11. Strawson W. <u>Teachers & the New Theology</u> London Epworth Press 1969 p.42

The difference between a child acquiring a Name - experience / meaning type concept such as 'computer' and a concept like God, is that the former has a tangible, visible and audible existence whereas the latter exists only in interpretation and evaluation of experience. The appropriate response to the concept, 'computer' is comprehension, whereas to the latter it is commitment.

'Where do ideas of God come from? They come very slowly from our living and thinking'[12] 'Ideas of God grow and change very slowly as people live and wonder about this world of ours. People cannot seem to help wo ing and trying to understand'.[13]

Goldman has shown that children's ideas of God develop in a way that is roughly parallel to the stages of cognitive development postulated by Piaget. But it is still uncertain how the concept is acquired; what makes for change from one stage to another; what is the relative importance of home, church, school and other environmental factors; what is the relationship between affective, cognitive and volitional elements in the child's development.

A study of the Bible shows that here too we have the record of an idea of God that developed 'slowly from living and thinking', or as orthodox theology would express it, 'God revealed Himself'. The Bible also shows, as Richardson says, 'there is a development, or perhaps we should rather say deepening in the varying conceptions of God at different stages of Hebrew history'. It is tempting to see a parallel between the development of the idea of God in the life of the individual and in the life of the people of God. One sees in the latter a continual process of assimilation, rejection, rearrangement, reinterpretation (even re-naming), reassesment of the elements of experience, interpretation and evaluation which make up the set, God. At the same time it must be recognised that our knowledge of the development of the concept of the God of the Bible and of the development of the idea of God in the life of the individual pertains to a particular religio - cultural environment. We are not in any position to

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12. E.F. Hunter Conversation with Children, Boston, Beacon Press 1961, p.43
13. Ibid p.39

say that what we notice in respect of the Biblical religion and of the Western-European mind is characteristic of all religions and of all people.

It would seem that each new development in the people-of-God's understanding of God occurred in conjunction with a crisis of faith where the expected met the unexpected. Sometimes, as in the Exodus, the Exile or the coming of Jesus it occurred on a national or community level. Often it occurred in the life or the individual. Very often it was left to the individual to interpret the experience of the group.

From this one might conclude that one of the most important attributes of a religious educator, is that he himself should not be afraid of his own crises of faith, and should not try deliberately to stifle or prevent those that are occurring in the lives of the children. Joanna Klink (1972) includes various comments in a section headed 'Doubt', which seem pertinent here. She quotes J.H. Huijts as saying,

> The uncertainty about faith which can nowadays be observed in many teachers is largely due to the rigid way in which religious education was undertaken in the past. And L. Kuylman-Hoekendijk says, 'With regard to the equipment which we provide for our children as parents, they must be ready and able to endure tensions. They must find uncertainty, lack of clarity, change and conflict quite normal.' A further statement along similar lines is made by H.C. Rümke who says, 'I am convinced that if we do not make room for doubt, then our faith becomes inexorably ossified and the words we use are gradually deprived of their significance and of their power to move us. It seems paradoxical but to be unable to sustain positive doubt is a hindrance in the development in the life of faith.'[14]

In the Bible we have records of the expected meeting the unexpected and the resulting crises of faith in the life of the nation in history, politics, the attraction of other religions and gods, morals, and in the life of individuals in personal crises involving failure, guilt, death of loved ones, meeting the call of God, obeying his commands, doubt, rebellion, new insight into old situations, and so on. Faith grows out of each of these crises and with it grows the knowledge and understanding of God, the object of faith.

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14. Klink, op cit pp 234,235

It is important to remember that whether we are speaking of the individual's religious development or that of the people of God it is left to the community to give the initial interpretation to the experience even if this initial interpretation is later discarded in favour of another one. The cultural dimension cannot be ignored.

The writer would like to make the following conclusions on the topic:

1. That the concept, God, is capable of being presented at different levels of intellectual development and maturity is attested by the questions and comments of children recorded by Edith Hunter, Joanna Klink, Violet Madge and others and the questions and comments that lead to highly trained and developed minds wrestling with the questions of modern theology.

2. There is evidence that children's and adults' ideas of God develop and mature unless something has happened to inhibit the development.

3. There is evidence of development in the conception of God recorded in the Old and New Testaments.

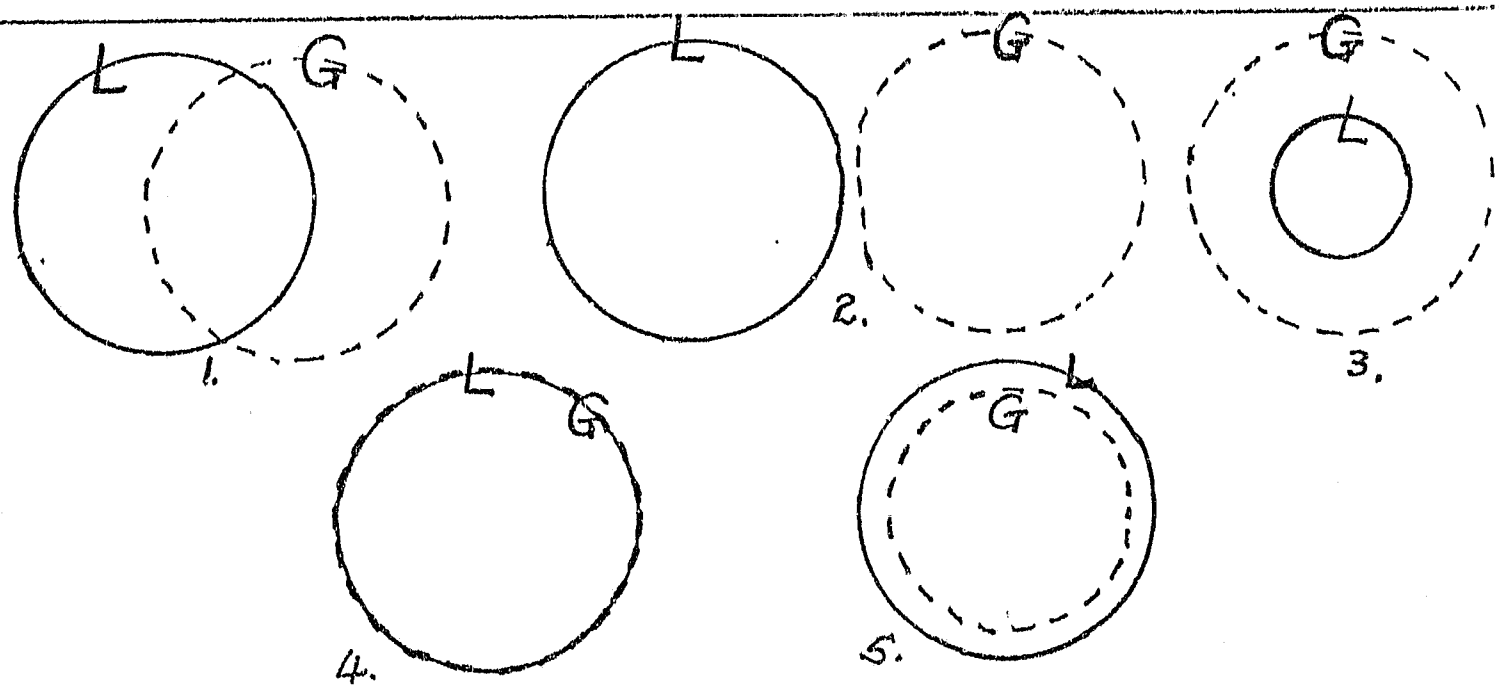
4. Crises of faith often accompany the acceptance of new conceptions of God.

5. Attempts to approach the concept at appropriate levels of development or to lead children to reach their own conclusions for a particualr stage of development have thus far been very tentative and of an experimental nature.

5. <u>The concept should allow for further development and be applicable under broader conditions than those under which it made its first appearance</u>

If one understands life to consist of an indefinite numb r of elements such as human relationships of all types, nature, the physical universe, science and its discoveries, politics, education, the arts, emotions, material possessions, technology, etc. then relates God to life by means of a Venn diagram, the following are possible relationships:

<u>Note</u>: L represents Life
G represents God



Taking Figs. 4 and 5 as the most valid representations for the relationship of the God of the Bible to life, it follows that every aspect of life can be related to God and thus God is relevant and may choose to reveal himself in any aspect of life. This results in two main problems for Religious Instruction.

1. The relevance of the concept is too wide and can be approached in so many different ways and from so many angles that the end result of the inquiry is more likely to be confusion than clarity. This seems to the danger in some of the 'thematic' and 'life experience' types of approach.

2. A rigid and authoritarian Christian interpretation can be placed on life which confines and inhibits it, as has been shown in Christelike Nasionale Onderwys.

It is for this reason that it is suggested that pupils explor the limited 'section' of life recorded in its relation to God in the Bible and work towards the broader implications in time, space, culture and history. This does not imply that they should not begin from their own experience as where these are analagous to or can be related to those recorded in the Bible.

6. Flexibility

The discussion in the preceding pages shows that one of the problems in dealing with this concept is excessive, rather than too little, flexibility.

CHAPTER 8

THE RESEARCH
CONCEPT AND METHOD IN THE CLASSROOM : TWO INVESTIGATIONS

One of the perennial questions that arises in Teacher Training is that of the relative importance of content and methodology, in the teaching of a subject. The answer which Concept Methodology gives to this question is that the two are inter-dependent - the content and structure of the subject determines the methodology, which in turn aims at imparting a clear conceptual understanding of the structure, basic ideas and ways of thinking pertaining to the subject. No methodology is possible until the teacher has a clear grasp of the subject as a whole. At the same time, a clear understanding of the subject enables those methods to be selected which are most appropriate to imparting its basic ideas.

Assuming that concept and methodology are inter-dependent, research in the classroom followed two lines. On the one hand, the methods used in the classroom in English-Medium State Primary Schools in the Transvaal were observed to discover what conclusions could be drawn concerning the concepts taught. The results of this investigation are described in this Chapter. On the other hand, an attempt was made to establish what concepts were held by Primary and High school students towards the end of their periods at Primary and High schools respectively, and by College students towards the end of their course in Religious Instruction at the Johannesburg College of Education. The results are analysed in the following Chapter.

INVESTIGATION 1

1.1 Nature of Investigation

First year Training College students commented in writing after their three week period of Teaching Experience in Primary Schools on the teacher's approach to the teaching of Religious Instruction, and what questions the children asked during the course of RI lessons.

No schools were mentioned by name. It is therefore not possible to distinguish between government and private schools except to say that a very small percentage of students visits private schools for their teaching experience.

The 144 students who wrote down their comments were from six College groups. One of the groups consisted of Junior Primary students, whose comments refer to classes from Grade I to Standard I. No notable difference emerged between their comments and those of Senior Primary students so that it is not necessary to consider their remarks separately.

Most comments were brief - about three to six lines. A few extended to half a page. The comments were informal and spontaneous. The students were not aware that the material was to be used for research purposes.

1.2 Classification of Results

1.2.1 56 replies (39%) yielded insufficient information on teaching methods for the following reasons.

1. Uninformative- 23 replies (16%) were vaguely worded or did not give the requested information.
2. Subject not taught 11 students (8%) stated that the subject was not taught, but did not give reasons.
3. Subject teaching- 6 students (4%) did not observe RI lessons because the school to which they were allocated practised subject teaching.
4. No comment- 16 students (11%) simply wrote 'no comment' on their papers.

1.2.2 88 replies (61%) gave information regarding the teaching method used. These replies were classified as follows:

1. The Story Method- 67 students (48%) mentioned some version of the use of the 'Story Method'
2. Other Methods- 9 replies (6%) mentioned methods other than the story method.
3. Unspecified Method- 12 replies (8%) indicated that the subject was taught, but did not specify any method.

TABLE 1 INVESTIGATION 1 : ANALYSIS OF 144 STUDENT TEACHER COMMENTS ON R.I. TEACHING METHODS

Comment	Uninformative	Subject not taught	Subject teaching	No comment	The story method	Other methods	Unspecified method
%	16%	8%	4%	11%	48%	6%	8%

1.3 The Use of the Word, 'Story'

The comments were again analysed to determine the number of replies in which the word, 'story', occurred at least once.

Of the 144 replies, 31 were ignored because their answers fell into the categories, 'No Comment', 'Subject not Taught', 'Subject Teaching'.

This left a total of 114. These 114 replies yielded the following information:

a. The word 'story' mentioned at least once: 67,5%
b. The word 'story' not used but strongly implied: 7%
c. The word 'story' not used: 25,5%

TABLE 2 THE USE OF THE WORD 'STORY' IN 114 REPLIES

Analysis	'Story' mentioned at least once	Word 'Story' implied	Word 'story' not used
%	67,5%	7%	25,5%

Of the replies in which some definite method of teaching RI is described, 89% referred to some variation of the story method, and 11% mentioned other methods.

TABLE 3 ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' COMMENTS REGARDING METHODS USED TO TEACH R.I.

Story Method	89%
Other Methods	11%

1.4 The Story Method

The replies describing the story method fell into four categories.

1.4.1 Bible read: the story was read from the Bible.

1.4.2 Children's Bible read: the story was read from the Children's Bible, or a book of Bible stories.

1.4.3 Story related: the story was told in the teacher's own words.

1.4.4 Story read: the story was read from the Bible or a book of Bible Stories; the student did not specify which book was used.

In most cases the story was followed by some type of activity during the lesson period. An analysis of the four categories of the story method and the various types of activity following them appears in Table 4.

TABLE 4: ANALYSIS OF 'THE STORY METHOD' AND METHODS OF CONSOLIDATION OF 'THE STORY METHOD' FIRST INVESTIGATION 1970

METHOD	Bible read	Children's Bible read	Story told	Story read	No of Instances	%
ORAL ACTIVITY						
Explanation of story	4	4	4	2	14	21
Teacher recapitulates	0	0	1	1	2	3
Teacher asks factual quests	1	6	0	2	9	13
Children ask questions	0	1	0	1	2	3
Teacher tests in depth relevance	0	3	6	0	9	13
					36	53%
WRITTEN ACTIVITY						
Pupils copy notes	3	4	3	1	11	16
Pupils colour in	4	5	2	2	13	19
Verse copied and learned	4	0	2	0	6	9
					30	44%

TABLE 4 (continued)

METHOD	Bible read	Children's Bible read	Story told	Story read	No of instances	%
CULTURAL ACTIVITY						
Dramatisation	0	1	3	0	4	6
Handcraft,poems	0	0	1	0	1	1
Hymn	1	0	0	0	1	1
					6	9
VISUAL AIDS						
Flannelgraph	0	0	1	0	1	1
Pictures	0	0	7	0	7	10
					8	12
NO ACTIVITY	0	5	0	3	8	12

One criticism of these results is that they are obtained from untrained observers.

Arising from the analysis the following comments may be made.

1. In 88% of the cases some attempt was made to consolidate the story.
   In 12% of the cases the lesson consisted only of reading the story.
2. Oral activity tended to be teacher orientated.
3. Apart from drawing, most written activities consisted of transcribing (copying notes, verses, or colouring pictures)
4. Little use was made of cultural activities (6%) or visual aids (11%)

1.5 Other Methods

9 out of the 76 replies mentioned'other methods', but they did not give sufficient information to enable an analysis of 'other methods'.

6 comments implied some version of the 'Story Method', 2 comments referred to Dramatisation. and the use of a Theme.

2. Analysis of general comments made by students

Apart from information on methods used in teaching, students' comments fell into three broad categories:

2.1 The Teacher

2.2 The Pupils

2.3 Religious Instruction as a subject, and the teaching of Religious Instruction.

Sixty such comments were analysed.
A selection of quotations from students' comments appears in Appendix A.

2.1 The Teacher

7 comments referred to the teacher. All of these tended to be negative, referring to lack of knowledge, interest and stimulation. One criticised a 'too spiritual' approach on the part of the teacher.

It should be remembered, however, that favourable comments under the headings, 'The Pupils', and 'The Subject', Religious Instruction', refer indirectly to the teacher and help to balance the negative remarks.

2.2 The Pupils

24 comments referred to the pupils, mostly focussing on their reaction to the subject.

2.2.1 Favourable Comments- 17 comments referred in favourable terms to the pupils' enjoyment of various aspects of the lessons. 3 spoke of RI as being the favourite school subject.

2.2.2 Unfavourable Comments- 3 remarks referred to boredom and lack of stimulation on the part of the pupils. 5 mentioned lack of understanding by the pupils and of opportunity to ask questions.

2.3 The Subject, Religious Instruction

29 comments referred to the subject, Religious Instruction. On the whole there were fewer favourable comments on this topic than the previous one.

2.3.1 Favourable Comments - 8 students gave a favourable picture of R.I. teaching, mentioning the emphasis given the subject in the school and the pupils' enjoyment of the lessons.

2.3.2 Unfavourable Comments - Most of the remaining remarks referred to problems or the low status of R.I.

9 students mentioned boredom and lack of stimulation as the main aspects of the R.I. lesson. 9 referred to the low status of R.I. as evidenced by the low priority given it amongst other subjects, or its total omission.

2.4 Teaching Aids

There were very few references to the use of teaching aids. Two mentioned the use of maps and charts. One student remarked that insufficient teaching aids were used. It appears that the general practice was to show the class illustrations of stories as they occurred in the Bible story books.

2.5 Questions asked by pupils

15 out of the 114 replies mentioned specific questions or the type of questions asked by pupils. These fell into the following types:

2.5.1 Factual Questions These questions involved information such as the names of people, or the sequence of or reasons for certain events.

2.5.2 Questions on Interpretation These questions involved the truth of events, especially those of a 'miraculous' nature.

2.5.3 Theological Questions These questions involved the nature of God, Christ and certain religious symbolism.

3. Investigation 2

3.1 Nature of the Investigation

On a second occasion four years later a group of first year students made observations in writing on the teaching of RI during their three to four week period of Teaching Practice. The comments were made in a formal assignment and were thus ... less spontaneous and more carefully phrased than those described in the previous Investigation. They were not asked to mention questions asked by pupils.

72 students took part in this exercise. 4 replies were unsuitable, leaving 68 replies to be analysed.

3.2 Analysis of Methods used in teaching RI

Of 68 replies, 54 (79,4%) described some version of 'The Story Method' and 14 (20,6%) mentioned other methods.

3.3 Analysis of 'Story Method'

'The Story Method' was divided into the same categories and analysed in the same way as that used in Investigation 1. In this Investigation all students specified the source of the story when it was read.
The analysis is given in Table 5

TABLE 5. ANALYSIS OF 'THE STORY METHOD' AND METHODS OF CONSOLIDATION OF 'THE STORY METHOD' - SECOND INVESTIGATION 1974

METHOD	Bible read	Children's Bible read	Story told	No of Instances	%
ORAL ACTIVITY					
Explanation of story	7	3	1	11	20
Teacher recapitulates	4	2	3	9	17
Teacher asks factual quests.	6	10	3	19	35
Teacher tests in depth relevance	3	5	0	8	15
Children ask questions	0	1	0	1	2
				48	89
WRITTEN ACTIVITY					
Pupils copy notes	9	9	5	23	43
Pupils colour in	6	12	6	24	44
Pupils copy verse and learn	5	5	5	15	28
				62	115
CULTURAL ACTIVITY					
Dramatisation	1	1	1	3	6
Handcraft, poem	0	0	1	1	2
Hymn	0	0	0	0	0
				4	7

TABLE 5 (continued)

METHOD	Bible read	Children's Bible read	Story told	No of Instances	%
VISUAL AIDS					
Flannelgraph	0	0	0	0	0
Pictures	0	1	1	2	4
Film	0	1	0	1	2
				3	6
NO ACTIVITY	1	0	0	1	2
				1	2

An analysis of the second investigation leads to the same conclusions as were made in Paragraph 1.4 concerning the first investigation. The correlation between the two sets of results is 0,74. The scattergram in Table 6 shows the relationship between the two sets of results.

3.4 Other Methods

14 students referred to the use of methods other than the story method, although in two instances the story method is strongly implied. Of the remaining 12 instances, only two mention what may be described as a teaching method, namely that of using a film or film strip to precede a discussion. One refers to pupils taking turns to read a verse from the Bible and explain it.

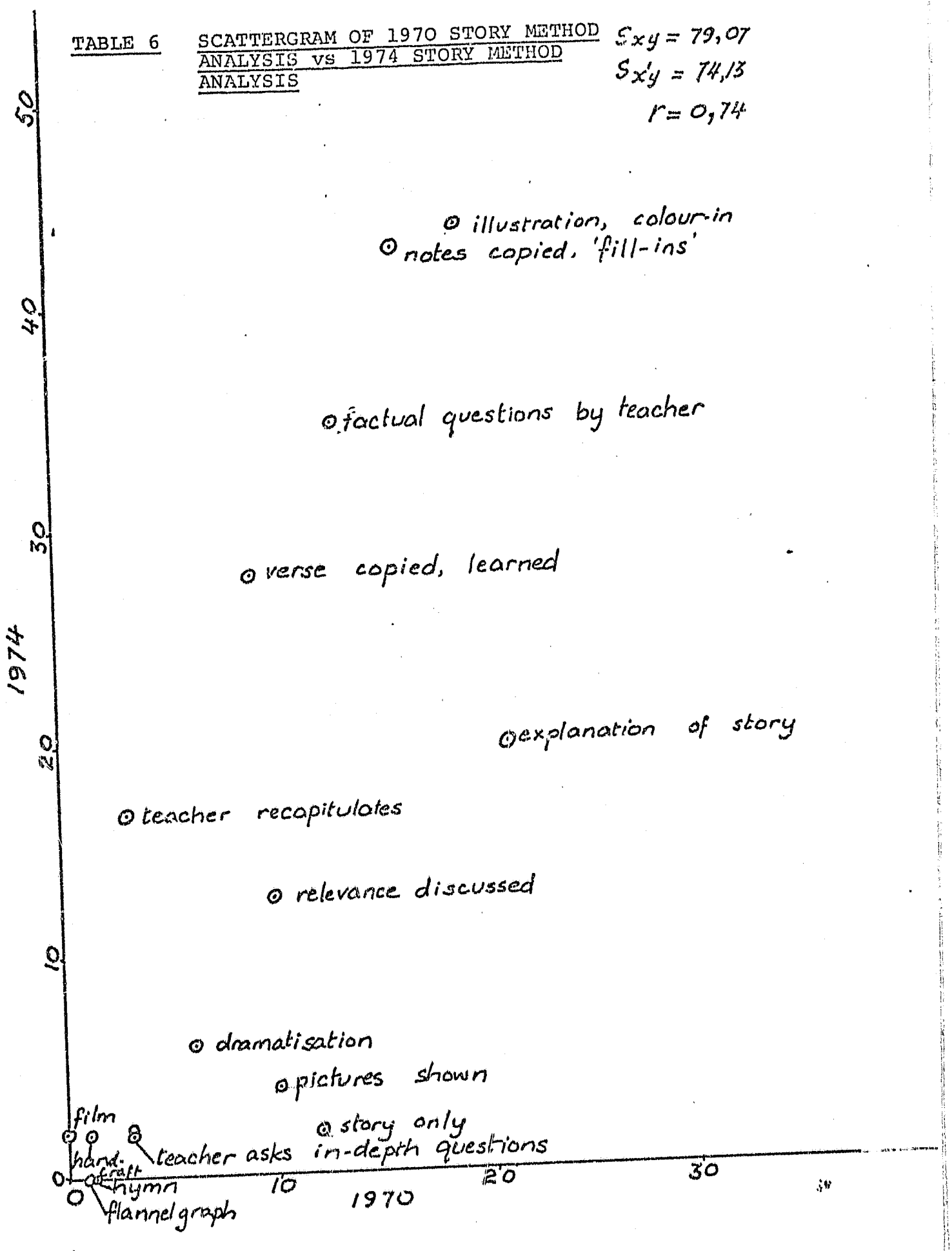
The remaining 10 do not describe any specific teaching method. In some it is implied that some teachers were using various ways of ensuring some sort of written record in pupils' books without direct teaching of the subject. Illustrative comments will be found in Appendix B.

3.5 Analysis of Comments

Comments were classified in the same categories as those used in the previous investigation, viz. The Teacher, The Pupils and Religious Instruction as a subject and the teaching thereof.

TABLE 6 SCATTERGRAM OF 1970 STORY METHOD ANALYSIS vs 1974 STORY METHOD ANALYSIS

$S_{xy} = 79,07$
$S_{x'y} = 74,13$
$r = 0,74$



3.5.1 The Teacher 29 Comments referred to the teacher.

Positive 4 students commented favourably on the teacher's handling of the subject. Enthusiasm, lack of rigidity, a sense of the importance of R.I. lessons to life situations emerged as qualities of a good R.I. teacher.

Negative 7 students commented on teachers avoiding teaching the subject for various reasons: the pressures of other subjects were too demanding, the teacher belonged to a sect and preferred not to teach the subject, the teacher preferred not to teach the subject - no reasons were given.
14 comments referred to lack of interest, 2 to lack of knowledge. There were also references to unstimulating methods, the intrusion of the teacher's personal religion and two instances of hostility to the subject on the part of the teacher were mentioned.

3.5.2 The Pupils 18 comments referred mainly to the pupils and their attitude to the subject.

Positive No students commented positively on the response of pupils to the subject, although it is obvious from some of the quotations in the previous section that not all pupil response was negative.

Negative
Distinterested and Unstimulated

10 students commented on lack of stimulation and interest by the pupils in the subject. The word 'boredom' featured often.

Antagonistic

5 comments referred to attitudes more negative than disinterest, using words like 'hated', 'had built a barrier' and 'bored dislike'.

Home Background

2 students mentioned that the home background of the pupils did not offer much encouragement to religion.

3.5.3 The Subject, Religious Instruction

71 comments referred to the subject as a whole, teaching of the subject and reaction to it. The trend in these comments is very similar to that in the previous investigation and complements statements made about teachers and pupils.

Positive The 5 positive remarks refer to attempts to use a variety of methods and stimuli, to relate the Bible to everyday life and to involve pupils in discussion.

Negative comments were numerous.

Low Priority There were 15 references to the low priority given to RI by teachers.

Waste of Time In 4 instances the phrase 'waste of time' was used.

Understanding Disregarded In 7 instances students remarked that there was no attempt to ensure that the pupils understood the lessons.

Uneducational 12 comments referred to procedures which the students felt had no educational value. These included colouring pictures which had been poorly reproduced, memorising verses or passages which were not understood and drawing pictures.

4. Conclusions

Although there is evidence that some teachers teach the subject in a stimulating, interesting and educational way, this is the exception rather than the rule. The impression given by many students is that often teachers were floundering in their handling of the subject; they attributed this to various causes, amongst which they mentioned laziness, lack of knowledge, lack of enthusiasm and the pressures of a time-table where they regarded other subjects as deserving greater priority.

From the comments, it seems that teachers often ignore the 'Suggestions in connection with Method' in the Introduction to the Syllabus for Religious Instruction which refer to aids, use of other selected Christian literature and knowledge of historical, geographical and archaeological background.[1]

The fact that students are inexperienced and tend to be idealistic may bring an over-critical note into their remarks. It may be necessary to make allowance for this. In order to put the subject in perspective, it may be worth mentioning that:

1. In the opinion of the students RI was not the only subject which was indifferently taught, but that the same indifference and uneducational techniques applied to the teaching of other subjects.
2. Differences in interpretation occur in disciplines other than RI, or, at a more advanced level, Theology and Biblical Studies. A Primary School subject in which differences of interpretation occur is History. At a more advanced level, there is hardly a subject which does not have its schools of thought and interpretation with opposing opinion even on what is basic to the subject.

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1. Handbook of Syllabuses for the Primary School. Published 1964 Syllabus for Religious Instruction, Introduction, p17 paragraphs 3,4,5,8

4.1 Relationship between Concepts and Method

At the beginning of the Chapter, the opinion was expressed that there was a close link between concepts taught and the methods used, and that each should give a clue to the understanding of the other. One of the points which has emerged most strongly from this study is that in Primary Schools the method used almost to the exclusion of others is the 'story' method. What can be deduced from this as to the concepts learned?

Before an attempt is made to answer this question, the writer would like to make certain observations.

1. In the Introduction to the Syllabus for Religious Instruction the following statements are made:

> Paragraph 4 (p17) 'As faith is founded upon knowledge and firm belief, it is essential that the pupil should be made thoroughly familiar with the contents of the Bible.'
>
> Parahraph 6 It is most important that the nature of, and the different stages in, the development of the growing child, especially the concepts of religious matters, should be taken into consideration in selecting and handling the lesson material.

The rationale for the Syllabus is contained in Paragraph F.

Subdivision of the syllabus (Page 19), which states:

> 1. The Material has been divided into three concentric cycles, viz; Grades I and II, Standards I and II, Standards III and IV and a separate syllabus for Standard V. The work in each successive cycle, that is, Standard I in succession to the work of Grade I, and Standard III in succession to the work in Standard I, is not merely repetitive, but it so chosen that it may be supplementary and extend the pupil's knowledge. The same holds for the work in Grade II, Standard II and Standard IV.

It can be seen that most material is repeated at least three times. It is expected that supplementary material be included to extend the pupil's knowledge in each successive repetition and that the end result of the repetitive approach should be 'the pupil should be made thoroughly familiar with the contents of the

Bible'.

2. There is minimal indication in the remarks by the students of any difference in content or methods between those used by Grade I teachers and those used by Standard V teachers. This statement must be qualified by two factors:

a. Students observing Junior Primary Classes form a small percentage (about 10-12½%) of the total group.

b. Students were not asked to state which Standards they had observed.

It was clear that little effort is made to extend older children in any way, or to take into consideration cognitive development or concepts of religious matters pertinent to them.

3. The concentric syllabus with its repetition and development is aimed at producing in pupils 'a sound Biblical knowledge upon which faith can be based.'

It appears that 'sound Biblical knowledge' is interpreted by many teachers to mean 'knowledge of certain names, places and events connected with various personalities in the Bible.' It is doubtful whether even this is achieved. The following comment by a student anticipated the results of one of the tests described in the chapter which follows. 'This of course was very uninteresting, although the children always seem to pay attention in class. I was very surprised that they did so badly in their tests because they always appeared to attend in class' (Underlining by the writer). A test, which will be described more fully in the next Chapter, tested six items of Biblical information at a low cognitive level. The Standard V pupils tested achieved poor results.

Returning to the question of what can be deduced from the use of the 'story method' regarding the concepts taught, it is unlikely that it produces the type of knowledge of the contents of the Bible on which faith can be founded, if faith is understood in the sense in which it has been defined and described in Chapter 6, viz. the response to the type of concept which includes interpretive and evaluative elements. This conclusion is based on the Analysis of the Story Method contained in Tables 4 and 5.

A student remarked, 'This type of lesson (Bible reading, factual questions and illustration) is like placing a bowl of porridge in front of an infant but forgetting to show it how to eat.' Proponents of teaching by concepts are adamant that without guidance pupils do not place items of information into a conceptual framework. In other words, they do not believe that teaching pupils a number of details pertaining to the subject automatically enables the pupils to gain mastery over the concepts of the subject. Part of the task of the educator is to use inductive or deductive methods to guide pupils to place items of knowledge within a framework of the concepts of the subject. A subject which is taught as a set of items of information on various topics is likely to equip pupils at best for answering questions on quiz programmes.

Doris Hill's statement quoted in Chapter 2 states 'Subject matter is more than a list of facts about persons, places and events. To "know a subject" is to be able to state or use at least some of the major ideas and characteristic ways of thinking that belong to that field.' The methods used at present to teach RI in English speaking Primary Schools seem unlikely to produce that type of knowledge of the subject.

The writer concludes that in the light of evidence of methods described in this chapter it is unlikely that RI teaching in the Primary School consciously promotes understanding of concepts.

CHAPTER 9

1. THE TEST

1.1 Objectives of the test

A questionnaire was devised to attempt to derive some information on the following subjects:

1. Relative influence of the home, church and school in the religous education of pupils and students.
2. In what way pupils and students understand religion, and their attitude towards it.
3. To what extent pupils have developed concepts of God, covenant and faith and what is the nature if their concepts.
4. To what extent pupils' concepts of God, covenant and faith are derived from the Bible, in particular that Biblical material in the syllabus which should have been taught.
5. Extent to which recognition of Biblical information is influenced by adding a conceptual dimension to the information given.
6. Extent to which 'secularisation' has affected the religious thinking and attitudes of pupils and students.

The questionnaire will be found in Appendix C, and the full table of results in Appendix D. In the analysis which follows, the numbers refer to the numbers of the questions or sections of questions in the original questionnaire.

The method of using a questionnnaire in preference to other methods of testing was used (a) because it enables a wider spread of opinion to be tested in the time available, (b) because it involved least disruption in the school time-table and (c) it facilitated the collection of data on a wide range of topics.

1.2 Testees

The test was administered to three groups: Standard 5, Standard 9, and First Year College students. The testing took place during the first two weeks of October. The groups were chosen for the following reasons:

Standard 5: This is the final year of the Primary School and testing at this stage and towards the end of the year would

enable some assessment to be made of the effects of seven years' teaching of the Primary School syllabus.

Standard 9: This is the penultimate year of the High School. Although it might have been preferable to test pupils in their last year of High School it was felt by the writer and the School Principals that the time of the year chosen for the test was rather close to the Matriculation examination and would cause inconvenience in the schools concerned. They expressed the opinion that there would probably be little difference in the results between Standard 9 and Standard 10 pupils. Testing Standard 9 pupils would give a reasonable guide to what had been achieved in their religious education in their high school years.

First Year College Students: All First Year College students receive a compulsory concentrated course in Religious Instruction which comprises eighty periods of forty-five minutes each, unless they specialise in the subject Biblical Studies. This is the last formal instruction they receive before they are required to teach the subject in the Primary School when they qualify as teachers at the end of three or four years at the College of Education. By the time the testing took place they had covered between 85% and 95% of their course in Religious Instruction.

Testing this group offered the following opportunities:

a. To examine some attitudes, concepts and knowledge held by a group of teachers in training a time when their involvement with the subject was at a peak. The fact must be taken into account that further changes in any direction might take place during their remaining two or three years at the College.

b. To compare their attitudes, concepts and knowledge with those held by the other groups; particularly the Standard 9 group.

Any comparison would have to take into account the following factors:

1. The College group is a specialised group in that all its members have elected to be teachers.

2. The male/ femal ratio in the College group is totally out of keeping with that in the other two groups.

3. The College group had undergone a concentrated course in Religious Instruction given by qualified personnel.

1.3 Choice of Schools and College Groups

Three Primary Schools in widely differing socio-economic areas were selected. Primary School 1 (lower) was in the lower income artisan class area; Primary School 2 (Middle) in an area where parents might be expected to have fewer financial problems and were better able to feed and clothe their children as well as provide them with 'extras'. Primary 3 (Upper) was in an affluent area, with maximum socio-economic rating.

The high schools chosen were those which corresponded both geographically and socio-economically to each of the primary schools. Thus a proportion of children in these high schools might be expected to have attended the primary schools used in the study.

Approximately equal numbers of Junior Primary and Senior Primary College students were tested. Junior Primary students are those who will eventually teach Grade I, Grade II and Standard I pupils. Senior Primary students will teach pupils from Standard II to Standard V.

1.4 Academic Ability

I.Q. figures were not available, and the research relied on an impression by the class teacher, conveyed verbally, in order to establish the level of academic ability of those tested. Spelling and language usage were also noted as indications of academic ability. The Primary School sample in particular reflected a wide range of academic ability. This was less true of of the Standard 9 group where the fact that they had reached that level of education in itself was an indication that the group was to a certain extent a selected group. The same remark applies to the College group.

1.5 Number of Pupils and Students Tested

This is shown in the following, Table 7, where the words LOWER, MIDDLE and UPPER are used according to the definition in 1.3

TABLE 7

Number of Pupils and Students Tested

	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER	TOTAL
Std 5	64	65	44	173
Std 9	38	50	67	155
College				124
			Total	452

1.6 Age Distribution of Testees

This is shown in the followi tables:

TABLE 8a Std 5

Age	11	12	13	14
Number of Testees	4	95	68	6

Total 143

TABLE 8b Std 9

Age	15	16	17	18	Age unknown
No of Testees	9	91	45	7	3

Total 155

TABLE 8c College

Age	17	18	19	20	21	over 21	Age unknown
No of Testees	8	66	27	10	2	4	7

Total 124

TABLE 8d Age Distribution of Total Sample

Age	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	over age 21	unknown
No of Testees	4	95	68	6	9	91	53	73	27	10	2	4	10

Total 452

1.7 Distribution of Sexes in Sample Tested

This is shown in the following table

TABLE 9 Sex Distribution in Sample Tested

Sex	Male	%	Female	%	Not stated	%
Std 5	84	48,6	87	50,3	2	1.1
Std 9	80	51,6	72	46,5	3	1,9
College	13	10,5	111	89,5	0	0,0
TOTAL	177	39,2	270	59,7	5	1,1

1.8 Administration of the Test

Permission was requested from and granted by the Transvaal Education Department and the Principals of the Schools and College to conduct the Test during a Religious Instruction period in the time-table of the class concerned.

All tests were conducted by the writer. In each case she was introduced to the class by the regular teacher who then withdrew.

The purpose of the test was briefly explained and the following points emphasised:

1. The pupil was not required to put his/her name on the paper. Thus there would be no repercussions for ill considered answers.
2. In very few cases was there a correct answer; all opinions were valid, and honesty of response was of the greatest importance to the investigation.
3. There was no compulsion whatsoever to fill in the questionnaire and point No 3 in the preliminary written instructions was emphasised, viz. 'If there is a question that you do not understand, or of there is one that you do not wish to answer, then leave it out. Go on to the next question.'
4. Testees were invited to add comments if they found it necessary or desirable to clarify their point of view.
5. Testees were permitted to ask questions of the supervisor to clarify meaning, but were not permitted to discuss anything with other testees.

1.8 (continued)

6. Jewish testees were permitted to omit any questions which had a specific Christian meaning if they were unqualified or unwilling to answer them.

1.9 Attitude of Testees towards the Test

The majority of testees appeared to regard the test as a novelty and a welcome change from routine. From observation during the test and from remarks written on the test papers, their attitudes ranged from neutrality to enthusiasm. Co-operation, and the greatest anxiety to please were displayed by the 'Lower' class Primary School children. Unwillingness and disinclination to reveal his beliefs was only explicitly stated by one Std 9 boy, who nevertheless continued to fill in the questionnaire.

1.10 Time Taken to Complete the Test

Most testees had completed the questionnaire after 35 minutes. A small proportion in each class needed an extra 10-15 minutes to complete the test. The less academically able class in the Lower Class Primary School took longest to complete the questionnaire and showed most uncertainty in understanding the questions.

2. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

2.1 Agencies Involved in the Religious Education of Young People

As is well known, three agencies are involved in the religious education of children: parents, the church and the school. It was necessary to attempt to obtain some indication of the influence of each.

2.1.1 The Church

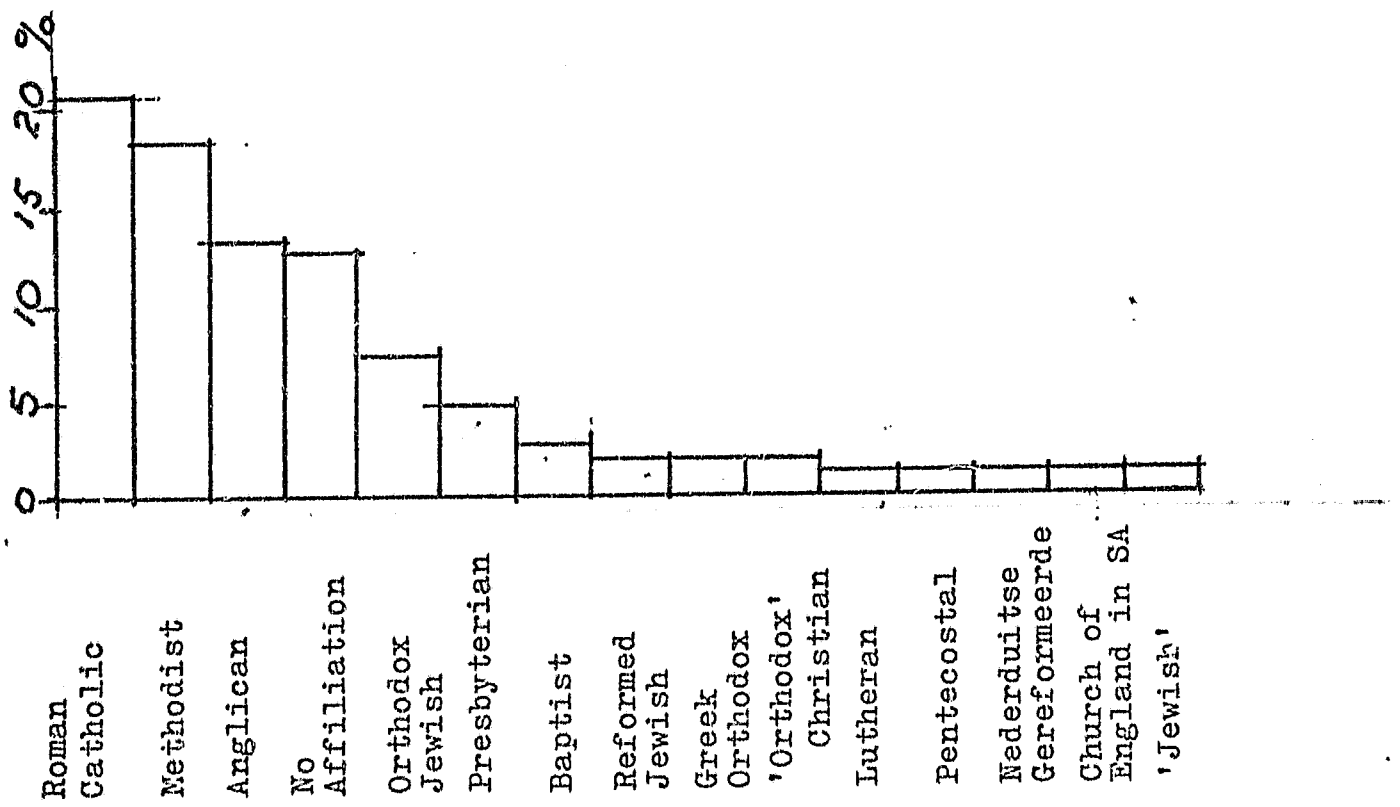
2.1.1.1 Denominational Affiliation

Amongst the 452 subjects tested were represented 33 identifiable denominations and a further 4 groups which could not be identified as denominations as such. These were those with no church affiliation, those who called themselves Jews or Christians but did not identify themselves with a particular group within those religions, and those whose allegiance lay simultaneously with more than one denomination. In some cases

it is possible that subjects have referred to the same denomination by two different names e.g. by Pentecostal and Assemblies of God they may have meant the same denomination. The writer has adhered to the name used by the testees.

The distribution of members of denominations named in this sample which were represented by 5 or more members is shown in the table below.

TABLE 10 Distribution of Members of Denominations with 5 or more Members



Those denominations which had fewer than 4 members represented in this sample are listed below

Denominations with fewer than 4 members

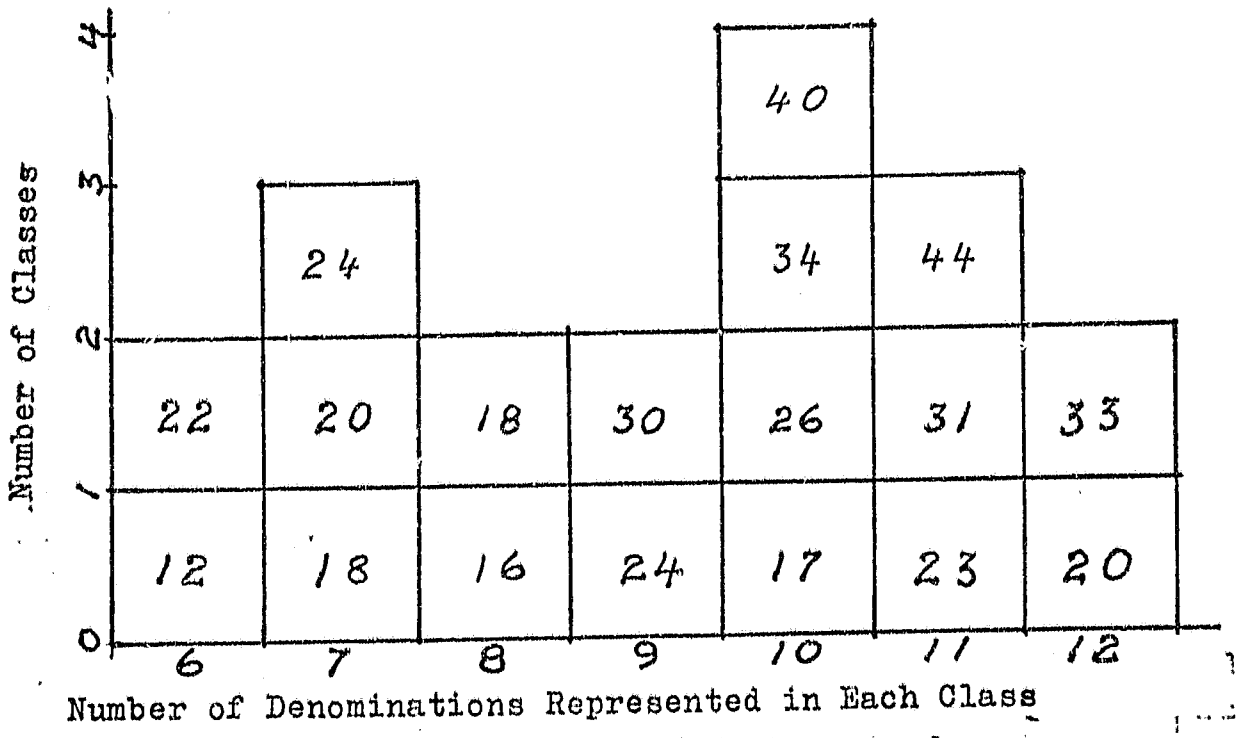
Name of Denomination	No of Members
Apostolic	1
Apostolic Faith Mission	3
Assemblies of God	3
Christian Scientist Church	2
Ecumenical	2

Name of Denomination	No of Members
Free Baptist	1
Full Gospel	1
Hervormde	1
Interdenominational	1
Invisible Church	1
Methodist / Roman Catholic	1
Mormon	1
Old Apostolic	1
Plymouth Brethren	1
Protestant	1
Quaker	1
Salvation Army	2
School of Truth	1
Seventh Day Adventist	3
Undenominational	1

These 20 denominations account for 6,4% of the total sample.

The 452 testees used in this test were divided into 17 separate classes. The smallest class consisted of 12 pupils, the largest class was made up of 44 pupils.The smallest number of denominations represented in any class was 6, the largest number was 12.

TABLE 11 DISTRIBUTION OF DENOMINATIONS AMONG CLASSES IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGE



Note: the numbers in the blocks indicate the number of pupils/ students in the class

It is interesting to examine the distribution of denominational membership amongst individual classes. Each class used during this test presented unique features in this respect, as is shown in a selection of examples recorded in the tables below.

TABLE 12 DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERS OF DENOMINATIONS IN A SELECTION OF INDIVIDUAL CLASSES

TABLE 12a A College Group

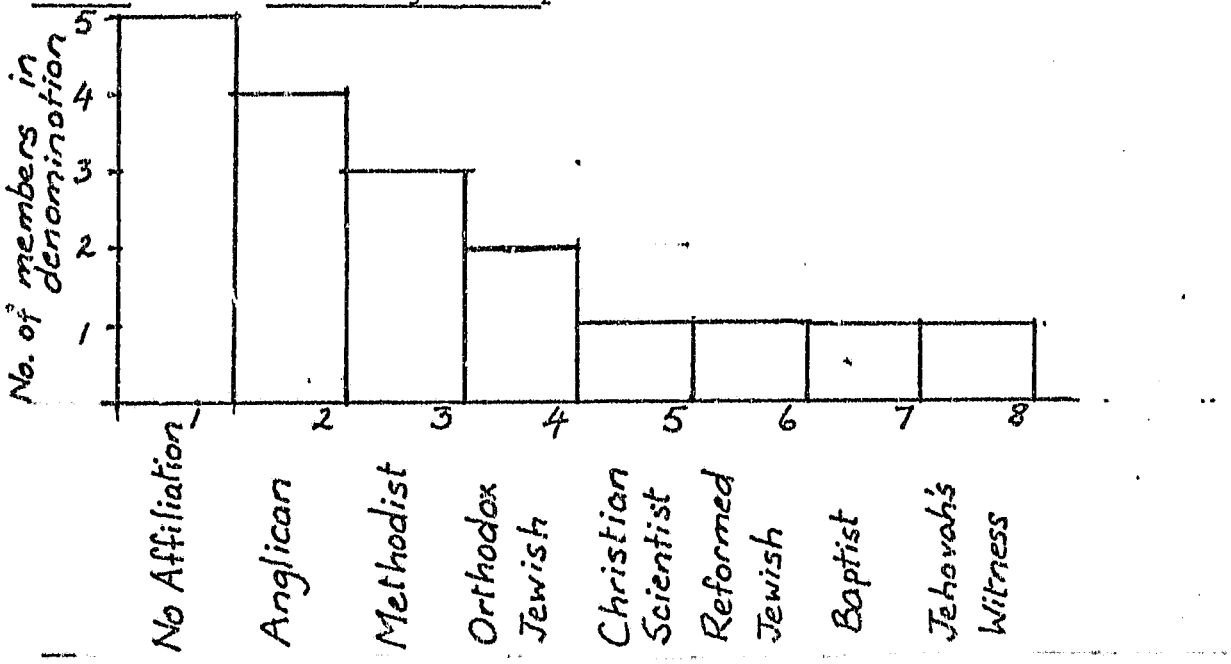


TABLE 12b A College Group

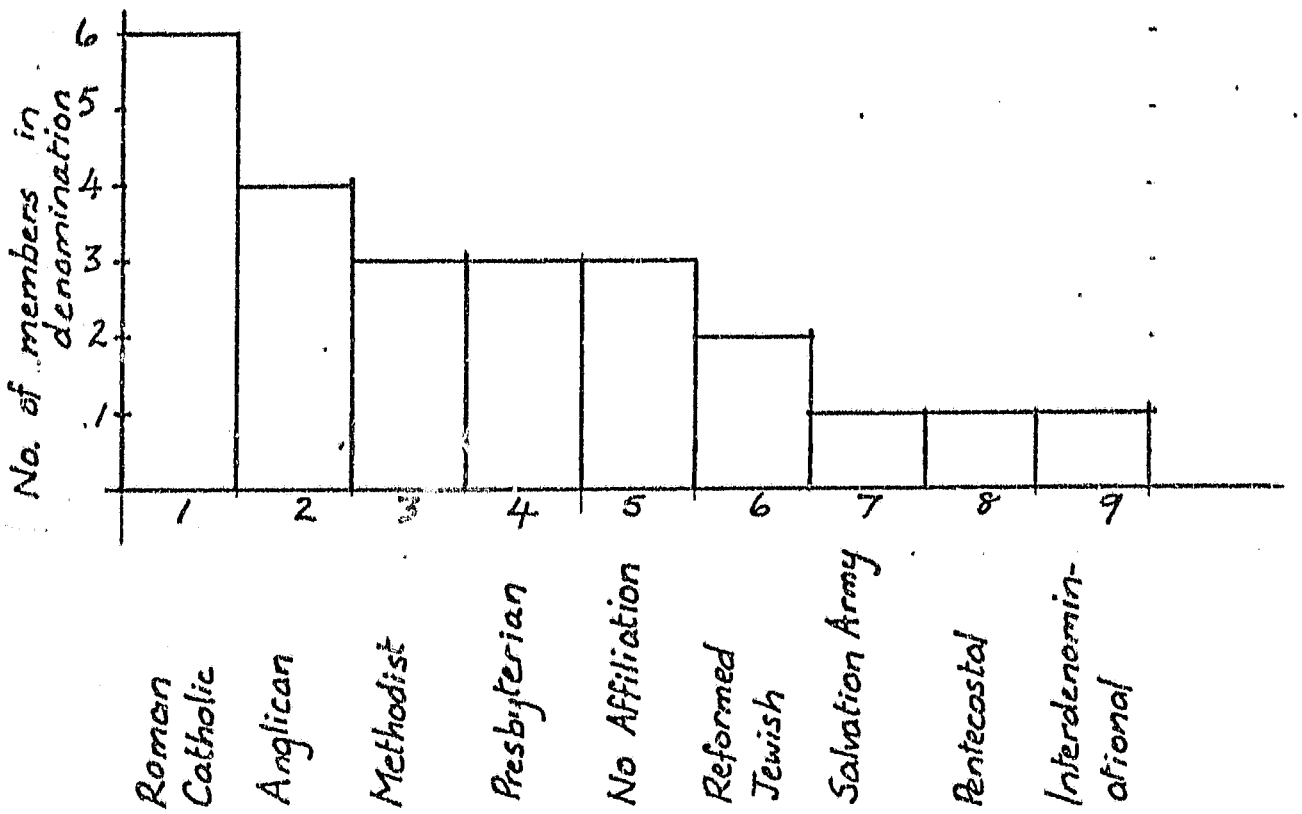


TABLE 12c A Std 9 Group (Upper Social Bracket)

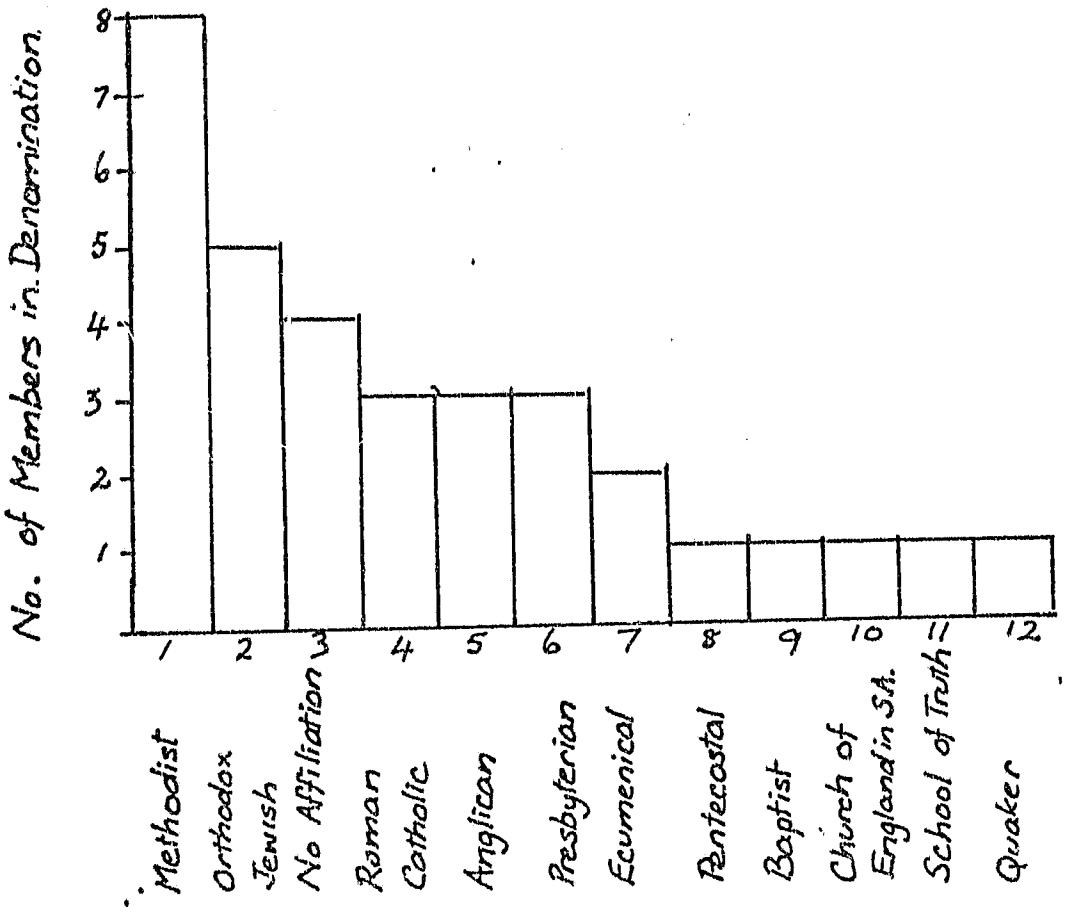


TABLE 12d. A Std 9 Group (Upper Social Bracket)

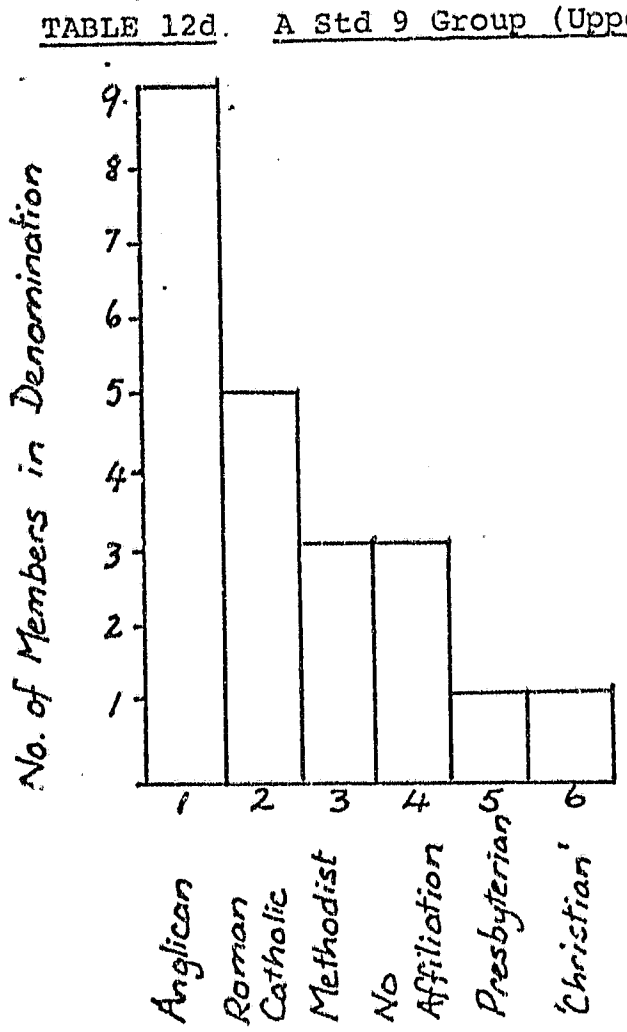


TABLE 12e. A Std 9 Group (Middle Social Bracket)

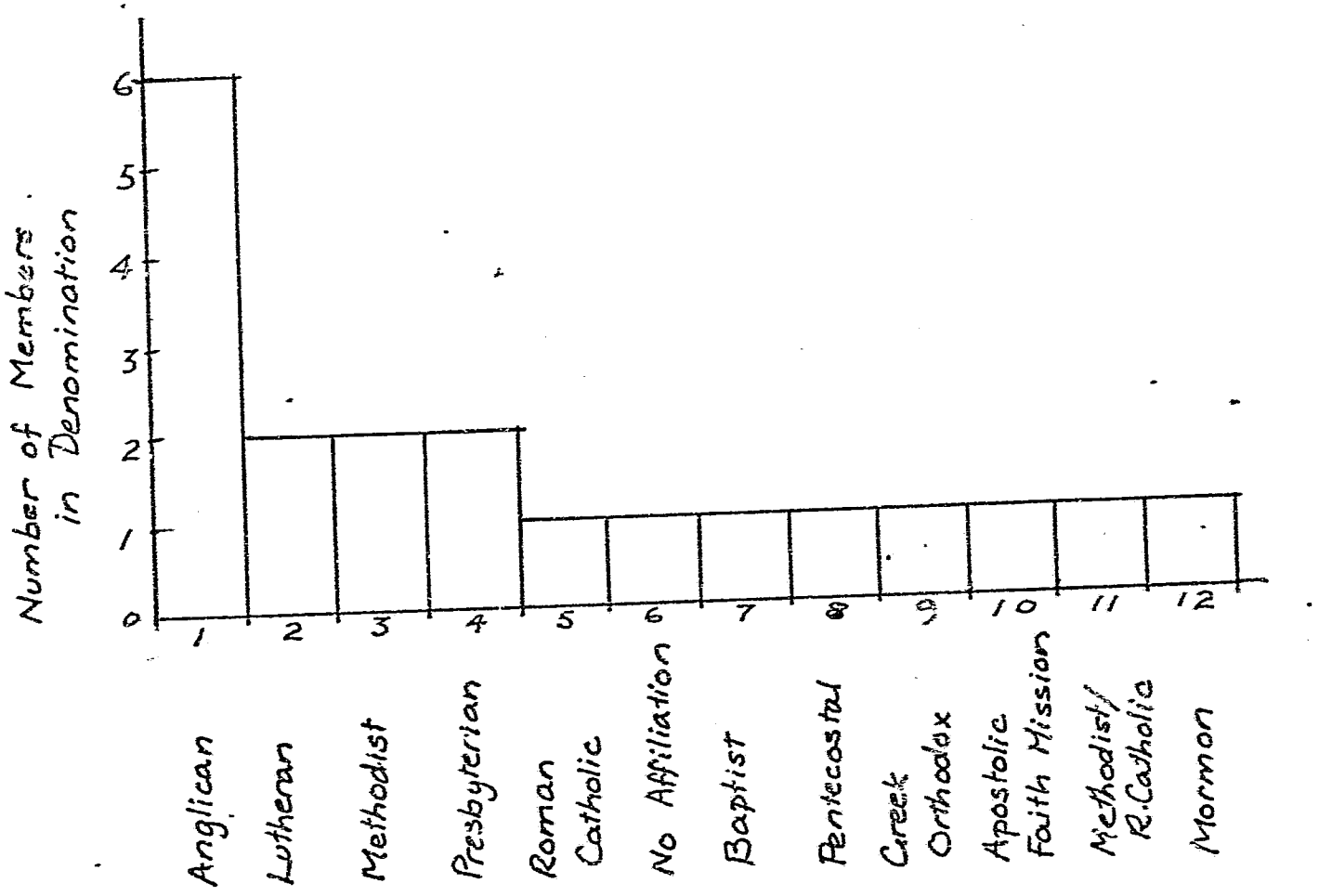


TABLE 12e. A Std 9 Group (Middle Social Bracket)

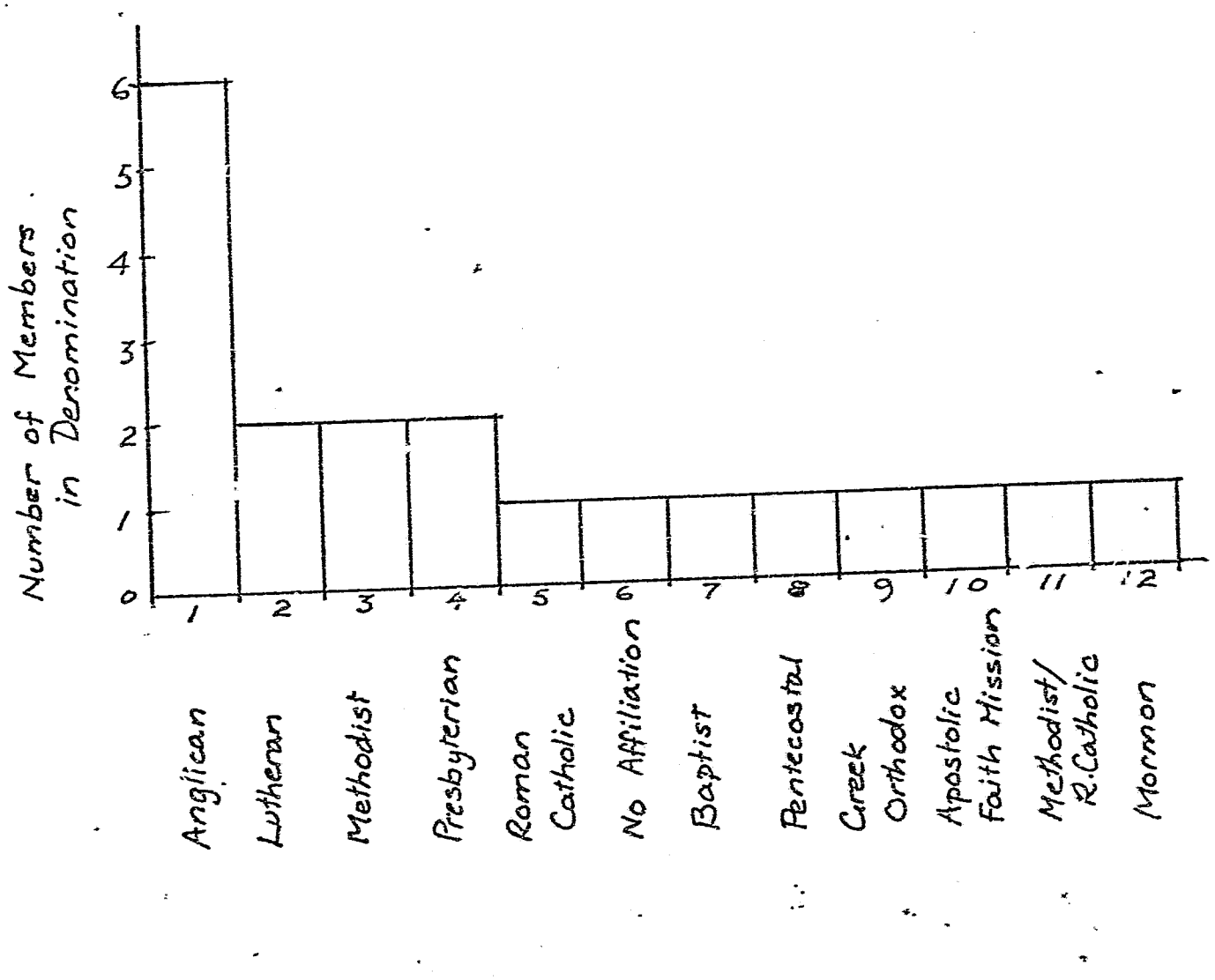


TABLE 12f A Std 5 Group (Upper Social Bracket)

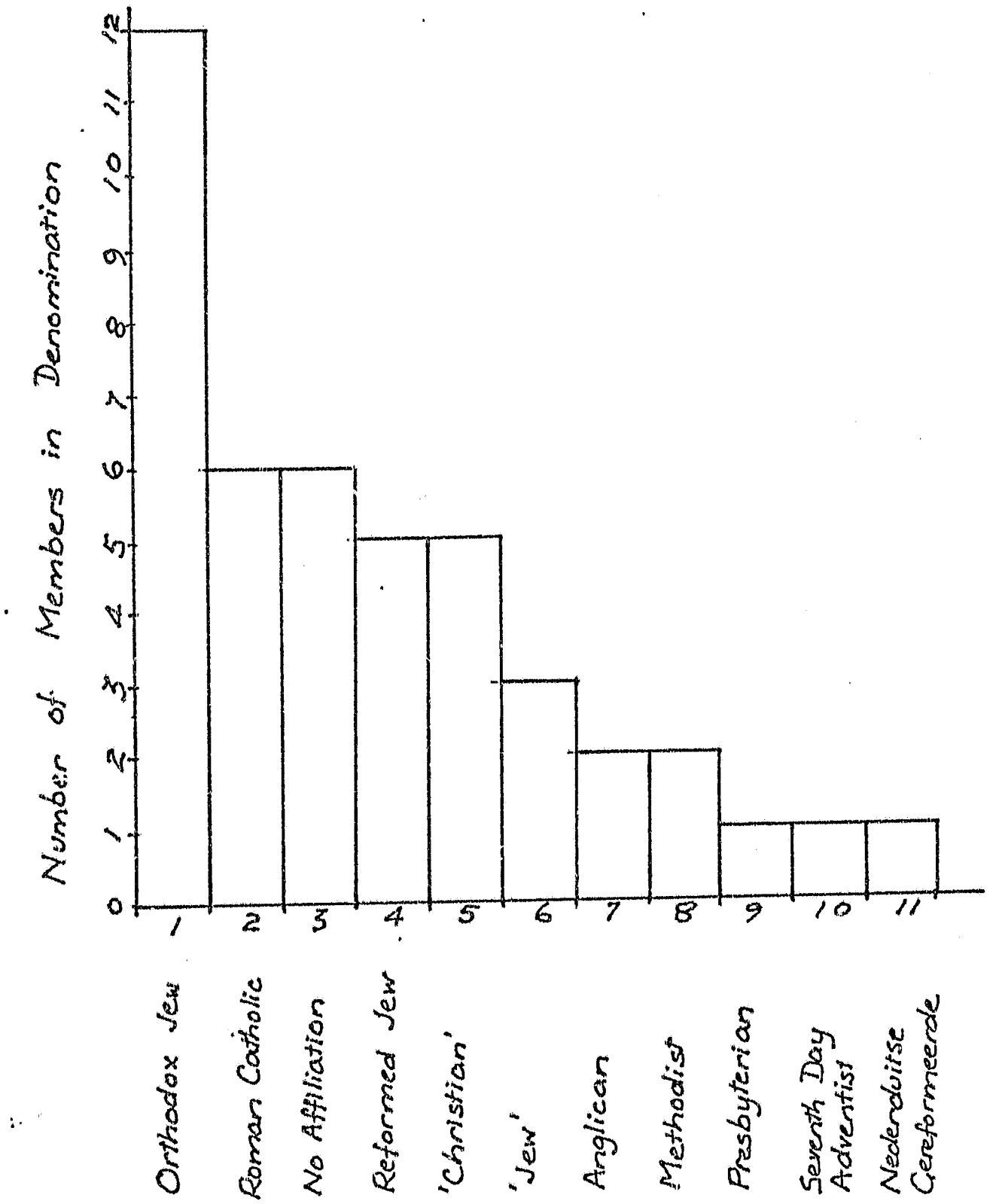
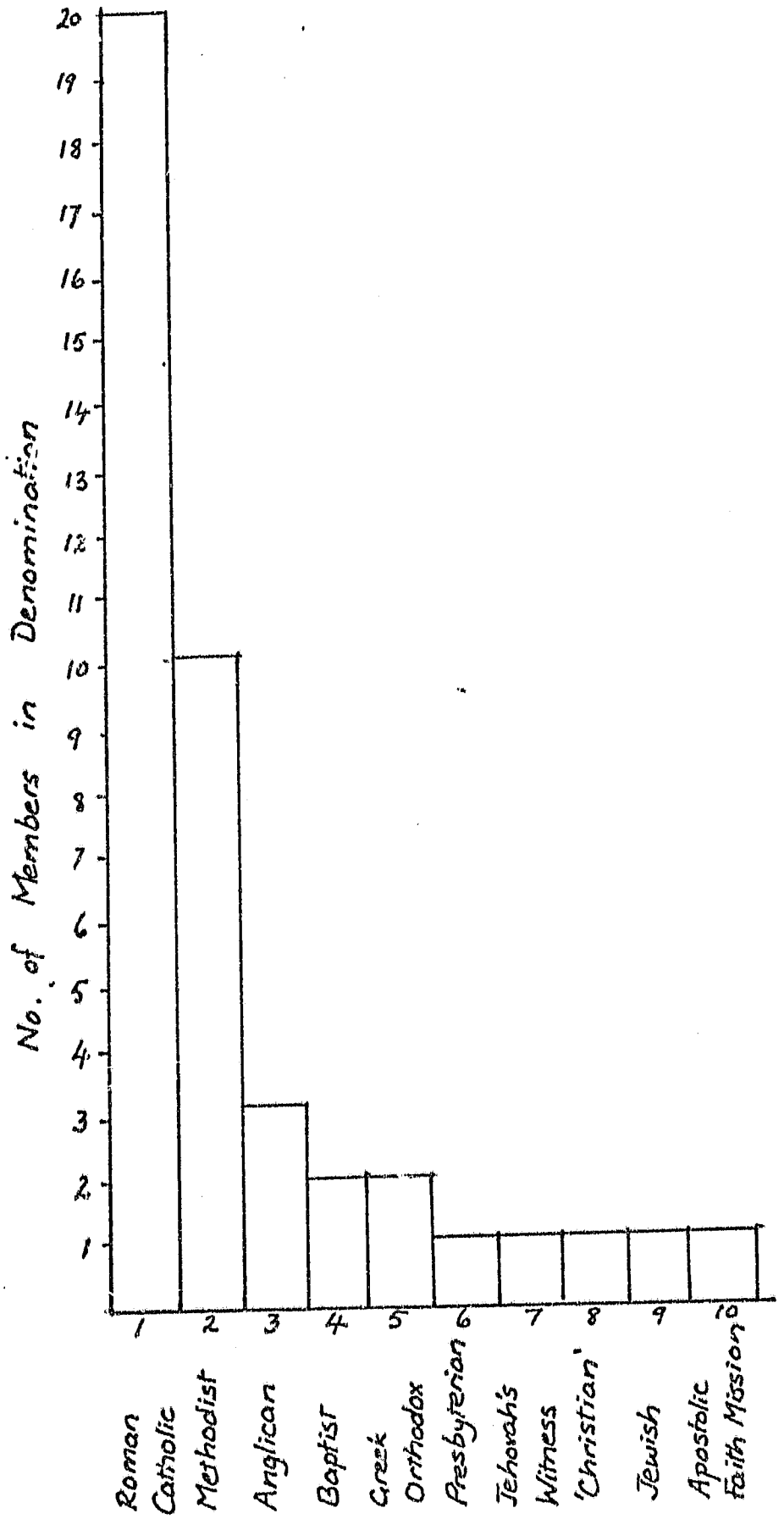


TABLE 12g

A Std 5 Group (Lower Social Bracket)



The above figures and tables demonstrate the daunting task which faces the Religious Instruction teacher, who, should he/she teach any of the classes which participated in this study would have to accommodate representatives from anything from six to twelve different religious groups. As can be seen from Tables (a) to (h), the predominant group might consist of Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Jews or those with no denominational affiliation. The teacher's accommodation has to stretch simultaneously across the Jewish/Christian gap and the 'fundamentalist/liberal' gap. Recognising that the latter division is one which exists within certain denominations as well as which divides one denomination from another, it is hardly surprising that the Religious Instruction teacher feels compelled to tread a very cautious path which often results in innocuous and irrelevant teaching. Mention has been made elsewhere in this dissertation of the rapidity with which a parent reacts to any treading on theological corns in the classroom. This is particularly likely to happen in the case of parents and children who belong to the less numerically strong denominations or 'sects'. Principals confirmed this in discussions which were held during the course of making arrangements to conduct this study. Although there was no indication that principals opposed the subject itself, they showed great sensitivity to the problems inherent in teaching Religious Instruction to the extent that some expressed the view that it might be better if it were left out of the school and remained in the hands of the home and the church.

2.1.1.2 Attendance at Church and Synagogue (Ques.1.7)

38,1% stated that they attend services regularly. There is an approximate 9% decline between Std 5 and Std 9 pupils who said they attend services regularly and a 12% increase in the percentage of those who said they never attend church. Of the total sample 12,4% claimed that they never attend services and 14,8% that they seldom do so. 25% stated that at one time they attended church but no longer do so. This figure probably includes some of those who answered 'Seldom' to question 1.7

regarding Church attendance.

The figures on attendance at services for Std 9 and College students do not show any remarkable differences.

The overall picture, then, is that approximately 40% of the sample claimed regular church attendance, whereas a little over 50% attended church seldom or never.

2.1.1.3 The Teaching Role of the Church

2. Most of what I believe about God

2.6 I learned at church/synagogue

	YES	NO
Std 5	80,9	11,0
Std 9	61,3	31,6
College	68,6	23,4

The highest percentage in both Std 5 and Std 9 groups named the church or synagogue as the main source of knowledge leading to their belief about God. College students rated the church second in this respect. Between Std 5 and Std 9 there is an approximate 20% drop in the numbers who acknowledge the significance for their belief of the role of the church and a 20% rise in the number who deny it.

2.1.1.4 The Sunday School

2. Most of what I believe about God

2.5. I learned at Sunday School

	YES	NO
Std 5	70,5	23,1
Std 9	57,4	36,5
College	43,6	41,9

It should be remembered that Sunday School does not form part of the religious educational system for Jews, Roman Catholics or members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Questions asked by these pupils during the test indicated that some of them wished to substitute Hebrew Classes or Catechism classes for Sunday School and did in fact do so. It cannot be assumed that all did so.

With regard to the teaching role of the Sunday School, Std 9 pupils ranked it 2nd and Std 5 and College students ranked it 4th and 5th respectively. The percentages for Std 5, Std 9 and College show a progressive decline in the numbers who regard its role as important and a corresponding rise in the numbers of those who deny the importance of its role. There may be various explanations for this. It is possible that as time separates testees from the experience of Sunday School, memory of its effectiveness declines. It may also indicate that what was taught at Sunday School was not sufficiently relevant to lay the foundations for problems encountered in later years.

2.1.1.5 The Youth Group

2. Most of what I believe about God.

2.7 I learned from my youth group

	YES	NO
Std 5	29,5	57,8
Std 9	32,3	59,4
College	39,5	48,4

The religious youth group appears to play a less important role in helping develop the religious beliefs of young people. It is rated last or second last by all groups.

2.1.1.6 Theological Problems

3. If I have a question about God, or about religion

3.3 I discuss it with

	Friends	Teacher	Parent	Minister	Rabbi	S.School Teacher Elder
Std 5			9,3	2,9		4,7
Std 9			8,4	0,7		
College			14,5	1,6		0,8
All Testees			10,4	1,8		0,8

A relatively low percentage in each group discusses religous problems with members of the religious 'hierarchy'. The figure

is comparable with that for 'Teacher', and much lower than for 'Friends' and 'Parent' which will be discussed later.

2.1.1.7 The Importance of the Church

11.8 The church is more important to young people today than it was to their parents

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	13,9	46,8	28,3
Std 9	9,0	63,2	20,0
College	8,9	57,3	25,00

It is evident that all groups do not agree that the church is more important to young people today than it was to their parents. No hard and fast conclusions can be drawn from this, however, in that it may imply either that the church is equally important to both groups or that it is less important to young people.

2.1.1.8 The Church, The Minister and Faith

12. I think a person has faith if

12.3 He goes to church regularly

	YES	NO
Std 5	71,7	14,5
Std 9	22,6	67,7
College	9,7	77,4

12.13 He is a priest, minister or rabbi

	YES	NO
Std 5	32,4	49,7
Std 9	14,8	78,1
College	14,5	70,2

With regard to regular church attendance (12.3) there is a significant difference of almost 50% between Std 5 and Std 9 in the numbers of those who associated it with having faith. When it comes to College students the gap widened by a further

13%. Over 75% of the College Students did not associate regular church attendance with having faith - an almost exact reversal of the Std 5 figures.

Of equal interest is the fact that in none of the groups did a majority agree that being a member of the ministry implies having faith (12.13) The Std 5 pupils denied this assertion less firmly than the other groups.

2.1.1.9 The Church and Love

I think a person loves people if

14.6 He goes to church or synagogue

	YES	NO
Std 5	48,6	36,4
Std 9	11,6	78,1
College	3,2	80,6

A 12% majority of Std 5 pupils agreed that going to church implies love of people. This position was sharply reversed in the Std 9 sample where a majority of 66,5% held the opposite view. It hardened further amongst College students where 80,6% (a majority of 77,4%) denied that going to church necessarily implies love of people.

CONCLUSION

1. The majority of those tested in this sample have had contact with a religious institution. Approximately one-third continues to attend church regularly, while one quarter has abandoned attendance at church.

2. The majority of testees assign to the church an important role in the development of their beliefs.

3. Amongst the older groups (Std 9 and College students) Church attendance declined.

4. The older groups in particular did not associate faith and love with the church and its officials.

2.1.2 Parents

There is unmistakeable evidence that parents play a significant role in the religious education of their children.

2. Most of what I believe about God

2.3 I learned from my father or mother

	YES	NO
Std 5	79,2	19,1
Std 9	52,3	41,3
College	66,1	25,0

79,2% of Std 5 pupils ranked parents in the second place to the church as a significant element in the development of their beliefs about God. This figure declined by 26,9% to 4th place for Std 9 pupils. Compared with Std 9 pupils fewer College Students deny the role of parents in the development of their beliefs and 14% more acknowledged it.

3 If I have a question about God or about religion

3.3 I discuss it with

	Friends	Teacher	Parent	Minister	Rabbi
Std 5			75,1%		
Std 9			36,8%		
College			50,0°		

For the younger group parents play a particularly important role in the discussion of religious questions. Comparing the role played by parents with that played by other groups, there is a gap of 59,6% for Std 5 pupils between parents and friends, the next group chosen by them. For Std 9 pupils and College Students the position of parents and friends is reversed. Most discussion takes place with friends. Nevertheless parents rank higher than teachers and ministers. There is a 20% gap for Std 9 pupils and 35% one for College Students between parents and the next most popular groups, teachers and ministers respectively.

4.29 It is easier for us to believe in God than it is for older people.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	11,6	56,4	27,3
Std 9	9,0	68,4	20,0
College	4,8	79,0	7,3

Although this statement does not refer exclusively to parents it does include parents. Affirmation of the assertion decreased amongst the older groups, while denial increased. Opinion became more certain, the 'NOT SURE' replies decreasing from 27,3% in Std 5 to 7,3% amongst College Students.

Some testees may have replied 'No' because they regarded belief in God as equally difficult for younger and older people. The indications are clear that:

1. The majority of testees did not regard belief in God easier for them than it is for older people.
2. The older the testees, the more they realised difficulties of belief.

Perhaps the fact that a relatively small percentage (8,9%) of the overall sample answered the question in the affirmative indicates that the younger generation does not find belief in God easy and recognises problems in that area.

11.8 The church is more important to young people today than it was to their parents

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	13,9	46,8	28,3
Std 9	9,0	63,2	20,0
College	8,9	57,3	25,0

These results have been discussed in 2.1.1.8. The trend is similar to that apparent in replies to Question 4.29. The replies may imply that parents have fewer problems with regard to the church than the younger generation, or that testees did not draw a distinction between the generations in this regard.

CONCLUSION

1. Parents play a significant role in the development of the religious beliefs of their children.

2. Discussion of religious questions is more likely to take place in the home and with parents than with those who may be assumed to be more qualified to handle them, namely ministers of religion and teachers.

2.1.3 The School

2. Most of what I believe about God

2.4 I learned at school

	YES	NO
Std 5	63,6	24,3
Std 9	40,0	53,6
College	42,7	48,4

The highest percentage of Std 5 pupils allowed the school importance amongst the agencies through which they derived their beliefs about God, ranking it in 5th place, as did the College students. Std 9 pupils ranked it 6th. Whereas a 40% majority of Std 5 pupils affirmed rather than denied its role, amongst the Std 5 pupils and College students the position was reversed and a higher percentage denied rather than affirmed its role.

2.1.3.1 The Teacher

3. If I have a question about God, or about religion

3.3 I discuss it with

	FRIENDS	TEACHER	PARENT	MINISTER	RABBI
Std 5		11,0%			
Std 9		16,1%			
College		10,5%			

The teacher does not appear to play an important role with regard to discussion of questions on religion. Scholars may not regard the teacher as the appropriate person with whom to discuss religious questions. This may be no reflection on the teacher, but may well be a consequence of the wide variety of denominations found in most class-rooms. It is possible that

it reflects teaching methods which are not conducive to asking questions.

2.1.3.2 Factual Knowledge

Questions 7 and 8 in the questionnaire tested factual knowledge of six Bible personalities. The questions and the correct answers will be found in Appendix D. These questions had two objectives.

1. To assess factual knowledge acquired by pupils and students.
2. To discover whether the factual knowledge had been placed within a framework of concept.

In attempting to assess factual knowledge especially in the subject Religious Instruction it is impossible to state with certainty that it has been derived from the school. The subject matter dealt with by Sunday Schools often overlaps that in the Primary School syllabus and is found in the majority of Bible Story books.

Statements describing the same six Biblical personalities were used in question 7 and 8. Four Old Testament characters were chosen, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David, while two were from the New Testament, Jesus and Paul. They were chosen because of their role in the development of the covenant concept, and with the exception of Paul, the frequency with which they are encountered in the syllabus as is shown in the following table.

TABLE (see over)

TABLE 13 NUMBER OF REFERENCES TO SELECTED BIBLICAL PERSONALITIES IN PRIMARY AND HIGH SCHOOL SYLLABUSES

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Std 1	Std 2	Std 3	Std 4	Std 5	Std 6	Std 7	Std 8	Total Primary	Total High & Primary
Noah	x		x		x		x	x			4	5
Abraham	x		x		x		x	x			4	5
Moses	x	x		x	x		x	x			5	6
David	x	x		x		x	x		x		5	6
Jesus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		7	8
Paul							x			x	1	2

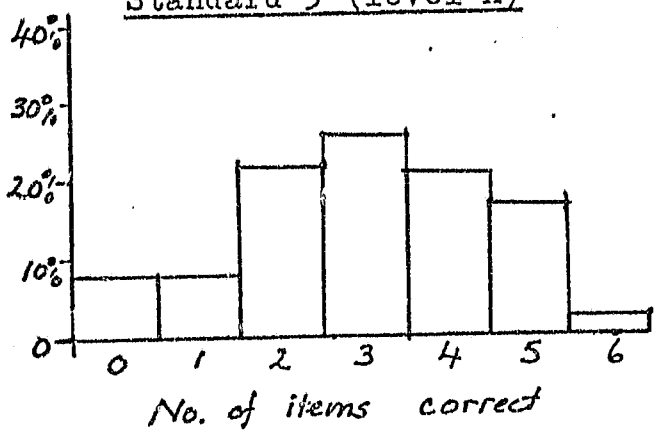
The descriptive statements in number 7 included some mention of the role played by the person in the history of Israel or the purpose of God. Thus recognition of the personality should involve greater conceptual understanding. The term 'Level A' will be used for these statements.

The descriptive statements in number 8 were of a superficial nature including the type of information often emphasised in Bible Story books and illustrations but of no great relevance in terms of the significance of the person concerned. The term 'Level B' will be used for these statements.

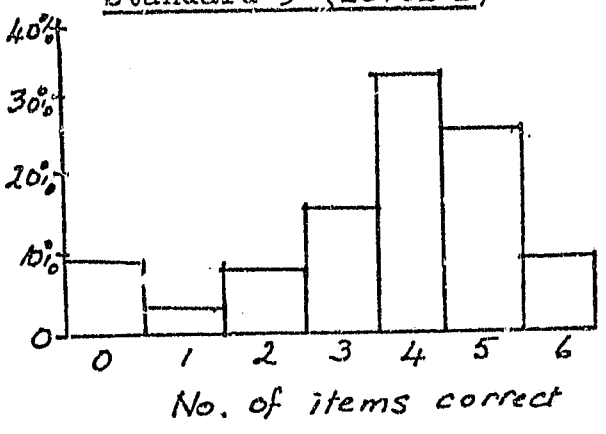
The number of items correct was recorded and percentages are shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14 PERCENTAGE OF CORRECT ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS 7 (LEVEL A) and 8 (LEVEL B)

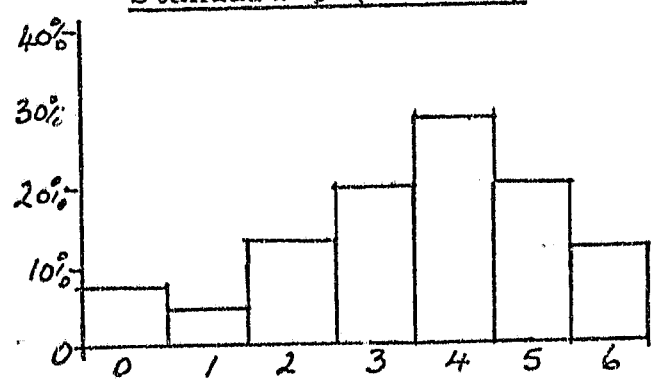
Standard 5 (level A)



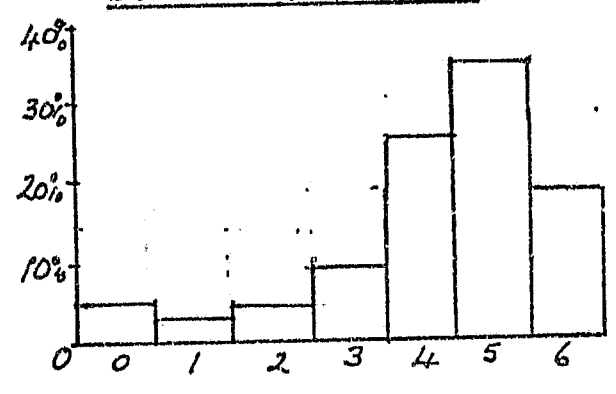
Standard 5 (level B)



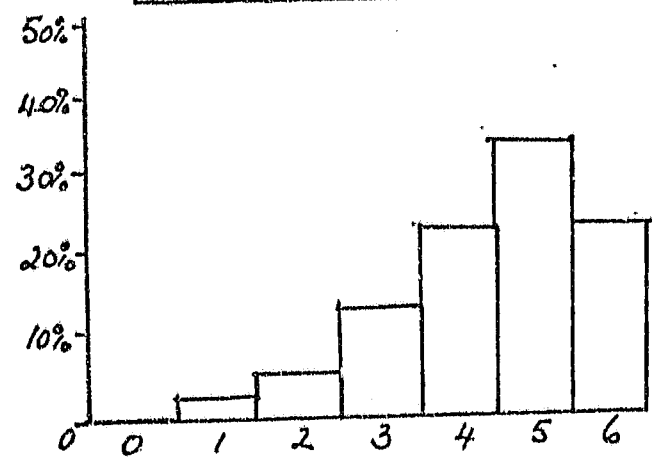
Standard 9 (level A)



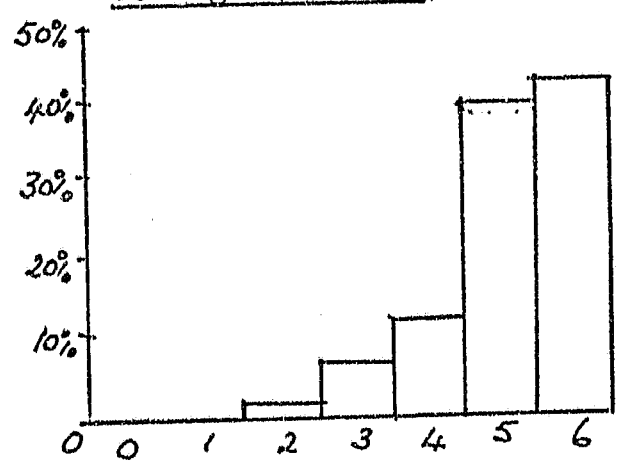
Standard 9 (level B)



College (level A)



College (level B)



At level B (that is the'elementary'level), approximately two-thirds (66%) of the Std 5 testees scored 50% or more. Approximately one-third (34%) answered between none and three out of the six questions correctly, this scoring less than 50%

At level A (the 'conceptual' level) the scores were almost reversed. 38,2% scored 50% or more, while 61,8% scored less than 50%

The ratio of scores 50% and above to scores below 50% at the elementary level was approximately 80 to 20 for the Standard 9 sample. At the 'conceptual' level, the ratio was approximately 60 to 40. In contrast to the Standard 5 group, a majority scored more than 50% at both levels.

This trend continued for the College sample, where the ratio of scores 50% and over to scores below 50% was 93 to 7 at the 'elementary' level, and 80 to 20 at the 'conceptual' level.

With regard to the results for the Std 5 pupils, it can be seen from Table 13 that four of the Bible personalities occurred in the syllabus at least four times. One (Paul) occurs only in the Std 5 syllabus, and it was not established whether this section of the syllabus had been completed at the time of the test. A section on Jesus occurs in every year of the Primary School syllabus. In the light of this, the failure of approximately one-third of the pupils to score 50% or more at Level B gives cause for concern, and in view of the fact that 5 of the items occurred frequently in the syllabus, the school can hardly escape its share of blame for the lack of knowledge, while it cannot necessarily claim all the credit for the knowledge displayed.

The fact that there is an improvement in the performance of Std 9 pupils on both levels is noted, but it is difficult to hazard any guess as to the reason for it.

Although the word 'conceptual' has been used to describe Level A questions, the descriptions of the Biblical personalities merely place them in a framework that describes historical rather than philosophical or theological significance. Recognition of the characters does not involve a high level of abstract thought.

2.1.3.3 Attitude to Religious Instruction

11. I think that

11.6 Religious Instruction is more about history than about religion

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	15,6	58,7	17,3
Std 9	25,2	49,7	20,0
College	29,8	48,4	14,5

From the denial by all groups that 'Religious Instruction is more about history than about religion', it may be deduced that teachers do not treat the subject as another branch of history. The results obtained from question 9 which will be discussed later, indicate that the historical perspective of Biblical teaching receives little emphasis.

11. I think that

11.5 What we learn about life in Religious Instruction is more important than what we learn about life in Science.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	40,5	13,9	33,5
Std 9	35,5	34,2	25,8
College	35,5	29,0	28,2

A majority of testees in all groups agreed that what is to be learned about life from Religious Instruction is more important than what Science teaches about life. However, the older groups were less certain about this, and the percentages separating YES, NO and NOT SURE answers were in no case greater than 10%. The relations between religion and science would seem to be a problem area or an area about which differing opinions are held, particularly as pupils get older.

CONCLUSION

1. Pupils and students regard the school as playing a less significant role than the home and the church in the development of their ideas about God and religion.

2. If discussion of religious issues takes place at all in the

school, it probably occurs between peers and outside the classroom, rather than in the classroom or with the teacher.

3. At the standard 5 level, testees' more positive assessment of the school's role in contributing to their religious knowledge stands in contrast to the results of the test of their knowledge both on the factual and the 'conceptual' levels.

2.2 The Pupils

2.2.1 Attitude to Religion

Pupils and students showed a positive attitude towards answering the questionnaire. Some testees claimed an atheist position and a negative attitude to religion, but seemed happy to state their views.

1.11 Is your religion important to you now?

	YES	NO
Std 5	86,7	6,4
Std 9	61,3	26,5
College	77,4	18,6

It will be noted that in all groups a substantial majority regarded religion as important. There is a 25% drop between Std 5 and Std 9 in those who answered 'YES' and the percentage rises again by 16% for College students.

1.12 Compared with what it used to be to you, is your religion now

	MORE IMPORTANT	LESS IMPORTANT
Std 5	70,9	6,4
Std 9	54,8	30,3
College	61,3	25,8

A similar trend can be observed in these figures as was evident in the previous question. It can be noted that in all cases fewer subjects are prepared to commit themselves to the assertion that their religion is 'More Important' to them now than say that religion is important to them. The percentages of Std 9 pupils and College students who say that their religion is 'Less Important' is slightly higher than in the previous question which did not imply any comparison. 15% of the total

sample omitted to choose either answer. In some cases remarks on their papers indicated that there was 'No change' in the importance of religion for them. In others omission may be taken to mean either 'No change' or 'No comment'.

2.2.2 Questions about Religion

3. If I have a question about God, or about religion

3.3 I discuss it with FRIENDS

Std 5	18,5%
Std 9	47,7%
College	61,3%

These figures show that as the pupil gets older there is a tendency towards discussing religious questions with members of his peer group.

It may be significant that most religious discussion for the older groups (Std 9 and College) took place amongst members of the peer group. The 18,5% figure for Std 5 pupils increased to 47,7% at high school and further to 61,3% at College.

Amongst Std 9 pupils discussion of religious questions with friends took place almost twice as often as it did with the more qualified group of teaching and religious officials. (47,7% with friends as against 25,2% with teachers, ministers and rabbis). At college the gap between the two groups, friends and 'qualified' advisers' increased to 33,9%

3. If I have a question about God, or about religion

3.1 It worries me a lot

	YES	NO
Std 5	27,8	63,0
Std 9	40,0	49,7
College	45,2	40,3

3.2 It doesn't worry me very much

	YES	NO
Std 5	52,6	34,0
Std 9	38,1	43,9
College	41,9	27,4

Replies to 3.1 and 3.2 indicate that the older groups admitted to greater concern about religious questions. The characteristic attitude of most Std 5 pupils seems to be one of acceptance.

3. If I have a question about God, or about religion

3.4 I go back a second and a third time with further questions.

	YES	NO
Std 5	52,0	34,0
Std 9	41,3	45,2
College	41,1	40,3

3,5 I keep it to myself

	YES	MO
Std 5	26,6	61,9
Std 9	33,6	52,9
College	28,2	50,0

Question 3.4 was designed to test the persistency of the questioner in his search for answers to religious questions. The figures for the Std 9 and College groups are remarkably consistent with their answers to 3.1 (If I have a question about God, or about religion it worries me a lot). This is not the case for the majority of Std 5 testees.

In all groups there were fewer testees who kept their questions to themselves than those who persisted in attempts to find an answer.

A conclusion is that religious questions are of concern to at least two-fifths of the older testees, and that they are active in attempting to find answers.

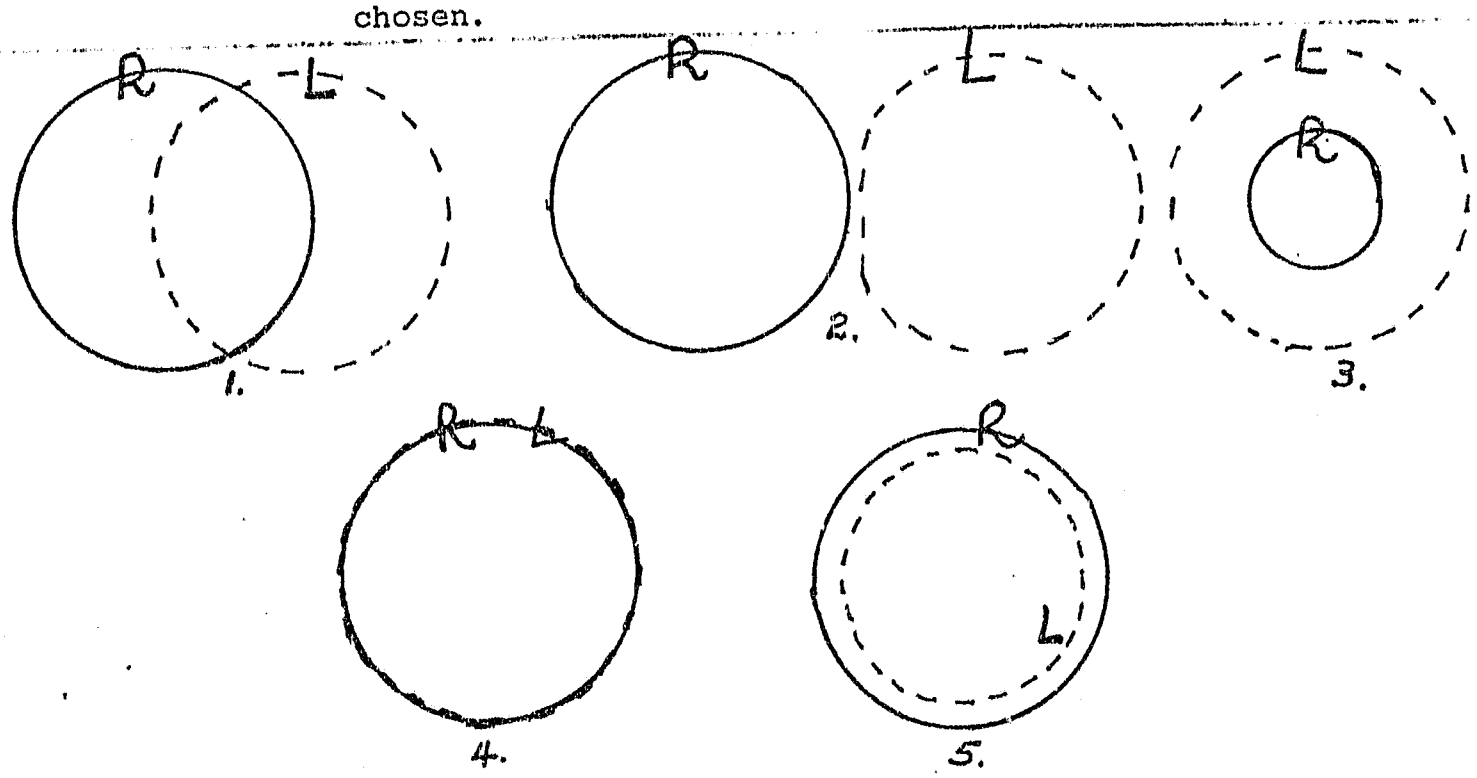
3.6 I remember having questions about God or religion

	YES	NO
Std 5	73,4	16,2
Std 9	72,9	15,5
College	65,3	19,4

Questions about religion have formed part of the experience of the majority of all groups and less than 20% in all groups has no recollection of having had questions about God or religion.

2.2.3 Religion and Life

16 Life and Religion are both important. We live our lives and have our religion. Here are 5 Venn diagrams. In the diagrams 'L' stands for Life and 'R' stands for Religion. The diagrams show different relations between Life and Religion. Study them carefully. Choose the one which you think shows the best relationship between Life and Religion.
Draw a ring around the number of the one you have chosen.



In this question subjects were asked to select the Venn diagram which best illustrated their concept of the relationship between Religion and LIfe.

Diagrams 1 and 3 show religion as having certain limitations. In No 1 religion has an area of coincidence with life, an area which is unique to it and an area where life excludes religion. In No 3 religion forms an area or dimension of life, which may even be central, but is nevertheless one dimension amongst others.

Diagrams 4 and 5 show religion coinciding with life in all its aspects (4) or including and transcending life (5). Neither of these diagrams shows any aspect of life lying outside religion.

Diagram 2 shows an understanding of life and religion which sees them as two entirely separated and unrelated entities.

The selections by the various groups are shown in Table 15 below.

TABLE 15 TESTEES' CHOICE OF VENN DIAGRAMS REPRESENTING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND LIFE

	STD 5	STD 9	COLLEGE
Diagram 2	2,3	7,7	4,0
Diagram 1 or 3	26,1	37,4	43,7
Diagram 4 or 5	57,3	46,4	51,5

A majority in all groups opted for one of the diagrams which showed the most comprehensive relationship between religion and life. For Std 9 pupils and College students the difference between the number of those opting for more comprehensive relationship and those selecting the 'limited relationship' Diagrams 1 and 3 is not as large as it is for Std 5 pupils.

In all groups a very low percentage chose the diagram representing religion disconnected from life.

It should be mentioned that some pupils and students did not answer this question, the highest percentage (14,5%)being found amongst the Std 5 pupils who may have found it too difficult to understand.

CONCLUSION

1. There is evidence of considerable interest in religion and concern about religious questions amongst all groups. The general attitude is a positive one.

2. Religion is seen as relevant to life and not isolated from it.

3. All groups experienced questions about God and religion, but the older groups showed more concern about their questions and gave evidence of a sincere desire to find answers.

2.2.4 Religious Concepts of Pupils and Students

GOD

The picture which emerged from replies to question 4 was fairly consistent for all groups.

The items on which there was strongest agreement (i.e. over 60%) have been grouped together and ranked in Table 16 The rank order is not significant, since in most cases only a small percentage separated one position from another. Sometimes a difference in ranking in those chosen by two groups may be slightly significant.

The items concerning which there was strongest denial have been similarly listed and ranked in Table 16 and those which produced the most 'NOT SURE' replies have been listed and ranked in Table 16

TABLE 16 ITEMS CONCERNING THE CONCEPT GOD WHICH RECEIVED THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF 'YES' REPLIES IN ALL GROUPS

YES	STD 5		STD 9		COLLEGE	
	%	.order	%	.Order	%	.Order.
4.3 God is everywhere	95,5	1	78,1	2	92,7	1
4.4 God is like a partner who never goes away from us	91,3	2	72,9	3	81,5	4
4.14 God made the world	90,7	3	69,7	5	79,0	6
4.26 There is only one God	90,1	4	82,6	1	84,7	2
4.12 God is love	82,1	5	68,4	6	83,1	3
4.11 God can do everything	82,1	5	62,6	8	72,6	9
4.22 God cares about the present state of the world	80,8	7	72,9	3	74,2	8
4.8 God is life	78,6	8	64,5	7	78,2	7
4.7 God is a great force	56,7	12	62,6	8	81,5	4

It can be seen from the above table that all groups hold a fairly consistent concept of God as unique, omnipotent, omnipresent, the Creator, involved with His creatures and His creation. They regard Him both as life and love. The more abstract and impersonal concept of God, as 'a great force' appeared to have less meaning for Std 5 pupils. The drop of 12,6% between the average percentage of Std 5 'YES' answers and those of Std 9 seems to indicate less certainty and perhaps more questioning on the part of the older pupils.

TABLE 17 ITEMS CONCERNING THE CONCEPT GOD WHICH RECEIVED THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF 'NO' REPLIES IN ALL GROUPS

		STD 5		STD 9		COLLEGE	
		%	Order	%	Order	%	Order
4.27	God is no longer interested in what happens in the world	78,5	1	79,4	1	82,3	1
4.19	There are three Gods	72,1	2	75,5	2	66,9	5
4.5	God can't be everywhere	67,6	3	71,0	4	71,8	4
4.23	God loves good people more than sinners	65,1	4	74,9	3	76,6	3
4.29	It is easier for us to believe in God than it is for older people	56,4	6	68,4	5	79,0	2
	Average %	67,9		73,8		75,3	

There is a similar trend in the negative answers of all groups, and these generally confirm the positive answers in the previous Table. All groups deny most strongly the statement that 'God is no longer interested in what happen in the world'. Fewer deny that 'there are three Gods' than affirm that 'There is only ore God'. Remarks on some of the papers indicated that, as might be expected, the concept of the Trinity presented problems. It may be noted that although 82,1% Std 5 pupils agreed that 'God is Love' they had more difficulty than the other groups in accepting that God's love applies as much to sinners as to good people.

TABLE 18 ITEMS CONCERNING THE CONCEPT GOD WHICH RECEIVED THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF 'NOT SURE' REPLIES IN ALL GROUPS

	NOT SURE	STD 5		STD 9		COLLEGE	
		%	Order	%	Order	%	Order
4.1	God has a body like a person	43,9	1	29,0	4	24,2	4
4.31	God intends men to find out about the world through Science	36,6	2	34,9	1	34,7	1
4.24	In the Bible times more people believed in God because there was no Science	33,7	3	25,2	8	16,1	9
4.9	God is in life but He is not life	32,4	4	25,8	5	19,4	7
4.21	It all means the same thing whether we use the name Nirvana,Allah,God Brahman	31,4	5	25,8	5	20,2	6
4.30	When there are wars, God makes them happen	26,2	10	30,3	2	30,7	2
4.2	God is in heaven in the sky	25,4	9	30,3	2	16,9	8
4.28	If we do not love God, we will not prosper	27,9	7	25,8	5	21,8	5
4.25	God will one day judge the world and He will punish those who do not believe in Him	29,1	8	23,9	9	26,6	3
	Average %	31,8		27,9		23,4	

The 'Not Sure' answers indicate that there is a degree of uncertainty or doubt as to the physical being of God, the relation of science to religion, the relation of God to the gods of other religions, the role of God in war and the aspect of judgement and punishment in the nature of God.

The items which received no mention in the above three tables are:

4.10 'God is everything'
4.13 'God is the little voice inside us'
4.20 'God was closer to people in the Bible times than he is to people noe'
4.15 'People of all religions worship the same God'

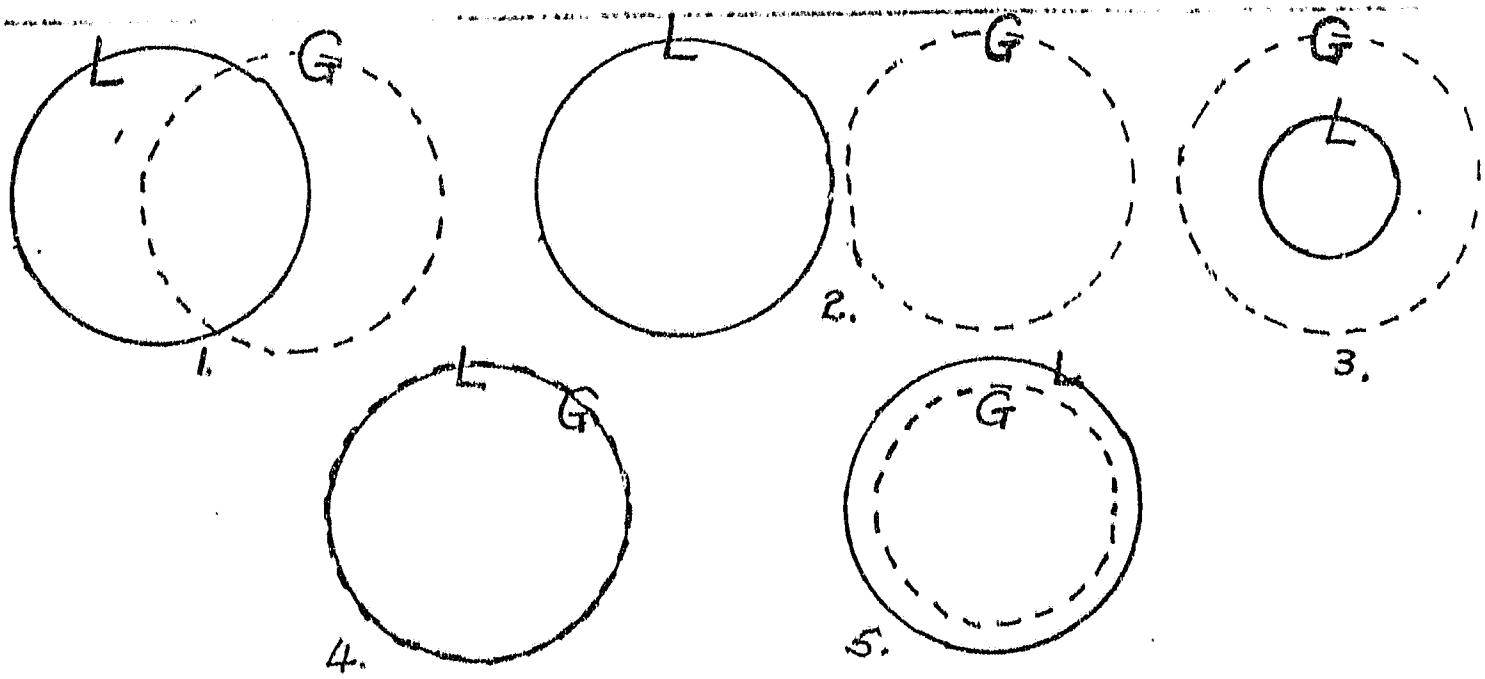
With regard to 4.10 'God is everything', all groups agreed with the statement, their agreement ranging from 49,7% (Std 9) to 58,1% (College). The Std 9 group with a 26,5% level of denial and a 20% level of uncertainty seemed least sure of it. All groups showed little significant difference between agreement, denial and uncertainty regarding 'God is the little voice inside us'.

In all groups a greater number answered 'No' to the proposition that 'God was closer to people in the Bible times than He is to people now', but the percentage difference between those who answered 'Yes' grew as the age of the group increased. It rose from 12,8% (Std 5) to 36,8% (Std 9) to 54,8% (College),; showing a growing tendency to reject the idea that Bible times were 'special' and perhaps a growing expectation, hope or desire to recognise His actions in contemporary life.

On the other hand, the older group was less inclined than the younger one to reject the idea that 'People of all religions worship the same God'. Here the percentage difference between those who rejected the statement and those who accepted it fell from 38,9% (Std 5) to 25,1% (Std 9) to 11% (College).

2.2.5 The Relationship of God and Life

17. God and Life are both important. Here are 5 Venn diagrams. In the diagrams 'G' stands for God, and 'L' stands for Life. The diagrams show different ways in which God and Life are related. Study them very carefully. Choose the one which you think shows the best relationship between God and Life.
Draw a ring around the number of the one you have chosen.



Again the Venn diagram was used in this case to investigate the way in which subjects understood the relationship between God and life. As in question 16, Diagram 2 showdd a situation where God has no relevance to life. Diagrams 1 and 5 presented certain limitations in the concept God, in that there are areas of life separate from God and from which God is excluded. Diagrams 3 and 4 showed the fullest relationship between the two and the most comprehensive concept of God.
The results are given in Table 1 below.

TABLE 19 SELECTION BY TESTEES OF VENN DIAGRAMS REPRESENTING VARIOUS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GOD AND LIFE

	STD 5	STD 9	COLLEGE
Diagram 2	1,2	7,1	2,4
Diagrams 1 & 5	19,6	27,1	17,0
Diagrams 3 & 4	63,0	58,0	78,3

The highest percentage in each group chose one of the diagrams which depicted a ma..imum relationship between God and life. Possibly the Std 9 figures indicate, as their replies to other questions have done, a greater degree of uncertainty as to the way in which God relates to life. The most popular choice for Std 5 & College groups was Diagram 4, while a slightly higher percentage of Std 9 pupils preferred Diagram 3 to 4. Only a small minority in each group opted for the Diagram that showed no relationship betwe'n God and life, the greatest number in this category coming from the Std 9 group.

As in No 16 some Std 5 pupils appeared to find difficulty in understanding what was required and a higher percentage than in other groups did not attempt the question.

2.2.6 JESUS, THE BIBLE AND NATURE AS SOURCES OF UNDERSTANDING GOD

The answers of Jewish subject to question 4.16 have not been taken into account and the total was adjusted accordingly in working out the percentages.

4.16 I understand God best because of Jesus

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	70,4	8,6	14,5
Std 9	57,7	23,5	12,1
College	49,5	27,7	12,9

4.17 I understand God best because of the Bible

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	59,9	15,1	18,6
Std 9	44,5	32,9	15,5
College	38,7	37,9	8,1

4.18 I understand God best through nature

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Std 5	51,2	18,0	22,1
Std 9	42,6	30,3	19,4
College	62,1	14,5	12,1

All groups acknowledged Jesus' role in their understanding of God, but the Std 5 pupils did so with much more conviction than the other groups. The Bible appears to play a less prominent role for all groups, the Std 9 and College figures indicating that they ascribe less significance to its role.

Figures for the College students' show that for them nature is most important in helping them to understand God, whereas it is least important for the other groups.

2.2.7 Comments on God

In 4.32 testees were invited to mention any changes which had occurred in their thinking about God. 24 College students, 33 Std 9 and 12 Std 5 pupils chose to do so.

College Students

6 College students recalled experiences of personal salvation and commented on problems encountered. 'But, you know, it is very difficult in this world we live in. Materialistic things are important to me, too important.' (Roman Catholic : female)

Some College students referred to a period of searching and subsequently coming to their conclusion about God. A Roman Catholic girl mentioned that she began to think more about religion and God in the last few years and had consequently rejected some of the tenets of her church - 'God and Jesus are NOT the same person ... we do NOT have free will'. A girl who belongs to the Christian Science church stated that she used to accept things but 'now I find things out for myself and have developed my own ideas'. 'The God I believe in is unique', was the statement of a girl who described her denominational allegiance as interdenominational. She went on to give an account of her attempt to understand God in terms of force, energy and evolution. Some reported the search as (thus far) inconclusive. 'Now that I can think and reason for myself I am no longer so sure of my religion any more'. (Roman Catholic: female) However, a reformed Jewess stated, 'College has taught me more about God and I have learned more interesting aspects of God'.

Two students reported that their quest for God and a meaningful religion had ended in disillusionment. 'I never believed in God till a close friend died'. The student described how she had found consolation in God and then - 'When I got over the shock I had to admit that I had never really believed it at all'. (No denominational affiliation). A male student who claimed no denominational or religious affiliation stated, 'People must live a Christian life. I am very sceptical of Christians. I do not want to be a Christian. I tried once but set too high standards for myself. I tried too hard instead of relying on God'.

Sometimes doubt was expressed in the light of the state of the world. An orthodox Jewess reported, ' I used to think of G-D as the proverbial old man with a long beard sitting on the clouds. Later I needed something to hang on to. I believe that what I need and am looking for is G-D, I'm not sure about His ways when I consider the state of the world and the suffering of innocent people'. 'Is God really so powerful and loving?'. is the quesion of a girl who claims no affiliation to a denomination.

Author Kerr S E
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