COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS

The RE Council of England and Wales

A research project sponsored by

The All Saints Trust

Culham College Institute
Abingdon

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Foreword

In recent years, collective worship in schools has moved from being an activity taken largely for granted, to an issue which is widely discussed. As the spotlight has been turned upon it in various Education Acts and Circulars, wide variations in practice have become evident, and many opinions on the subject have been voiced. The churches and other faith communities as well as a variety of educational organisations have been considering both the underlying principles and current practice relating to collective worship in schools, and these deliberations have led in some instances to the publication of a number of reports, pamphlets and conference resolutions.

In 1995 this survey report was commissioned, tracing developments in practice and principle since 1944, the range of current views on this feature of the community life of schools, and some of the key issues which have emerged, particularly since Circular 1/94. The aim was to bring together all the existing published information and research about collective worship in England, and to present it in a published document which could be made widely available. The survey arose partly out of plans for a consultative process on collective worship to be sponsored jointly by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education and the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, and partly from discussion within the All Saints Trust. The Trust decided to fund the survey which was conducted in consultation with the three organisations concerned, and co-ordinated on behalf of the All Saints Trust by Culham College Institute.

A small steering group was established, consisting of Gwen Palmer (Chairwoman of the RE Council of England and Wales and chair of the group), Dilip Kadodwala (Chair of the National Association of SACREs), Brian Pearce (Director, the Inter Faith Network for the UK) and John Gay (Director of Culham College Institute). The group was subsequently enlarged to include Alan Brown (Church of England Board of Education), Sheila Dainton (Association of Teachers and Lecturers), Brian Gates (University College of St Martin, Lancaster), Peter Hartley

(All Saints Trust), Mohammad Akram Khan-Cheema (Muslim Education Forum) and Laurie Rosenberg (Board of Deputies of British Jews).

Some initial research was undertaken by Catherine Christie. The work was then taken up by Brian Gates and Peter Gedge at the University College of St Martin, Lancaster. Both brought to bear on the work a long-standing expertise in the subject which is evident in the skilfully produced text. The Steering Group has played a significant role in suggesting additions and emendations and the final version is the result of an interactive process with all the strands being brought together by the editor, Jan Greenough. To all concerned I am enormously grateful.

This report has been written from an informational and reference perspective and so a neutral tone has been adopted in relation to the sources quoted. The fact that some faith and educational organisations do not feature in it does not imply their lack of interest in collective worship; it simply means that they have not produced any published documentation on the subject. Such organisations may however produce information for the conferences referred to below, in which case their views will be made available subsequently in the published proceedings of the conferences.

As explained earlier, the original discussion within the Religious Education Council, the National Association of SACREs and the Inter Faith Network had focused on plans for a national consultative process on collective worship. The most appropriate ways of achieving this were subsequently agreed and, with funding from the All Saints Trust and the St Gabriel's Trust, three conferences are being held in 1997. The conferences will provide an opportunity for members representative of a wide range of interests, including educationalists, the faith communities, teachers' professional associations and others to explore ideas about provisions for collective worship which are educationally appropriate and practicable. It is hoped that this document will provide delegates with both background information and a starting-point for discussion and consultation. It is also intended that the report should be a source of information and ideas for all concerned with the future of collective worship in schools.

John D Gay
11 October 1996

PART I: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP 1944–1996

1. Collective Worship 1944–1988

Collective worship has a long history in the English education system. A daily act of worship and what was then known as 'religious instruction' were to be found in many pre-war elementary and secondary schools. As might be expected, they often had a more marked presence in independent schools and those with church foundations, but during the 1930s it had become fairly common in grammar schools for religious studies to be offered as a subject for public examinations. However, religious instruction was often decidedly marginal in the elementary schools, whose pupils ended their formal education at the age of fourteen. One substantial reason for that was legislation operating in the 1930s which restricted school worship and religious instruction lessons in such schools to the first or last period of the morning or afternoon session of the school day. The ostensible reason for that restriction was to facilitate withdrawal of those pupils whose parents might exercise their rights under the conscience clauses. However, in practice, its effect was that both worship and 'scripture teaching' tended to be 'crowded out by register-marking and milk-ordering', as Basil Yeaxlee, editor of the journal *Religion in Education,* put it.[1]

The Director of the Oxford University Department of Education and a psychologist, Yeaxlee was an influential supporter of religious education. For him and for other pre-war opinion formers in RE like T.F. Kinloch, one of the first LEA RE Advisers, it was the combination of school worship and class teaching of religion in the normal programme of the school that aided the process of 'sentiment formation' which they saw as the goal of religious education. In Kinloch's words, 'The basis of all RE must be the Bible ... yet no system of religious education can be regarded as satisfactory save one in which worship has its proper place.'[2]

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[1] *Religion in Education*, vol. 4 (1938–9), p. 101

[2] T.F. Kinloch, *Religious Education in Provided Schools* (1938), p. 15

In 1943, with the war at its height, the coalition government published a White Paper, *Educational Reconstruction,* heralding a major new Education Act, and noting 'a very general desire ... that religious education should be given a more defined place in the life and work of schools'.[3] Indications of what that 'more defined place' might desirably include had been aired in a 1941 statement in *The Times* by the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales, on measures to strengthen religious education. This statement, which came to be known as 'The Archbishops' Five Points', identified among the priorities the provision of a daily act of collective worship, and stated that

> in all schools a Christian education should be given to all scholars (except, of course, insofar as any parent may wish to withdraw their children from it). The religious instruction should be entrusted to teachers willing and competent to give it.[4]

Collective worship after the 1944 Education Act

The Education Bill and the resulting Act of 1944 provided for a daily act of worship in all maintained schools, and for religious instruction as a curriculum subject which would be open to inspection by HMI, except in aided schools. Collective worship was seen then as an integral part of 'Religious Education in County and Voluntary Schools'. The Act stated: 'The school day in every county school and in every voluntary school shall begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils ...' (Section 25(1)); 'religious instruction shall be given in every county school and in every voluntary school' (25(2)). Section 25(4) gave parents the right that their child could be 'excused from attendance at religious worship ...' and (26) stated that 'the Curriculum shall not, in any county school, be distinctive of any particular religious denomination.'

> The 1944 Act merely gave statutory support to what was already recognised procedure in most schools. The practice of beginning and sometimes ending the school day with prayers had long been customary and went back to the years before 1870 ...[5]

But support for compulsory collective worship was not universal. For example, the *Times Educational Supplement* of 30th October, 1943 carried an editorial on 'Church and School', described as paraphrasing the views of 'a distinguished [but unnamed] Christian apologist'. The anonymous authority made a case which included the view that 'any attempt to capture the schools for the systematic inculcation of the

[3] *Educational Reconstruction*, Cmd 6458 HMSO (1943)

[4] *The Times*, 12.2.41

[5] Bibliography section B: Durham Report: Sec 286

Christian view of life would be wrong', but that 'England professes to be a Christian country, leavened with insights emanating from Christianity.' The editorial judged, therefore, that it was right to 'make RE (and inspection of it) a statutory requirement in all publicly maintained schools, but it does not sanction the making obligatory of a corporate act of worship.'

The strong support for collective worship (and Religious Instruction) in particular reflected the deep conviction that the war was a defence of Christian values against totalitarianism. This was also an era when RE was still considered to be the basis of moral education. Moreover, England was seen by the majority as a Christian nation, and Christian assumptions permeated discussions about the Act through the influence of men like R.A. Butler (President of the Board of Education) and the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple.

The word 'Christian' did not appear in the religious clauses of the 1944 Act, but Souper and Kay[6] accept the validity of Bishop Spencer Leeson's judgement, made in his famous 1944 Bampton Lectures, that 'Parliament has declared the will of the nation that it should be a Christian nation, and the state-aided schools are to do their part in teaching the nation's children to worship and to understand.' A report in 1954[7] supported this view, and for twenty years a traditional programme of Christian hymns, readings and prayers generally prevailed, alongside Christian, largely biblical, syllabi of Religious Instruction.

Hull in his history of collective worship[8] speaks of a 'philosophy of Religious Education' which held sway from 1920 until about 1965 in schools:

1. The school was regarded as a Christian community.
2. The task of Christian Education (which was not distinguished from religious education and which was an attitude towards the whole curriculum ....) was to bring this community to self-consciousness, that is to create Christian discipleship.
3. Religious education can as a consequence only be taught by Christians.
4. In assembly, the school affirmed explicitly what was implicit in all of its work, namely its aspiration towards the divine society of

[6] B: Souper and Kay, p. 26

[7] B: Institute of Christian Education, p. 97

[8] B: Hull (1975), p. 23f

which it was the image. The school would lift its heart in worship to God ...

The literature on school worship which followed the 1944 Act reveals little appreciation of the distinction between the church school and the state school.

What is school 'worship'?

Definitions of 'worship' have had central place in half a century's debates about collective worship. Hull's comment (*ibid.* p. 34) is significant: 'Worship in the history and literature of school assembly (i.e. up to 1975) is understood as an explicit, direct and appropriate response to God who has the right to the total loyalty of the believer.' And worship was commended for its effect on pupils. In 1966 the important West Riding *Suggestions for Religious Education*[9] quoted with approval an influential writer on worship, Revd J.G. Williams:

> An act of worship communicates religious truths more powerfully than any kind of direct religious instruction – and it does so at a much deeper level because the truths are implicit rather than explicit, because in fact they are taken for granted.

Yet Loukes, in a book written in 1965 entitled *New Ground in Christian Education* [10] had reflected more accurately the practice in what was commonly known as 'school assembly' when he wrote:

> What 'worship' means to the millions who marry in church, watch coronations and the laying of foundation stones ... is not an act of ultimate commitment but an act of evocation.... What the public was saying (in 1944) was 'Give our children something of this. Let them grow up able to respond to these evocations of mystery and meaning at the great moments of their lives'.

More and more schools felt unable to obey the letter of the law about collective worship. At the same time schools sensed the need to bring staff and pupils together on more expressly moral than religious ground. This was in effect a weaker version of the fourth characteristic as expressed by Hull, 'to affirm explicitly what was implicit in all of its work' – i.e. its values as a community – in school assemblies. The belief that such assemblies were important for their moral influence on pupils was always a strong argument for their retention in school life.

[9] C: West Riding, p. 117

[10] B: Loukes (1965), p. 130

Secularisation and the plea for abolition

Twenty years after the 1944 Act the influential Durham Report[11] concluded:

> Since the early 1960s we believe it is no exaggeration to say that a minor revolution has taken place in religious education. It has been influenced by three main factors; cultural, theological and educational. (sec. 34)

It described the cultural factor as 'the materialist assumptions of a culture dominated by science and technology' (sec. 37), the theological factor as the 'impression that not only Christian doctrines but also Christian ethics were in the melting pot' (sec. 39), and the educational factor as detailed in some results of educational research, such as that of Loukes[12] and Goldman.[13] This cultural change, often labelled 'secularisation' and usually illustrated by statistics of falling church membership and attendance at services, affected attitudes to collective worship. Loukes[14] gave a lively description of what some fourteen-year-olds felt about collective worship: 'All of it is a time-waster. It's more like a PE lesson, up and down, up and down.' He identified the central issue as 'adoration', which could not be compulsory. Teachers were complaining more openly of feeling hypocritical: no longer could their Christian commitment be taken for granted.

The British Humanist Association[15] quoted another passage from J.G. Williams, similar to that quoted above and used by the West Riding *Suggestions*, precisely to illustrate their own criticism that 'worship is a most powerful form of indoctrination.' R.F. Dearden[16] and H.L. Elvin[17] were making the same point in their books and lectures in the 1960s, arguing that collective worship was uneducational.

The Durham Report offered a defence of collective worship in 1970 (sec. 288): 'The main weight of evidence was in favour of the continued provision of some form of regular worship in schools' (cp. B: Jones, pp. 14–16). But it acknowledged that 'The evidence also revealed much

[11] B: Durham Report (1970)

[12] B: Loukes (1961, 1965, 1973)

[13] B: Goldman (1964)

[14] B: Loukes (1965), ch. 10

[15] E: BHA (1975), p. 28

[16] B: Dearden

[17] B: Wedderspoon, pp. 166–188

division of opinion about the desirability of a daily act of corporate worship continuing to be a statutory obligation on all types of primary and secondary schools.' It set out arguments for and against 'school worship' and 'daily assembly', and noted the confusion that existed 'between school assembly and school worship' (sec. 294). Yet it still felt able to conclude that

> regular opportunities for school worship should continue to be provided for two principal reasons:
>
> (a) The experience of worship is a necessary part of religious education. [i.e. collective worship is not yet clearly separated from classroom RE]
>
> (b) School worship is expressive of society's positive disposition towards religion and contributes to the preservation within the school community of those spiritual, personal and moral values which derive from the Christian tradition.

However, Alves[18], Jones[19] and the three Schools Council Projects in RE in the 1970s noted serious problems with collective worship in schools. The Primary Project[20] echoed the British Humanist Association by observing that the problem of worship was especially acute with primary children who were less able to look critically at what they experienced. So it suggested

> with some trepidation ... that the time has come to resolve this ambivalence [between worship and assembly] by giving up the notion that a county primary school assembly ought to be an act of Christian worship in the commonly accepted sense.

The Secondary RE Project touched only briefly on 'worship and the school assembly' as these were now being distinguished from RE. But it too showed awareness of the broadening of the approach to collective worship and of problems in secondary schools which still persist.

> The administrative burden of preparing an imaginative act of assembly worship for every day of the school year is beyond the resources of all but the most talented head teachers or those to whom they delegate. [21]

It went on to speak of a need for 'a renewed *raison d'être* that will overcome the increasingly hostile reaction of those staff and pupils who

[18] B: Alves, p. 199f

[19] B: Jones

[20] B: Schools Council (1972), p. 65f

[21] B: Schools Council (1971), pp. 97–100

feel that the present arrangements are an impertinent waste of their time and the educational resources of the nation' (p. 98).

Even Christian educationalists like Jean Holm[22] in a standard text on teaching religion in schools expressed serious reservations about attempting 'worship' in schools as distinct from assembly. The Free Church Federal Council commented that

> ... the early interpretations of the (religious) clauses (of the 1944 Act) did carry an assumption of evangelical and confessional emphases which in 1944 were regarded as proper provisions in a Christian country, but which, in the kind of society to which we now belong, and with present educational insights, would be called into question.[23]

It went on to say:

> ... the vast majority of school assemblies cannot now be regarded as assemblies of worship ... In this respect, as with religious instruction, expectations have been too high, and the time has clearly come for a distinction to be drawn between Christian worship (or even, religious worship) and school assemblies.

A multicultural society

Another factor in the changing situation was the increase in members of faiths other than Christianity in Britain.[24] By the late 1960s the Schools Council Working Papers took this factor and the increase in secularisation into account, suggesting that the traditional concept of collective worship as a fundamentally Christian activity was no longer tenable. The Primary Project[25] noted the wider range of topics and resources that could be used in collective worship, taking advantage of the presence in schools of members of other faiths. The Secondary Project stated: 'Obviously the multi-religious situation that exists in many schools calls for a general reconsideration of the aims and purposes of the school assembly.' It also raised another controversial issue in discussing ways of meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in school worship without 'the holding of hybrid multi-faith services' or leading more parents from minority groups to 'press for their legal rights of withdrawal'.

[22] B: Holm, ch. 15

[23] F: FCFC (1992)

[24] B: Jones, p. 91f

[25] B: Schools Council (1972), pp. 66–8

This broader approach was reinforced by the wider acceptance in the early 1970s (fostered by the SHAP Working Party and Ninian Smart's writings) of the study of other faiths as well as Christianity in schools, even with primary pupils. As Hull[26] summed it up, 'the previous unity between worship, religious education and the life of the school' was destroyed – and he called his 1975 book *School Worship: an obituary*.

Collective worship may have become more clearly distinguished from religious education (a term commonly and increasingly superseding the statutory 'religious instruction'), but both reflected a growing feeling that Britain was now a 'pluralist' society. The Schools Council paper *RE in Primary Schools* had commented

> The uncertainty of aim so frequently found in other aspects of religious education is obvious also in many assemblies. Some headteachers and teachers think of assembly in a county primary school as a purely social occasion, with perhaps a dash of moral education thrown in, and others think of it as a full-scale act of Christian worship.[27]

A more inclusive approach to collective worship is well illustrated by a DES seminar (quoted by the Schools Council paper *RE in Secondary Schools* [28]) which mentioned some secondary schools where 'The assembly is not always religious in the narrow sense in tone and content; over a period it provides an exchange of philosophies and approaches to life' in ways 'which appear useful and credible to humanist and secular staff and pupils as well as to Christians.' This working paper also notes later the presence of a group of pupils 'from homes that explicitly reject all religion', a group rarely mentioned in discussions about pluralism, but one which grew in numbers until the 1996 *Population Trends* reported 40% of the population saying that religion played no part in their lives.

Justification for 'school assembly'

Looking back in 1992 Alan and Erica Brown commented:

> One of the most interesting developments of school worship over the past two decades has been the increasing use of 'assembly' to create an understanding and awareness of those values which are to be encouraged within the school ... 'Assembly' became an acceptable term probably because it released teachers (and pupils) from the

[26] B: Hull (1975), p. 88

[27] B: Schools Council (1972), p. 66

[28] B: Schools Council (1971), p. 99

> implications and consequences of 'worship'; but this should not be regarded as a solely negative response.[29]

Various attempts were made to find educational justification for collective worship (e.g. B: Wedderspoon, p. 214f). The Durham Report[30] had drawn a distinction between the 'expressive' and 'didactic' elements in worship. 'An act of worship provides a means whereby the worshipper can express his response to God ... The worship situation is also to some extent a teaching situation.' Others suggested that assembly with young children could be regarded as an exercise, learning for example what praise is. Ninian Smart, in an influential book *The Concept of Worship*, [31] claimed that one could experience some of the sentiments of religion as participant observers. But as the British Humanist Association pointed out, 'The borderline between genuine "participation" and mere "attendance" at an act of worship is extremely obscure.'[32]

The Schools Council paper *RE in Primary Schools*, after its suggestions for more inclusive assemblies, introduced another idea which became important: 'the kind of assembly thus envisaged ... most certainly brings children to the verge of worship, to what John Hull calls the "threshold" of worship.'[33] This paper also suggests that children can profitably 'share in the emotional experience of worship' (p. 67), for instance by being present when teachers say prayers.

Others made use of the omission of the word 'Christian' from the 1944 Act (e.g. B: Jones p. 100) and found a rationale for the broader treatment of collective worship in analyses of the concept of 'worship'. The Anglican priest, J.G. Williams, had also pointed out that

> the word itself is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *weothscipe* – 'worthship' ... The stress is on the idea of 'worth' or 'value' or 'personal merit'. So to 'worship' anything (or anybody) is quite simply to acknowledge the value it possesses for us.[34]

This has long proved to be a useful idea in debates about collective worship.

[29] F: National Society (1992), p. 7

[30] B: Durham Report, secs 299, 300

[31] B: Smart, 2.11

[32] E: BHA (1975), p. 30

[33] B: Schools Council (1972)

[34] B: Williams, p. 8

An influential handbook, *Paths to Understanding – a Handbook to Religious Education in Hampshire Schools*, published in 1980, well illustrated the changing attitudes to collective worship.[35] In a Parliamentary debate in 1976 it was argued on behalf of the Department of Education and Science that if schools were departing from the letter of the law, it was so that its spirit might better be fulfilled. Many pointed out that the 1944 Act had not specified 'Christian' worship and claimed that it permitted a broader definition. Hampshire offered the following statement, relating 'to a collective rather than to an individual activity', and making distinctions which continue to be important in subsequent discussions.

> Worship has to do with worth and worthiness. It is the recognition, affirmation and celebration of the 'worth-ship' of certain realities and values, held to be of central importance to the community which worships. The act of worshipping renews the meaning of these realities and values for the community, helping each of its members to grasp them personally. The community focuses on what it knows to be of great or supreme worth, hence worthy of preservation and promotion, and of its members' dedication.
>
> If such a broad interpretation of worship is adopted, then secular humanists, for example, can properly be said to worship such values as honesty, love and freedom; besides these values, Muslims would worship the one God, revealed through the Prophet and the Book; while Christians would add, as the distinctive feature of their worship, an emphasis on the crucial importance of Jesus Christ. For a school, where unanimity about what is of most worth can hardly be expected, and certainly not assumed, an act of worship would express and affirm values which are significant within the total school community, and are shared by at least a substantial proportion, or by distinctive groups, of its members. It is worth noting that the word used in the 1944 Act and stressed both at the time and subsequently by R.A. Butler (then Minister of Education) is 'collective' not 'corporate'. This word implies that there will be scope for a variety of responses by those present (e.g. when prayers are said some may participate, others may listen in order better to understand what prayer means to those who are participating), whereas in a corporate activity all participate in the same manner.

Practice in the 1980s

Sheila Dainton in a retrospective article felt able to write:

> Back in the 1980s collective worship was not a major bone of contention. We 'did it' – as we did so many things in the days before the 1988 Education Reform Act – in a variety of ways in a variety of schools. In some schools collective worship happened on a daily basis with due regard to what the law required; in others the law was observed more in the breach than in accordance with legislative requirements. Collective worship was (and perhaps still is) characterised by its diversity ... We were simply doing what we had always done – and enjoying it.[36]

Leslie Francis, however, in a research report[37] noted that younger teachers were less sympathetic and, as he put it: 'the cultural assumptions of school worship and of church services are often far apart.'

Secondary schools continued to find it difficult to obey the law. Bernadette O'Keeffe's summary (published in 1986) is not unrepresentative:

> A clear picture emerges from our discussions with county headteachers regarding school worship. In the majority of county schools collective worship is seen as an inappropriate activity because both pupils and staff encompass a wide range of religious beliefs and secular views. Collective worship is not seen as reflecting the life and ethos of the whole school community. It is for these reasons that headteachers recognise the inappropriateness of compulsory collective worship laid down by the 1944 Act and instead stress the importance of assemblies which promote a sense of community, emphasise values such as respect for others, tolerance, justice, compassion and responsibility, and allow for the affirmation of values which are significant within the whole school community. These teachers take as their starting point the diversity of pupils', and teachers', backgrounds.[38]

In 1981–2 the Commons Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts turned its attention to scrutiny of 'the secondary curriculum and examinations'. Both the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Hume gave oral evidence to the Committee, and the Church of England Board of Education submitted a memorandum on matters relating to religious education and the collective act of worship.

In his oral evidence to the committee Archbishop Runcie indicated (as did the Free Church representatives) that he would welcome some re-examination of the existing legislation regarding collective worship, and that he felt there might be merit in moving in the direction of 'less but

[35] C: Hampshire (1980), p. 119

[36] D: Dainton, p. 11

[37] B: Francis (1987)

[38] B: O'Keeffe, p. 76

better' in that area.[39] The Board of Education's memorandum recognised 'the difficulty at the present time of implementing the law relating to the daily act of worship' and indicated that the Board 'would welcome an opportunity to discuss with the Secretary of State a revision of the clauses in the 1944 Act relating to assemblies, so that more flexibility both as regards the frequency and nature of acts of worship might be possible in the future'.[40]

In the second of its two reports in 1982, the Select Committee declared that 'the Secretary of State should now begin discussions with all interested parties, including the Church authorities, about guidance to schools on the school act of worship. These discussions should include the possibility that legislative changes may be necessary.'[41] However, in a Commons Answer in April 1982 the then Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, Dr Rhodes Boyson, said, 'I wish to make it absolutely clear that this [Section 25 (1) of the 1944 Education Act] is the law on religious education and the school assembly, and we have no intention of changing the law, but every intention of seeing that it is upheld.'[42]

The Swann Report in 1985 *Education for All: The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* pointed up the difficulties experienced by some parents. It reported (p. 481) one Muslim organisation as telling parents 'not to feel hesitant or embarrassed' over withdrawing children from assembly, a point still being made by such groups ten years later. It commented that 'it must be recognised that assemblies which do not contain a collective act of worship are contrary to the spirit and indeed letter of the law ... and that assembly and acts of collective worship are not interchangeable terms.' Its conclusion differed from that of the Durham Report fifteen years earlier.

> We have received much evidence about the difficulties generated by the requirement ... for a daily act of collective worship. We therefore believe that the government, in consultation with religious and educational bodies, should look afresh at the ... Act to see if alternatives are called for. (p. 773)

The Parliamentary Select Committee agreed.

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[39] HC 110 (1981), para. 1254

[40] HC 110 (1982), para. 3.8(b)

[41] HC 111 Second Report (1982), para. 15

[42] HC Deb (8th April 1982), vol. 21 col. 1133

In reply to this recommendation Sir Keith Joseph, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, declared in the House of Commons that the government still had no intention of changing the current statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education in maintained schools. Yet only three years later, in spite of the practice in many schools and the considered opinions of many professionals, not only were the requirements for collective worship restated (with minor adjustments) but a more detailed and complex definition of collective worship was offered – in the Education Reform Act 1988.

2. The Education Reform Act 1988 and after

The passing of the Act

'The Education Reform Act of 1988 was the most important and far reaching piece of Educational law making for England and Wales since the Education Act of 1944', claimed Stuart Maclure in his 'guide' to the Act.

> Why? Because it altered the basic power structure of the education system. It increased the powers of the Secretary of State for Education and Science ... It restored to the central government powers over the curriculum ... It introduced important limitations on the functions of the Local Education Authorities. [43]

Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State, added in debate: 'We need to inject a new vitality into the (education) system. It has become producer-dominated.' [44]

What was now officially termed 'religious education' (instead of the 1944 term 'religious instruction' which was used to designate the teaching part of RE) remained an essential element in the 'basic' curriculum, and in Section 1 (1) of the Act it was now clearly distinguished from 'religious worship'. But

> ministers and their officials had been taken aback by the vehemence of the feelings aroused on religious issues in the Bill ... What had been intended to be a routine tidying-up of the law on the daily assembly became a matter of great interest, especially in the House of Lords.[45]

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[43] B: Maclure, p. ix

[44] *ibid.* p. x

[45] *ibid.* p. 18

A reaction had built up against the broader interpretation of the law on RE and collective worship. It was argued that Britain's Christian culture and ethic should be defended. Baroness Cox pointed out that: 'Eighty-five per cent of our population claim to be Christians ... Unless and until we present a coherent presentation of the Christian faith and the opportunity to experience Christian worship ... we deny our young people their birthright.'[46]

Copley (*ibid.*) commented that many of this 85% were 'folklore' Christians (rather than churchgoers) and

> traditionally this group of people, as revealed in opinion polls, has supported school worship ... While one may be sceptical about the validity of this position, it has to be accepted as real. Moreover, it cuts across social and intelligence strata, so that it is quite possibly held by some of the people who have legislated the new Act.

He also noted that 'Whether we go to church or not, we in the West are culturally conditioned to think of worship as an activity directed towards God' (p. 2). 'Secondary school worship has been dominated not merely by Christianity, but by the Protestant, or Reformed, Christian approach in which hymns, prayers and the sermon ... are uppermost' (p. 3).

A lobby had been pressing for RE which was specifically Christian as well as for daily Christian worship. When the RE Council approached Kenneth Baker to argue for more flexible wording for collective worship he replied that schools might implement flexible timings and group sizes, but that worship must be provided for all pupils, every day, in every school. Apparently he was surprised to be told that this was far from common practice in many secondary schools.

> So a small group of peers was determined to insert into those sections of the Act relating to RE and the act of worship in county schools a requirement that both should be of a mainly 'Christian' character. (Collective worship in voluntary aided and controlled schools was to be provided by the Governing Body in accordance with provisions of the Trust Deed.) They rightly pointed out that this had been taken for granted in 1944. Now, they thought, it needed to be spelled out.[47]

The churches, however, were reluctant, and their spokesman in the House of Lords, Dr Leonard (then Bishop of London and Chairman of the Church of England Board of Education and the National Society) eventually forged a package of amendments to the original proposal. He introduced them by stressing his aim to avoid

[46] B: Copley, p. 14

[47] B: Maclure, p. 18

> damaging divisions within a school and its surrounding community. Differences of worship within a community need not divide a community; but they can do so if, on the one hand, they are over-emphasised or, on the other hand, suppressed or ignored. Sometimes the maintenance of harmony within a multi-faith school will be best achieved by expression of the differences that exist through provision for different forms of worship. There will also be occasions where common expression of common concerns and interests should be sought.[48]

His concern was 'to ensure that there was a proper framework, which enables people to respond, which informs and which encourages but which does not ... compel.'

He went on to express five intentions behind his proposal:

> We have sought to provide a framework for worship which
>
> *first*, maintains the tradition of worship as a part of the process of education, giving proper place to the Christian religion;
>
> *secondly*, maintains the contribution of the collective act of worship to the establishment of values within the school community; yet,
>
> *thirdly*, does not impose inappropriate forms of worship on certain groups of pupils;
>
> *fourthly*, does not break the school up into communities based on the various faith groups of the parents, especially in that it makes some groups feel that they are not really part of the community being educated in the school; and,
>
> *finally*, is realisable and workable in practical terms of school accommodation and organisation.[49]

Baroness Hooper, at the end of the debate, also distinguished the 'educational' value of worship from 'confessional' acts of worship practised by believers, besides typically claiming that collective worship was valuable in developing a school's sense of community.

> First, we wish as far as possible to ensure that the act of collective worship provided for in statute is indeed collective. It is because such an act of worship can perform an important function in binding together members of a school and helping to develop their sense of community that we in this country make collective worship in schools a statutory requirement although other equally Christian countries do not do so. This educational value of worship must be clearly

[48] F: National Society (1992), p. 4

[49] *ibid.* p. 6

> distinguished from confessional acts of worship which are properly pursued by practising Christians and members of other faiths.[50]

Implications of the clauses about collective worship

Circular 3/89, explaining the changed requirements of the 1988 Act, declared that 'the changes introduced by the Education Reform Act reflect the government's commitment to strengthening the position of RE and collective worship in schools.'[51]

Collective worship is dealt with in Sections 6 and 7 of the Act. Section 6(1) basically repeated the requirement of the 1944 Act: 'all pupils ... shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship'. But 6(2) followed what had become common school practice, making arrangements more flexible: an act need not now be at the start of the day, and separate acts were now permitted for 'different school or age groups of pupils'.

A significant new requirement had been introduced in 7(1) and (2) of the Act. Collective worship was to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (7(1)). This was given further definition in section 7(2) as being 'of a broadly Christian character if it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination'.

The peers may have considered this to be moderate. Lord Thorneycroft stressed: 'We are not seeking indoctrination. We are seeking a fair and open-minded description of this great Christian faith and tradition.' [52] He also recognised the need to respect other faiths. But Professor John Hull noticed here a process which, once it begins, becomes interminable: the process of theological definition. It is interminable, he argued, because the character of theological definition is to create distinctions which themselves require further theological definition.

Another new requirement sought to meet the declared needs of the schools. The acts of collective worship are to be 'appropriate having regard to any relevant considerations relating to the pupils concerned' (7(4)), i.e. 'any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils concerned which are relevant' together with 'their ages and aptitudes' (7(5)).

Hull commented :

[50] *ibid.* p. 4f

[51] A: DfE (1989)

[52] B: Hull (1995), p. 28

> In the case of many pupils their family backgrounds will not represent any religious tradition at all ... One must, in such cases, think of educating pupils into various possibilities of worship, of creating a 'threshold of worship'.[53]

He continued: 'What the new Act clearly rules out altogether ... is the kind of school assembly which had itself become merely secular and administrative ... It is to contribute to the spiritual development of the pupil' (a major point picked up later by the Office for Standards in Education). He concluded optimistically (p. 21):

> If interpreted sensibly and not dogmatically, educationally and not evangelistically, spiritually but not confessionally and always consistently with dialogue, the results will be a renewal of a central part of the British school experience.

The law continued to rule out denominational approaches to Christian collective worship, though these differences were generally less significant than they had been in the nineteenth century. It also ruled out what one politician called 'multi-faith mishmash' or, as the Chief Rabbi put it, 'a cocktail of faiths.'[54] Where a standing advisory council for religious education (SACREs were now made statutory) 'determine that it is not appropriate for [broadly Christian collective worship] to apply in the case of any county school,' that school could apply for a 'determination' to allow separate collective worship for members of a non-Christian faith, though collective worship was not to be affected by mere denominational differences.

The 1988 Act also retained the parental right of withdrawing children from collective worship, and safeguards for teachers who did not wish to be involved in collective worship (9(3)(a),(c)).

Hull's claim in a journal editorial is important:

> We now have an Act of Parliament which prescribes Christian belief as a norm for something which is to take place ... in our schools. This has to be recognised as the introduction of a confessional element into educational practice, something which Parliament has studiously avoided in all previous educational legislation.[55]

But Brenda Watson offered a less polemical interpretation of the Christian reference:

[53] B: Hull (1989), p. 19

[54] B: Copley, p. 17

[55] B: Hull (1990), p. 63

> It can be seen as a very fair compromise showing political and educational astuteness. The presence of the word 'Christian' is based on an argument which almost all concede: the undoubted impact of Christianity on the kind of society which has developed in the West, and the appropriateness of children who grow up in this society understanding something of Christianity.[56]

Yet she went on to refer to

> a major criticism of the legislation which [was] that it assumes that worship must come under the umbrella of one or other religious tradition ... It is this 'package' aspect of the worship which is the real bone of contention dividing people into separate camps.

Making the Act work

'Simply ignoring the 1988 Act [over collective worship] is no longer an option' wrote Stephen Orchard, General Secretary of the Christian Education Movement.[57] The new legislation provoked a wide range of ingenious responses. The Bedfordshire handbook on collective worship declared: 'The strengthening of the position of collective worship in schools by the ERA 1988 has raised anew issues concerning the nature and purpose of school assembly.'[58] It pointed to the confusion arising 'because teachers are trying to satisfy two seemingly opposing requirements' – the legal and the educational. 'If collective worship ... is to give pupils a relevant and worthwhile educational experience, teachers and governors need to read the Act carefully and interpret it flexibly but responsibly in the interests of the schools and communities they serve.'

Dorset[59] spoke of the 'disturbing effect' on many heads and staffs of the phrases 'daily' and 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.' But Northamptonshire[60] said the clauses caused some 'consternation' at first but 'mature reflection has led many to conclude that rather than placing an impossible burden on schools, the Act does offer an opportunity for development which cannot and should not be ignored.' Grahame Miles' paper[61] illustrated how the Act could be interpreted in a broad way so that broadly Christian worship could contribute to pupils' development. A good number of documents were produced by local

[56] B: Watson (1993), p. 160

[57] B: Copley

[58] C: Bedfordshire (1989), p. 1

[59] C: Dorset (1990)

[60] C: Northamptonshire

[61] D: Secondary Heads Association (1990)

education authorities and SACREs (see Section C of the bibliography). The National Curriculum Council[62] wrote positively about the contribution of collective worship to spiritual and moral development.

Two early pieces of research into the effects of the 1988 Act were carried out by Monica Taylor of the National Foundation for Educational Research. After a survey in 1989 of Advisers' perspectives she noted 'the Act has raised for consideration and decision many complex issues relating to the teaching of RE and the organisation and nature of collective worship which are likely to have major implications for school and community life.'[63] Comments reported on 'broadly Christian' (p. 39) showed a wide range of interpretations, including 'This is a delightfully vague phrase for which we should all be truly grateful.'

Monica Taylor's conclusion two years later after a survey of the operation of SACREs was that the 'examples demonstrate the lack of clarity and wide interpretations of ERA in local authority and school contexts. There appears to be a lack of consistent principle irrespective of actual practice.'[64] She ended the section on collective worship:

> The complexity of the issues raised requires further conceptual enquiry and empirical evidence. But in principle the question remains: is worship, collective or confessional, an appropriate activity for an educational form of life which is part of the school day and curriculum? (p. 155)

Copley also had referred to 'the conceptual dilemma about worship.'[65]

Some empirical evidence about primary schools in the summer term of 1991 was published by Culham College Institute,[66] based on 1381 replies from a random sample of 3480 county and voluntary schools.

> The issue of collective worship, brought to attention by the ERA, produces strong and varied views. Some heads ... appear to give it a high priority ... others see collective worship in terms so broad as to embrace almost anything. Others again are hostile to the very idea of worship and regard it as an irrelevance. From all these three groups, some heads claimed that 'compulsory' worship is a contradiction in terms ....

[62] A: NCC

[63] C: Taylor (1989), p. 82

[64] C: Taylor (1991), p. 153

[65] B: Copley, p. 5

[66] C: Culham College Institute

'SCRAP IT (and yes I am a practising Christian)' wrote one. The report concluded that 'among those who believe that worship has a rightful place in the primary school there is still a wide diversity of view about its nature' (p. 15), including spiritual or aesthetic experience, with or without any specific religious context. 'Others put the emphasis on moral teaching with or without a religious basis' (p. 16).

One view in this report was that 'some see [collective worship] as an instrument for helping the understanding of other faiths' (p. 15) and Brenda Watson[67] argued that 'inter-faith assemblies' which 'enabled' worship were possible. The NUT[68] did not want a spirit of intolerance to grow up and declared: 'There is scope for much good practice in multi-faith collective worship to continue.' But Cole and Evans-Lowndes[69] refer to faith communities being deeply 'upset' by the 1988 Act.

Sheila Dainton[70] wrote that the story of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers forming a policy on collective worship began 'with the publication in 1992 of the government's White Paper *Choice and Diversity: a new framework for schools* and in particular with Chapter 8 on 'Spiritual and moral development'. This declared (p. 37):

> 8.2 Proper regard should continue to be paid to the nation's Christian heritage and traditions in the context of both the religious education and collective worship provided in schools. The Education Reform Act 1988 offers a framework in relation to collective worship which reflects primarily that tradition, while offering opportunities for the worship of other faiths in a context of mutual understanding and respect.[71]

The 'Christian heritage' argument was typical of more traditionalist thinking.

Significantly the Muslim Educational Trust[72] used its response to call for greater opportunity for Muslims to worship separately and to say their prayers in school at the discretion of the headteacher without having to use the clumsy 'determination' procedure. It also complained that parents were deterred from using their right of withdrawal, for instance by

[67] B: Watson (1993), p. 162ff

[68] D: NUT (1989)

[69] B: Cole and Evans-Lowndes, p. 94

[70] D: Dainton, p. 10

[71] A: DfE (July 1992)

[72] E: Islam: MET (1992)

language problems and by the attitude of some headteachers. M.A. Bari echoed this in describing 'Muslim demands for their own denominational schools in the United Kingdom.'[73]

Spiritual and moral development

Paragraph 8.5 of the 1992 White Paper stated: 'Religious education and collective worship play a major part in promoting the spiritual and moral dimension in schools.'

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers[74] criticised the link made between RE and collective worship and said the Paper overstated their effect on spiritual and moral development.

But this last point was picked up by the first version of the detailed *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools*, produced by OFSTED in August 1993.[75] It set out 'evaluation criteria' for pupils' 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' and laid it down that

> the report should include evaluation of:
>
> for those schools in which collective worship is to be inspected, [i.e. county schools and Grant Maintained schools which were formerly county schools] the extent to which collective worship promotes spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. (Part 2, p. 22)

Part 4 (p. 16f) listed factors to be taken into account when reaching a judgement, including whether or not 'the majority of acts of worship are of a broadly Christian character over a term.'

The first draft of the OFSTED Handbook had been trialled in 1992–3. Collective worship was observed in 146 (out of 180) secondary schools and 242 acts of worship were seen in 130 primary schools. The OFSTED summary report on RE and collective worship[76] had some interesting main findings:

> Visits to primary schools showed that ...
>
> all the schools complied with the requirement to provide daily collective worship.

[73] E: Islam: Bari

[74] D: ATL (1995)

[75] A: OFSTED (1993)

[76] A: OFSTED (1994b)

> Judged in terms of the quality of the opportunity they provided for social and moral development, standards in these acts of worship were satisfactory or better in 75 % of the schools ... (paragraph 63)
>
> although provision was made conscientiously, few schools provided a sufficiently strong spiritual focus ...
>
> a significant number of assemblies were not attended by all primary staff.' (p. 4)

Paragraphs 71–2 on secondary schools showed how little had changed over the years.

> Compared with primary schools, the provision of collective worship in secondary schools was very disappointing. Forty per cent of the schools inspected were identified as not complying with the legal requirements regarding collective worship and in the remainder there were tensions and difficulties (71) ... Most examples of collective worship inspected were regarded as moral ... The spiritual dimension in this provision is generally weak .... (72)

Ironically, as some headteachers pointed out, there was no correlation between fulfilling the law on collective worship and the quality of spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. The Chief Inspector's next report (1994) confined itself to RE and did not discuss collective worship, which was reported on elsewhere. This separation seemed to indicate OFSTED's recognition of the separation of the two in practice.

Interpreting 'broadly Christian character'

Hull's unpacking of the Act noted above[77] had illustrated some of the complexities of interpreting 'the broad traditions of Christian belief'. The 1988 Act had also set up a complaints procedure (to give parents more power). Hull's later lecture summarises what followed:

> Several complaints regarding the content of collective worship came before the Secretary of State. The framework within which complaints are dealt with is essentially legal, so now the legal imperative was added to the theological one. Law courts cannot function efficiently without definitions, nor can inspection report efficiently. Thus three pressures emerged: one from the legal necessity, one from the inspectorial demand, and the third from the theological imperative.[78]

One example of the process of theological definition started in 1989, a legal case which continued until 1993. Some mothers complained that

[77] B: Hull (1989), pp. 16–19

[78] B: Hull (1995), p. 28f

their sons' primary school did not have daily acts of collective worship which were wholly/mainly of a broadly Christian character. Their complaint reached the Secretary of State in 1991 to be rejected on 23rd June, 1992. He said, *inter alia*, that collective worship 'should be concerned with reverence or veneration being paid to a being or power regarded as supernatural or divine.' When the Parental Alliance for Christian Education asked for clarification he replied on 7th July, 1992, that it was not necessary for him to identify the object of worship so long as one could be reasonably satisfied that there was one. However, the definition of Christian collective worship was subsequently sharpened by saying that it must contain elements which 'accorded some special status to the person of Jesus Christ.'

Towards DfE Circular 1/94

The lobby that was active before the 1988 Act continued to be unhappy with the amount of attention still given in RE to faiths other than Christianity and with the diffused focus of collective worship. Then John Patten, as Secretary of State, produced the DfE *Draft Circular on RE and Collective Worship: 11 October 1993* [79] leaving little time for consultation.

Contrary to what most professionals were saying and implementing, the draft offered a definition of collective worship, drawing on the recent replies to complaints:

> 50. To constitute worship as normally defined in common English parlance, collective worship in school must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities; it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a being or power regarded as supernatural or divine; and the pupil, at his or her level, should be capable of perceiving this. Although collective worship and assembly may take place together, the distinction between the two should be clear. Collective worship can, nevertheless, be related to the day to day life, aspirations and concerns of the school.

The draft circular also sharpened the definition of 'broadly Christian':

> 52. In the light of the Christian traditions of Great Britain, section 7(1) of the Education Reform Act 1988 says that the collective worship organised by the school is to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. The main emphasis of broadly Christian worship should be on the broad traditions of Christian belief. It must contain some elements which can be related specifically to the

[79] A: DfE (1993)

traditions of Christian belief, and which accord some special status to the person of Jesus Christ.

The RE Council of England and Wales canvassed the views of its members – faith communities including Christian churches and other educationalists also made representations – and by December the Chairwoman began her summary:

> Responses were received from across the spectrum of the member organisations of the RE Council, i.e. from faith communities and from professionals, including a cross-section of Christian bodies. Responses to the section on collective worship in the Circular were worded more strongly than responses to other sections.

Comments quoted included: 'Understanding of worship here is exclusive ...' 'Uses an unprecedented "theological" definition of collective worship, leading to theological and community separation ...' 'County school is not a faith community ...' 'Many Christians emphasise the voluntary nature of worship ...' 'Paragraph 52 goes way beyond the scope of the Circular' (various theological objections were raised here) and 'Interpretation in the Circular is far more rigorous than the law itself.'

Yet Circular 1/94 was published on 31st January, 1994, showing only minor changes to the draft.[80]

3. After Circular 1/94: Religious Education and Collective Worship

Circular 1/94 and its interpretation of the 1988 Act

Circular 1/94, issued on 31st January, 1994, was described by Hull[81] as an attempt 'to secure through departmental pressure that which had not been secured through the parliamentary process' (in 1993), i.e. 'to tighten the legislation', though the Circular bore on its cover the disclaimer: 'This guidance does not constitute an authoritative legal interpretation of the provisions of the Education Acts or other enactments and regulations; that is exclusively a matter for the courts.' However, the verdict of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers[82] was typical: 'The tighter definitions in this Circular have caused much controversy and proved a major stumbling block,' which was later aggravated by OFSTED's acceptance of the Circular as defining its criteria for inspection.

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[80] A: DfE (1994)

[81] B: Hull (1994), p. 66

[82] D: ATL (1995), sec. 3.2

The section on collective worship began with a broad statement of aim:

> 50. Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes.

Schools were reminded of the requirements for collective worship in the 1988 Act. But paragraph 57 offered a sharper 'exclusive' definition of worship, taken over from the previous two years' discussions. This section proved highly controversial:

> 57. 'Worship' is not defined in the legislation and in the absence of any such definition it should be taken to have its natural and ordinary meaning. That is, it must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.

(The word 'supernatural' which had appeared in the Draft Circular was dropped.)

Yet the next sentence introduced an important qualification.

> However, worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to 'collective worship' rather than 'corporate worship'.

The following two paragraphs drew attention to distinguishing 'assembly' from 'collective worship' and 'taking part' from 'passive attendance':

> 58. Collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear. Collective worship can, nevertheless, be related to the day to day life, aspirations and concerns of the school.
>
> 59. 'Taking part' in collective worship implies more than simply passive attendance. It follows that an act of collective worship should be capable of eliciting a response from pupils, even though on a particular occasion some of the pupils may not feel able actively to identify with the act of worship.

The next sub-section gave guidance on 'the character of collective worship' which, by its reference to according 'a special status to Jesus Christ' in the last sentence of paragraph 63, added significantly to the 1988 Act:

> 63. Provided that, taken as a whole, an act of worship which is broadly Christian reflects the traditions of Christian belief, it need not contain only Christian material. Section 7 (1) (of the Act) is regarded as permitting some non-Christian elements in the collective worship without thus depriving it of its broadly Christian character. Nor would the inclusion of elements common to Christianity and one or more other religions deprive it of that character. It must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ.

This last sentence, which also proved highly controversial, was drawn from discussions over the previous two years (see p. 29).

Paragraph 64 said that the worship should be 'appropriate to the family backgrounds of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes', and paragraph 65 reiterated the concern that all pupils should be able to join in collective worship:

> 65. Pupils who do not come from Christian families should be able to join in the daily act of collective worship even though this would, in the main, reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief. The law intends that, subject to the exceptions provided by section 9 of the 1988 Act (paragraph 83), all pupils will take part in such collective worship.

Any departure from 'the broadly Christian requirement' was to be justified in the terms of paragraph 64 – 'the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the pupils concerned' (paragraph 66).

The rest of the section on collective worship gave guidance on 'determinations' and the parental 'right of withdrawal' with their implications for collective worship including (paragraph 88) the possibility of 'allowing at parents' request ... religious worship to take place according to a particular faith or denomination.'

Reactions from the teaching profession

'Since Circular 1/94 was issued collective worship has been a matter of considerable debate and argument in many quarters.' With these words Suffolk SACRE began its *Guidelines.*[83] Clearly many schools found the further guidance of the Circular 'not always helpful',[84] with secondary schools in particular claiming to experience problems.

[83] C: Suffolk (1995), p. 4

[84] D: PCfRE (March 1994)

In the summer of 1994 the Education Management Information Exchange[85] conducted a survey of LEAs about progress and intentions in respect of RE and collective worship, with particular regard to (*inter alia*) the guidance of Circular 1/94. There were 62 replies (53%). All the LEAs who commented on the statutory requirements for collective worship reported that their schools had difficulties with them, though some said these requirements were not problematic in primary schools (p. 28). Sixteen respondents were strongly critical of the difficulties brought about by the Circular, e.g. 'We have significant problems in relation to collective worship as defined in Circular 1/94. Considerable resistance in schools is now evident' and 'Circular 1/94 is more significant than the Acts, particularly for collective worship. It will, however, be largely ignored' (p. 29) – as OFSTED continued to find.

The National Association of Head Teachers[86] surveyed its members' opinions in May 1994 and received 2346 replies (1374 from county primary schools, 599 from 'church schools' (presumably including controlled schools) and 373 from secondary schools). Some 79% found the government's expectations for RE and collective worship unacceptable (including 49% of the church schools) and 69% did not think they could satisfy the collective worship requirements. More headteachers and staff now wished not to be involved in collective worship. (Attendance at assembly was distinguished from attendance at collective worship by Circular 3/89; the former is a contractual duty.) The NAHT press release summed up the survey as representing a 'massive thumbs-down' for the government's policy on RE and collective worship in schools. The General Secretary, David Hart, commented that 'the government should have listened to the views of the professionals.'

The Secondary Heads Association[87] wrote to John Patten to inform him of a resolution passed at the end of an 'excellent' debate at Council:

> That Council, while believing that carefully planned and well presented assemblies, which may include acts of worship, play an important part in the promotion of moral, ethical and spiritual education, advises the Secretary of State that the present law is incapable of full implementation and recommends that school policy on assemblies should be entrusted to governing bodies.

[85] C: Capey

[86] D: NAHT (1994)

[87] D: SHA (June 1994)

The letter went on to say 'there was considerable strength of feeling that the time had come to act on this matter.' In 1996 the SHA policy seemed likely to continue to be to seek some relaxation of what the Association felt to be over-prescriptive and unhelpful legislation.

However, the Secretary of State had insisted in 1994 that the law was 'flexible', so one LEA continued to take a broader view of collective worship, even if this appeared to differ from OFSTED's more rigid interpretation of the Circular.

Suffolk SACRE employed this notion of flexibility. It noted:

> Though more specific than the 1944 Education Act, the requirements of the 1988 Education Act are still open to an interpretation which can be both inclusive and sensitive to a plural population. The DfEE Circular 1/94, on the other hand, contains a number of apparently narrow, exclusive interpretations, which have caused distress to some Christians, as well as to members of non-Christian faiths and people without a religious faith, such as Humanists. However, it should be noted that a DfEE circular offers guidance and 'does not constitute an authoritative legal interpretation of the provisions' (see cover of Circular 1/94).[88]

But Suffolk produced guidelines which took

> particular note of the requirement of the 1988 Act that, 'The extent to which and the ways in which the broad traditions of Christian belief are to be reflected in such acts of collective worship should be appropriate to the family backgrounds of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes' (cp. Circular 1/94, paragraph 64).

So it stressed that the 'broadly Christian' element must be presented in a context which 'recognises the possible diversity of faith and commitment' (p. 18), looking for areas of common ground in a community which is diverse but is sharing a range of experiences, including Christian, 'presented for consideration and reflection' (p. 7).

Reactions from Christian churches

The Methodist Conference was told in 1995 that 'legislation about collective worship and more particularly the DfE guidelines have continued to daunt Headteachers.'[89]

The Churches Joint Education Policy Committee,[90] representing a wide range of Christian denominations, declared: 'We all agree with many

[88] C: Suffolk (1995), p. 5

[89] F: Methodist Church Division of Education and Youth (1995)

[90] F: CJEPC (1994), 5.2.3

teachers that one of the major stumbling blocks has been the attempt at tighter definitions in Circular 1/94.' The Society of Friends, writing to the CJEPC, interestingly wanted to help 'rebut the unfortunate definitions of Christian worship which appear in Circular 1/94 and the OFSTED Bulletin.'

CJEPC's final statement[91] recommended:

> 1.1 Serious attention should be given by the DfEE to the concerns of the teaching profession and the problems identified by the churches. This could involve improved advice in a formal Circular, as well as extension of the guidance, now provided by OFSTED for its Inspectors, to enable schools to deliver quality.
>
> 1.2 Since a change in the law is unlikely in the near future, discussion should be encouraged with the DfEE about the interpretation and application of the daily requirement in the Act. There should be clearer appreciation of the nature, aims and objectives of worship in a school context ...

Section 5 of this important ecumenical statement provided an exposition of 'Theological Aspects of Collective Worship' as one attempt to deal with questions raised by the inadequate concept of 'worship' indicated in Circular 1/94.

Also in 1995 the Church of England Board of Education consulted its forty-three dioceses and held five regional seminars at which other faiths as well as Christianity and teachers' professional organisations were represented. A report by Alan Brown, RE Officer (schools) of the Board of Education, was published in February 1996.[92] Responses from dioceses showed good awareness of educational and theological issues and of schools' problems. There was some anxiety lest pressure for a change in the law would play into the hands of the secularists – though it was acknowledged that no early change in the law was likely. Yet, as one diocese put it, 'there is a conflict between the Act of Worship and the process of education in the county school.' Compulsory worship in the terms of Circular 1/94 was thought to be 'theologically impossible.' The conclusion (p. 33) commented: 'The limitations of paragraphs 57 and 63 indicate the problem of the state becoming too deeply involved in the detail of theology.'

The same document included 'The policy of the Board on Collective School Worship' (p. 35):

[91] F: CJEPC (1995)

[92] F: Church of England (1996)

(iv) The Board encourages schools to adopt a policy for worship broadly based on paragraph 50 of Circular 1/94 ...[see p. 31]

(v) It is the view of the Board that the paragraphs of Circular 1/94, which many regard as contentious (particularly numbers 57, 59, 63 and 65), confuse the policy and purpose of the 1988 Education Reform Act. The Board welcomes the clarification on the law provided in the October 1995 edition of the OFSTED Handbook.

The section on collective worship in the 1995 Handbook[93] included:

> In forming a judgement about the character and quality of worship in schools, the following points may be helpful ...
>
> much that is identifiably Christian in tone, may not necessarily mention Jesus ... However, if the worship consistently avoids reference to Jesus within the spoken or written word then it could not reasonably be defined as mainly Christian ...
>
> worship may be judged not to fulfil statutory requirements but could still be observed to make a powerful contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. That should be made clear in the report.

Responses from world views other than Christianity

The Islamic Academy, after involving a wide range of Muslim organisations in discussions in 1995, produced a policy document.[94] This indicated current problems, for instance over determination. It made an interesting comment (p. 2) that 'worship is ... defined from a Christian perspective, with the assumption that such concepts are similar in the other major faiths. This is not the case, certainly from an Islamic point of view ...' So it preferred assemblies which would 'fulfil some of the aims set out in Circular 1/94 (paragraph 50)' about developing values (p. 3). The statement ended:

> The policy of Muslims should be to encourage the government to amend education legislation so that the statutory requirement for collective worship is removed. (p. 4)

Similarly the Muslim Educational Trust[95] in a statement sent to Gillian Shephard (then Secretary of State for Education) on 16th May, 1995, wrote:

> We are increasingly coming to the view that there should be no statutory requirement for collective worship ... School assemblies could still tackle moral issues ... The failure of many schools to meet the legislative requirements of collective worship, and the difficulties faced by teachers of different faiths or of no faith in leading collective worship, only add to the weight of our arguments. (p. 4)

The Board of Deputies of British Jews in a press release on 17th June, 1994, acknowledged 'the principle of acts of collective worship in schools as helping to enhance children's accessibility to a spiritual dimension.' But it took legal advice on paragraph 63 of Circular 1/94 about according a 'special status to Jesus Christ.' In Counsel's opinion (sec. 3.7), 'the last sentence of paragraph 63 of the Circular is outwith the terms of the 1988 Act.' The Board therefore informed John Patten (then Secretary of State for Education) of this, urging him to review this section of the Circular.

Humanists continued their long-standing criticisms of the law on collective worship. A leaflet[96] said bluntly:

> The most universally contentious aspect of the 1988 Act is concerning collective worship. It states that such daily gatherings must be *wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character*. Not only that, but Circular 1/94 advises that such worship *should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.*
>
> These and other clauses have been widely condemned as unworkable, divisive and reactionary by headteachers and their staffs, by leaders of the religious organisations concerned with education, and by Christians and non-Christians alike ... They are causing much consternation in our schools and in the faith communities ... The case for legislative change remains overwhelming ...

Conclusion

One response to the 1995 consultation of the Church of England Board of Education said that Circular 1/94 allowed a great deal of flexibility and there was much rather silly criticism of it by those who had not taken the trouble to read it. At least two LEAs known to the authors have continued to manage to interpret the law flexibly, taking at its face value the Circular's disclaimer that it did 'not constitute an authoritative legal interpretation of the provisions of the Education Acts ...'

But in the considered view of a wide range of groups concerned with education the government's attempts to preserve the nation's Christian

[93] A: OFSTED (1995a), p. 87

[94] E: Islam: Islamic Academy (1995)

[95] E: Islam: MET (1995)

[96] E: British Humanist Association (March 1995), p. 5

heritage through tighter definitions of the legislation concerning collective worship had raised very difficult theological, educational and practical issues. To some of these we now turn.

PART II: KEY ISSUES

(Some material from Part I is repeated here to reduce the need to refer back.)

1. Defining worship

Attempts at definition

The Secondary Heads Association[1] said that the present arrangements for collective worship are not simply 'inconvenient' but 'raise fundamental religious and spiritual issues' and concluded that these issues 'pose problems and demand solutions which the churches themselves have not found easy to resolve'.

In discussions about collective worship the definition of 'worship' is one such fundamental issue. Paragraph 57 of Circular 1/94 may have said that 'worship should be taken in its natural and ordinary meaning' but the Church of England Board of Education[2] criticised this paragraph as offering a 'too simplistic view of the nature and theology of worship'.

The OFSTED Handbook[3] observed 'Defining worship is difficult because a wide variety of activities is used by people of all faiths.' The City of Westminster[4] noted (in 1993) that no legally binding definition of worship was yet available and the Churches Joint Education Policy Group[5] declared that 'no attempt to provide a legal definition for worship in schools [was] likely to obtain sufficient general support.' Moreover a Muslim comment was noted above,[6] that British discussions on worship usually operated from Christian perspectives, whereas the Muslim

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[1] D: SHA (1994), sec. 6.1

[2] F: Church of England (1996), p. 14

[3] A: OFSTED (1995a), p. 87

[4] C: City of Westminster p. 19

[5] F: CJEPC (1995), sec. 2–5.2

[6] E: Islam: Islamic Academy, p. 2

perspective was different. Hertfordshire,[7] Richmond,[8] and Wandsworth[9] offered definitions from several faiths (Wandsworth included Humanism). Westminster[10] offered multi-faith perspectives in some detail.

But Hull[11] suggested one analysis of worship, which can prove useful in discussion, when he distinguished its 'subjective' and 'objective' character:

> This distinction is reminiscent of the understanding of religion offered by Paul Tillich. He distinguished between God as that which evokes our ultimate concern, that which we take seriously without any reservation (the subjective side of religion) and that reality which is the ground of being, the power of being, or being itself (the objective meaning of religion). So school worship could be understood as the expression of serious concern and the affirmation of that which should be taken with deep seriousness, or as worship offered to God as a supreme being or almighty creator. The latter, the objective, understanding of worship, is in principle a narrower approach.
>
> Each understanding of collective worship presupposes a theological rationale. This can remain implicit in the wider, more subjective understanding, but in the objective or more narrow sense it necessarily becomes more explicit because definition of the content and object of worship is required.

Worship in its 'objective' character is what religious believers are involved in and attempt to speak about. Otto wrote: 'in religious thought worship is seen as the response of humanity to the *mysterium tremendum'*. Evelyn Underhill began her famous book on worship: 'Worship in all its grades and kinds is the response of the creature to the Eternal ... it is always a subject–object relationship ... an acknowledgement of Transcendence ... Worship then, at every level, always means God.' This is illustrated by a Muslim statement: 'Any act of worship ... must be worship only of the One God (Allah). It must be based on belief in God, his prophets and his revelations'[12] and an

[7] C: Herts (1989), Appendix

[8] C: Richmond, p. 11f

[9] C: Wandsworth, p. 11f

[10] C: City of Westminster, p. 47f

[11] B: Hull (1995), p. 28

[12] E: Islam: Islamic Academy, p. 2

Anglican one: 'Worship involves a God in whom the worshippers have a personal faith and to whom they make a personal response.'[13]

Hertfordshire[14] quoted H.M. Chief Inspector for Schools, writing in July 1995:

> We accept that many schools wish to run assemblies which promote and celebrate broadly agreed values ... However, we believe that it is unhelpful to classify such activity as worship if it has no focus on the existence of God. It is the nature of the focus, rather than any particular activity which is unique to worship ... Whatever their judgement, they [inspectors] should never fail to evaluate the provision against a school's stated policy.

Many documents on collective worship attempt analyses of worship, notable examples being Miles[15] and the Churches Joint Education Policy Committee in its 'Theological Aspects of Collective Worship.'[16]

Some implications for county schools

The frequent reference to 'response' in definitions of worship points to its being a voluntary activity. A *Times* editorial (on 23rd February, 1996) claimed: 'It is Britain's boast that religious liberty has been guaranteed since 1688' and The Muslim Educational Trust[17] says 'Islam does not allow compulsion in religion.' In any discussion of worship the notion of 'free response' is one basic point.

The British Humanist Association raised other basic issues.

> Worship presupposes an object of worship, and the detailed practices involved in worship presuppose various truths about the nature and activities of this object of worship. It is only meaningful, therefore, for someone to worship if he does in fact believe in the appropriate manner. Christian worship presupposes a community of Christian believers.[18]

As the Churches Joint Education Policy Committee[19] put it: 'Proper worship is distinctive of each religion.'

[13] F: Church of England (1996), p. 27

[14] C: Hertfordshire (1995), sec. 1.12

[15] D: SHA (1990), ch. 3

[16] F: CJEPC (1995), sec. 5

[17] E: Islam: MET (1995), p. 2

[18] E: BHA (1975), p. 28

[19] F: CJEPC (1995), sec. 5.2

Britain is commonly described as a liberal democracy. The nineteenth century shows a history of fierce conflicts between Christian denominations, but important freedoms were won in RE and collective worship as a consequence. 'Denominational instruction' was forbidden in 'Board' (now county) schools in the 1870 Education Act and the parents' right of withdrawal of their children from 'Religious Instruction' and collective worship was enshrined in the 1944 Act. Detailed analyses of the concept of 'education' over the past thirty years have shown the wisdom of this. In controversial matters such as morals and religion anyone teaching in county schools must be aware of important distinctions between such processes as 'instruction', 'education' and 'indoctrination' and show this awareness in their practice.

So 'objective' definitions of 'worship' may provide important points of reference but a county school is in principle not the same as a community claiming allegiance to one specific religion. 'School worship is ... *sui generis* (unique)'[20] and complex. Dorset declared: 'All simple definitions of worship remain unsatisfactory, all detailed definitions remain unrealistic.' 'In no sense is worship a simple issue. The law (ERA 1988) recognises the complexity of the situation.'[21] So even Circular 1/94 (paragraph 57), having spoken of worship in 'its natural and ordinary meaning' adds 'However, worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship among a group with beliefs in common.' So 'a key issue identified by schools [was] help in understanding the meaning and purpose of collective worship in an educational context.'[22] Perhaps the term 'worship' should not be applied to this sort of activity. (The broader interpretations of collective worship are discussed on p. 44f.)

2. Corporate or collective worship

One way of attempting to denote the distinctive character of worship in county schools is the use since the 1944 Act of the term 'collective' worship as distinct from 'corporate' worship (although R.A. Butler sometimes used the two terms interchangeably). Gent[23] noted that one of the most interesting effects of the 1988 Act has been the rediscovery of the distinction between 'corporate' and 'collective' worship. Collective worship is appropriate to a collectivity of people possessing a wide

[20] C: West Glamorgan, p. 5

[21] C: Redbridge, p. 8

[22] C: Humberside, p. 5

[23] D: CEM, sec. 4.1

diversity of religious, agnostic and non-religious stances.' Miles[24] distinguished them thus: '*Corporate* worship is characterised by commitment to beliefs; *collective* worship involves no necessary prior commitment to beliefs and a way of life.' The SHAP Working Party commented that 'Since pupils and staff in county schools represent a spectrum of secular and religious views, it follows that corporate acts of worship cannot reflect the life of the school as a whole.'[25]

Suffolk[26] provided a chart to distinguish corporate and collective worship and Berkshire[27] produced a large detailed Venn diagram to show where they differ and overlap. The Christian churches also accept the distinction between corporate and collective worship as valid for county schools.[28]

In practice the distinction is not always easy. Muslims[29] complained that many schools fail to distinguish collective worship from corporate (presumably Christian) worship and Alan Brown commented that the educationalist and theologian 'may dance on the head of the pin of collective worship' but for many pupils *all* worship is school worship.[30]

The distinction is not well understood by many adult church members, according to the (Christian) Evangelical Alliance, which claimed that for twenty-five years after the 1944 Act both churches and schools did intend that what happened in school worship should be an introduction to the full-fledged worship of the Christian churches.

In theorising now about collective worship the distinction is generally accepted: 'Church worship is a "faith" activity whereas school worship is a "pre-faith" activity.'[31] 'A school is not a worshipping community'[32] but

[24] D: SHA (1990), sec. 3.2.3

[25] Quoted in F: National Society (1989), p. 9

[26] C: Suffolk (1995), p. 18

[27] C: Berkshire, p. 7f

[28] F: CJEPC (1995), secs 4.2, 5.1

[29] E: Islam: Islamic Academy, p. 1

[30] Alan Brown, *Crosscurrent* no. 48 (1995), p. 3

[31] C: Wirral, sec. 12

[32] C: Dorset (1990)

rather 'a worship-enabling community.'[33] The Church of England 1995 seminars[34] noted that

> the management of collective school worship is of a lower order than the theological, philosophical and educational rationale ... Although the word 'God' is sufficient for those Christians who believe, it clearly poses problems for members of some other faiths and agnostics and atheists

– an important reminder of the nature of pluralism in schools, even primary ones.

3. Educational school worship

In the House of Lords debate on the 1988 Act Lady Hooper applied the distinctions in another way when she said that the 'educational value of worship must be clearly distinguished from confessional acts of worship which are properly pursued by practising Christians and members of other faiths.'[35]

This 'educational' nature of collective worship is strongly emphasised by many commentators. 'Worship is an inclusive not exclusive activity which has an educational rather than liturgical foundation'.[36] 'Worship should be inclusive, educational, curricular, contributing to RE and with a sense of occasion.'[37] Gent wrote:

> As a learning experience for all members of the school community, assembly should be consonant with other educational activities, and, in so being, place neither the presenter nor the recipient in an awkward or less than honest position. ... This would mean that evangelism – the attempt to pass over a body of central religious convictions through direct appeal – is inappropriate to school collective worship.[38]

The Muslim Educational Forum expressed a similar point of view:

[33] B: O'Keeffe (1986) and Watson (1987), p. 166

[34] F: Church of England (1996), p. 27

[35] Quoted in F: National Society (1989), p. 13

[36] C: Dorset (1990), sec. 1.4

[37] C: Stockport, p. 2

[38] D: CEM, sec. 4.3

> Everyone must accept the fact that collective worship and RE in state funded schools are not the occasion to introduce pupils/students to the concept of worship or the practising of their faith within the various religious traditions. In order for it to be relevant for the school community as a whole it must take account of the family backgrounds of all the pupils/students taking part in these educational activities.[39]

As Loukes had pointed out in 1965, 'adoration' was a central issue in collective worship[40] and he reported girls who said to their headteacher 'You have no right to make us pray.' 'But I don't,' she replied, 'nobody can make you pray!' 'But you try to,' they countered, 'you say, "Let us pray" ' (p. 133). The 1988 debates in the House of Lords showed awareness of this point. The Bishop of London's concern was 'to ensure there is a proper framework which enables people to respond, which informs and encourages, but which does not compel.'[41]

LEA documents often make this point about no compulsion: 'One should create an opportunity for worship for those able to use it while providing a fertile medium for learning about worship for others.'[42] Hampshire, giving advice on prayer, suggests that a quiet time of stillness 'allows for an open response from all pupils and teachers.'[43] Another phrase from John Hull which has proved useful is the notion of producing experiences through which 'children may be brought to the "threshold" of worship ... This should however be done in a way that is educationally and theologically acceptable (i.e. without any element of compulsion).'[44]

Wakefield[45] made similar points and gave a number of suggestions to facilitate this possibility. It also illustrated a widespread sensitivity to the presence in school of pupils of various faiths. So its collective worship group sought an understanding of worship in school which:

- retained the distinctiveness of each faith, and yet could be inclusive of all pupils;
- could respect the freedom and integrity of each child while supporting the faith nurture of pupils within their community;

[39] E: Islam: MEF (1996), p. 8

[40] B: Loukes (1965), p. 126

[41] B: Copley, p. 8

[42] C: Warwick, p. 4

[43] C: Hampshire (1993), p. 7

[44] C: Wandsworth, p. 3

[45] C: Wakefield, p. 7f

- would enable pupils to develop their own beliefs.

Another aspect of 'educational' collective worship involves teaching pupils about the nature of worship and its associated activities.[46] The Durham Report,[47] as noted earlier, had distinguished the 'didactic' element of worship from the 'expressive'; e.g. pupils learn what prayer and praise are and are informed about religious festivals. Some LEA documents disagree with this; some feel that this is more properly a task for RE lessons.

Ninian Smart[48] argued that education in worship involved people being participant observers, besides learning information. Miles[49] made a similar point: 'Corporate worship is characterised by commitment to beliefs and a way of life, though pupils may 'inhabit' them while they are *exploring* or *celebrating* a worthwhile value, viewpoint or activity.'

Contributing to the spiritual development of pupils is explicitly mentioned by the 1988 Act as one purpose for collective worship. The Board of Deputies of British Jews[50] 'acknowledge the principle of acts of collective worship in schools' and considered that 'such acts help to enhance children's accessibility to a spiritual dimension'.

Westminster[51] in its guidelines included a passage from a lecture given to its SACRE by John Hull: 'Children have a spiritual right of access to their family traditions. That right should be set in the context of their access to all spiritual traditions upon which their community draws.'

Jill Davies[52] illustrated how children with special needs could 'explore the meaning' behind festivals of various faiths and 'become involved in the feelings involved' through imaginative participation and so 'gain in understanding of the people whose faith is expressed in celebrations.' Among innumerable other writings *Discovering an Approach*[53] provides vivid examples from primary schools of educational assemblies.

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[46] cp. B: Wedderspoon, p. 214f

[47] B: Durham Report, sec. 299f

[48] B: Smart (1972)

[49] D: SHA (1990), sec. 3.2.2

[50] E: Judaism (1994)

[51] C: City of Westminster, p. 86

[52] B: Wood, p. 128f

[53] B: Schools Council (1977)

4. 'Wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'

Initial criticism

A controversial addition to the law on collective worship made by the 1988 Act was the requirement in Section 7 (1) that 'the collective worship required in the school by Section 6 of this Act shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.' This was defined in 7(2) as being 'of a broadly Christian character if it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination'.

This aroused strong feelings. Dorset found it 'disturbing'; some Advisers found the concept 'nonsense'.[54] Interpreting the phrase was one of Humberside's 'major questions'.[55] Humanists were critical; in *Standing Together* [56] they shared 'the widespread concern of many teachers and heads at the "divisive" "hypocritical" implications of the 1988 Act's demands for "wholly" or mainly Christian worship'. (Note the omission of 'broadly'.)

John Hull wrote in an editorial quoted earlier: 'This has to be recognised as the introduction of a confessional element into educational practice, something which Parliament has studiously avoided in all previous legislation.'[57]

It could be argued that this requirement, judiciously expressed, was put in to make explicit what previously had been implicit, and that it was representative not merely of more traditional voices in the educational and political worlds but also of public opinion. Even in 1993 an opinion poll carried out for the *Independent* showed that 70% of the population said that children should say daily prayers in school and only 10% objected strongly. Attendance at Christian churches may have fallen sharply since the war but a significant percentage still used Christian rites of passage. The 1988 Bill was passed in the House of Commons with a majority on a free vote of over 200, though time for debate was very limited.

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[54] C: Taylor (1991), p. 141

[55] C: Humberside, p. 7

[56] E: BHA (1989)

[57] B: Hull (1990), p. 63

More positive reactions

The Free Church Federal Council[58] offered a justification which is significant in view of the Nonconformist traditional support for county schools (as those were the schools to which they usually had sent their children as distinct from church schools):

> The Education Reform Act makes it quite clear that county schools are not 'secular' institutions, nor is the education provided by them 'secular' in the sense that it is opposed to religion ... The worship clauses sometimes refer specifically to Christianity because that has been, and is still, the major formative religious tradition of the United Kingdom.

In an earlier booklet[59] Hull himself had taken a positive view of the Act emphasising the freedoms offered.

> The Act does not identify collective worship with Christian worship ... Moreover we must take account of the fact that the materials which do reflect the Christian traditions can be extremely various. For example, whatever the broad traditions of Christian belief may contain, they may certainly contain belief in God. Any religious material which deals with God can be said to reflect this Christian tradition of belief. Insomuch as Islam, Christianity and Judaism all reflect the Abrahamic tradition they may be said to reflect one another ...

LEAs echoed this in their interpretation of 'broadly Christian'; for instance, Wakefield[60] noted, 'Many of the broadly Christian beliefs are shared by other religious believers too, for example that God is creator ...' (cp. C: Hertfordshire (1995), sec. 2.7).

Hull continued: 'The most natural way forward is for the schools to interpret the requirement in the general spirit of freedom and tolerance, bearing in mind the educational context of their work, and the varied backgrounds of the pupils and the teachers' (p. 18f).

'Appropriate' to pupils

The remark quoted above refers to another set of qualifications to this 'broadly Christian' worship. Acts of collective worship must 'have regard to any relevant considerations relating to the pupils concerned'

> 7.(5) These considerations are ...
>
> (a) any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils concerned which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship which is appropriate in their case; and
>
> (b) their ages and aptitudes.[61]

Hull argued that

> in the case of many pupils their family backgrounds will not represent any religious tradition at all. What kind of religious worship would be appropriate for these pupils? ... One must, in such cases, think of educating pupils into various possibilities of worship, of creating a 'threshold of worship'.[62]

Advisers and SACREs turned their minds to producing guidelines for collective worship which could match the requirements of the Act to what they thought were the needs of the schools as they tried to contribute to the spiritual and moral development of their pupils.

A range of interpretations

A variety of possible interpretations was soon revealed. Taylor's research[63] showed the range of Advisers' views. Gent[64] also stressed the choice of interpretations open to a particular school:

> This choice lies in each school deciding:
>
> (a) *how many* assemblies should reflect this – the Act saying that a *majority* over any term should;
>
> (b) *in what ways* the assemblies should reflect a broadly Christian character, a matter which is of course bound up with the issue of what exactly 'broadly Christian' means.
>
> At present, this is the subject of much national debate and it is clear that the words are open to *many* and *widely different* interpretations.
>
> At one extreme, some are suggesting that Christian beliefs and practices should so influence the school community that what results is something closely akin to faith-group worship.
>
> At the other extreme is the suggestion that, whilst the presuppositions of some school assemblies are different to those of church congregations, they should at least be compatible with Christian belief, practice and principles broadly understood.

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[58] F: FCFC (1990), C1

[59] B: Hull (1989)

[60] C: Wakefield, p. 15

[61] A: ERA (1988), 7(1)(4)

[62] B: Hull (1989), p. 20

[63] C: Taylor (1989), p. 35f

[64] D: CEM (1989), sec. 5.3(b)

> The DES Circular 3/89 (January 1989) itself adopts a flexible position – as when it says, for example, that 'an act of worship which is "broadly Christian" need not contain only Christian material provided that, taken as a whole, it reflects the traditions of Christian belief' [paragraph 34].

Advice sought to reassure teachers who clearly often felt constrained by Section 7. Christian beliefs must not be 'embodied' in collective worship but 'explored'[65] or 'reflected'.[66] Warwick went on to say (p. 14) there was no reason why any individual act of worship should include any or all of such items as the name of Jesus, biblical material, Christian hymns or prayers to comply with the Act. Wakefield[67] produced a broad interpretation. Hertfordshire[68] towards the end of its analysis of the Act wrote:

> The Act requires that collective worship be of 'a broadly Christian character' and by concentrating on those characteristics which are shared by Christian and other traditions the school act of worship can become a purposeful collective spiritual act which sets the tone for all of its pupils for the school day.

But these broad professional interpretations of the 'broadly Christian' clause proved too broad for some. OFSTED evidence suggested that the clause was being ignored, especially in secondary schools. So, as shown on p. 29, Mr. Patten (then Secretary of State) and his advisers tried to clarify – and tighten – this particular requirement by Circular 1/94, section 63.

However, a letter from the DfEE in July 1995 reverted to the earlier policy of Circular 3/89:

> It may be helpful if I clarify the purpose of paragraph 63 of the Circular, which you quote in your letter. This explains the flexibility at a school's disposal when deciding on the content of an act of worship which is mainly of a broadly Christian character. It explains that the inclusion of elements from faiths other than Christianity, or of elements not exclusively Christian, would not mean that the act of worship, taken as a whole, was not broadly Christian.[69]

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[65] C: Kingston, sec. 6

[66] C: Warwick, p. 10

[67] C: Wakefield, p. 14f

[68] C: Hertfordshire (1989), sec. 3.4

[69] Quoted in C: Hertfordshire (1995), sec. 1.13

5. '... accord a special status to Jesus Christ'

Circular 1/94: paragraph 63

The most controversial section of this Circular was probably paragraph 63. This convoluted paragraph tried to give a broad interpretation for collective worship 'of a broadly Christian character' but the last sentence: 'It must contain elements ... which accord a special status to Jesus Christ' drew fire from all quarters.

Criticisms from faiths other than Christianity

The Board of Deputies of British Jews, as noted earlier, accepted the value of 'sensitively planned Acts of collective worship' but they felt moved to seek Counsel's opinion on this sentence. He declared that 'the last sentence of paragraph 63 of the Circular is outwith the terms of the 1988 Act'.[70] The Board wrote to John Patten (then Secretary of State) who in his reply illustrated the requirement by saying that examples of giving special status to Jesus Christ were 'the use of parables and other teachings of Jesus'. But, as Hull[71] pointed out that is not 'distinctive' of Christianity as in Islam Jesus is a prophet. The status of Jesus that is distinctive of Christianity is as the second person of the Trinity. If that status were presented in school worship, Muslims would have to be withdrawn. So the phrase did not offend only Jews; arguably Christians too found it theologically unsound.

Then, as Umar Hegedus pointed out in response to Hull's lecture,[72] 'By spelling out this interpretation the Department has effectively excluded from acts of collective worship all Muslim teachers and over 300,000 Muslim pupils in schools in England', whereas 'everything we have heard and read encourages Muslim pupils to believe that schools wish their collective worship to be an inclusive occasion to which all pupils can contribute.'

The Muslim Educational Trust[73] reiterated the firm Muslim view:

> School assemblies provide valuable focal points in the school day or week. Collective worship, though, is only meaningful when people of the same faith willingly come together to participate in an act of religious devotion. Islam allows only worship of the one God – Allah.

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[70] E: Judaism (1994), sec. 3.7

[71] B: Hull (1995), p. 30

[72] B: Hull (1995), p. 38

[73] E: Islam: MET (May 1995), p. 3

> Muslim children should not be forced to go against this basic tenet of their faith.

Teachers were concerned too. The Secondary Heads Association wrote to Mr Patten in June 1994 asking for the law on collective worship to be changed. Some statements in Circular 1/94 were widely seen as aggravating the difficulties and one headteacher wrote: 'Many Heads and teachers both Christian and non-Christian find the concept of "collective mainly Christian worship" for a variety of believers and non-believers a wholly unChristian concept.'

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers policy statement declared:

> By its nature worship is freely given; it cannot be imposed. ATL agrees with the Association of Christian Teachers that the formula for collective worship of a substantially Christian character, as set down in Circular 1/94, will, in many schools, result in acts of worship which are either not honest or not Christian.[74]

Criticisms by Christian churches

The Christian churches were generally critical too. The ecumenical Churches Joint Education Policy Committee surveyed its members in 1994 and individual responses showed strong support for a revision of Circular 1/94. The first two major recommendations of the final document,[75] judiciously expressed, were:

> 1.1 Serious attention should be given by the DfEE to the concerns of the ... teaching profession and the problems identified by the churches. This could involve improved advice in a formal Circular, as well as extension of the guidance, now provided by OFSTED for its Inspectors, to enable schools to deliver quality.
>
> 1.2 Since a change in the law is unlikely in the near future, discussion should be encouraged with the DfEE about the interpretation and application of the daily requirement in the Act. There should be a clearer appreciation of the nature, aims and objectives of worship in a school context ...

The document expressed the churches' support for collective worship but warned that 'irrelevant or hypocritical acts of worship contribute to pupils' prejudice against the Christian (and other) faith(s)' (sec. 3.5). Section 5.5 is a good example of the complexities of interpreting 'broadly Christian' in practice.[76]

[74] D: ATL (March 1995), sec. 2.3

[75] F: CJEPC (4th December, 1995), p. 1

[76] Quoted also in F: Church of England (1996), pp. 46–7

The Church of England Board of Education also carried out a thorough enquiry via its Diocesan Boards and regional seminars.[77] It drew attention to the fact that

> in submissions to the draft of the Circular (Circular X/94) the attention of the DfE had already been drawn to the theological difficulties as well as the practical implications of the phrase 'a special status to Jesus Christ'. This advice was not taken up in the final version of the Circular. (p. 15)

One Diocesan Board commented: 'The final sentence (of paragraph 63) is a major stumbling block.'

> We believe that the guidance on collective worship in schools as contained in Circular 1/94 is inappropriate, unhelpful and in many county schools impossible in practice. (p. 16)
>
> There is much of value in 1/94, but the key passages on worship seek to define too much (e.g. paragraphs 57 and 63). The point here is that while we would affirm such ideas many do not. For example those who are Buddhist cannot accept paragraph 57, and those who are Jewish are offended by paragraph 63. Doctrinal statements of this nature in a government document are destructive of the kind of consensus which is crucial if worship is to be developed in schools. Paragraph 50, by contrast, offers a broad basis for agreement. Many secular Heads would accept that some pupils will want to worship God within a school act of worship and will respect this. However the negative aspect of 1/94 is considerable. (p. 17)

In the regional seminars there were

> trenchant criticisms of certain paragraphs in Circular 1/94. One expressed amazement that paragraph 63 was so theologically naive and questioned why a 'one nation' government document should refer to the messiahship of Jesus, as this was certain to cause offence. (p. 25)

The report ended with a statement of the Policy of the Board (of Education) on Collective School Worship which includes:

> (v) It is the view of the Board that the paragraphs of Circular 1/94 which many regard as contentious (particularly numbers 57, 59, 63 and 65), confuse the policy and purpose of the 1988 Education Reform Act. The Board welcomes the clarification on the law provided in the October 1995 edition of the OFSTED Handbook. (p. 35)

[77] F: Church of England (1996)

OFSTED and Suffolk (1995)

The 1995 edition of the OFSTED Handbook,[78] a much shorter version of the original 1993 compendium, offered a more cautious version of paragraph 63.

> Much that is identifiably Christian in tone may not necessarily mention Jesus. This is true of some hymns and prayers used regularly as part of worship within Christian churches. However, if the worship consistently avoids reference to Jesus within the spoken or written word, then it could not reasonably be defined as mainly Christian.

Suffolk[79] offers an 'inclusive' interpretation of the 'broadly Christian' clause after careful consideration of the Act and paragraphs 61 and 63 of Circular 1/94:

> It would take a panel of theologians to determine the precise boundaries of these clauses and even then they are unlikely all to agree! ... there is a high level of ambiguity, to say the least.
>
> The requirement for all pupils to participate in acts of worship which would reflect broad Christian traditions of belief can be interpreted in two ways ...
>
> 1. Christianity shares common beliefs and values with other faiths e.g. ... love, forgiveness and reconciliation are important. These are likely to coincide with many of the school's shared values and should not constitute a problem.
>
> 2. Certain beliefs and values which are particular to Christianity. It would be wrong to present these as though they were the same as the agreed or shared values of the school. However, if correctly contextualised, they can be presented for consideration and reflection e.g. 'On this matter most Christians believe that ...' or 'Christians believe that Jesus is God and that ...' It can be consistent with agreed school values that pupils should learn about different faiths and reflect on various teachings.[80]

[78] A: OFSTED (1995a)

[79] C: Suffolk (1995), cp. Hertfordshire (1995), sec. 2.7

[80] cp. C: Hertfordshire (1995), sec. 4

6. How 'religious' are assemblies and 'subjective worship'?

Broad interpretations of 'collective worship'

The range of activities which a school might count as collective worship under the Act was outlined in many LEA documents. The Sunderland guidelines[81] gave one typical analysis:

> Many definitions have been offered about the nature of collective worship, and out of all the words written and spoken, it is possible to identify six views of what such worship might be:
>
> 1. Broadly Christian Worship
> 2. An Exploration of the Spiritual
> 3. The Celebration of Values
> 4. Other (non-Christian) Faith Worship
> 5. An Educational Activity
> 6. The Building Up of the School Community
>
> Each of these views provides a 'way in' to worship at a different level, and though each has been isolated for comment, we try to show how these views relate to, overlap and interconnect with each other.

Sunderland's conclusion (p. 48) was typical too:

> These guidelines present an interpretation of the provisions of the Education Reform Act, which:
>
> a) makes it clear that worship is an educational activity;
>
> b) takes seriously the nature of broadly Christian worship, so that worship presented to students under the heading does properly reflect Christian belief;
>
> c) offers alternative approaches to worship, as being concerned with 'the spiritual', and with the 'celebration of values' within the context of worship;
>
> d) suggests that (c) can form part of the content of (b), (though for schools to be pursuing a policy of broadly Christian worship, there must also be clear reference to the Christian belief on which the worship is based)
>
> e) stresses that no act of worship should be concerned with fostering or promoting a faith so as to bring students to a particular conviction;

[81] C: Sunderland, p. 28

f) makes it clear that in all acts of collective worship (including those acts which are wholly or mainly broadly Christian) the aim is to bring before children the possibility of worship, to bring them to the 'threshold of worship', and to provide an opportunity for their own response.

'Subjective' worship and assemblies

Those conclusions in the Sunderland guidelines raise significant issues about 'worship'. Even if the 1988 Act seemed to stress what Hull called the 'objective' character of worship, many county schools still held 'assemblies' tending towards what Hull[82] called a 'subjective' view of worship focusing on what Tillich had termed 'ultimate concern, that which we take seriously without reservation'.

Ninian Smart also had supported a wider view of 'worship' in his *Concept of Worship*,[83] where he wrote of worship as involving a relationship between a person (or persons) and a 'focus of value' which is transcendent. West Glamorgan[84] used Smart's analysis in its guidelines. It also quoted a famous Quaker, George Gorman, on worship (p. 4):

> I wish to consider first, worship as an individual form of human activity, when we purposely put ourselves in the position of paying particular attention to those things in life which have the greatest meaning for us. In this sense, worship is a sitting down in the presence of our values. It is an act of reconciliation in which we become more fully aware of their real meaning for us.

Hampshire too drew on Gorman's words when it defined worship as 'a universal human activity which can be expressed as a growing ability to celebrate and reflect on things held to be of worth.' The British Humanist Association[85] quoted other examples of this approach, such as Suffolk (1990): 'School worship should offer all members of the school the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the 'worth-ship' of realities and values held to be of central importance to the school community.' (The Anglo-Saxon origin of the word 'worship' continued to prove useful to several authorities.)

Teachers' unions valued such assemblies. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers[86] pointed to the values of

[82] B: Hull (1995), p. 28

[83] B: Smart (1972)

[84] C: West Glamorgan, p. 42

[85] E: BHA (1989)

[86] D: ATL (March 1995), secs 27–8

> gathering together, identifying and acknowledging that which, collectively, the school community values and considers to be of worth ... Such gatherings, or assemblies should ... where appropriate ... provide an opportunity for pupils to engage in a more formal act of collective worship ...

The National Union of Teachers in 1994 wrote of assemblies as 'useful for establishing the school ethos and a sense of community'. Muslims too, though against collective worship, agreed that 'school assemblies could still tackle moral issues.'[87]

How 'religious' can such assemblies be?

But Sunderland's fourth conclusion, (d), quoted above, recalled a long-standing problem – a tendency to present value issues with little or no reference to religion. The view that morals are autonomous from religion is not uncommon.

This was illustrated by OFSTED's report.[88] 'In general, acts of worship provided the (primary) pupils with moral and ethical teaching consonant with Christianity. However, ... specific links between morality and religious belief were often not clearly established' (65). In secondary schools 'most examples of collective worship inspected were moral ... The spiritual dimension in this provision was generally weak' (72). OFSTED's own problems in establishing criteria for the spiritual and moral development which it was supposed to be inspecting are a further illustration of the difficult conceptual problems in these 'areas of experience'.

So, although such assemblies were common practice as a means of meeting the legal requirement appropriately, those concerned about the 'objective' nature of collective worship continued to raise questions about their contribution to pupils' 'spiritual' development. Muslim approval of assemblies to develop values as distinct from collective worship also serves to point up the distinction between collective worship in its strict 'objective' sense and assembly, and the importance of clarifying the aims of the exercise.

[87] E: Islam: MET (1995), p. 4

[88] A: OFSTED (1994b)

7. Collective worship in Circular 1/94

The Circular

As has been outlined above, in the light of five years' experience of the Act in operation and OFSTED's reports the government tried to tighten up the law on collective worship by administrative action – the issuing of a Circular. It introduced a significant sharpening of the aims of collective worship and offered an 'objective' definition.

Paragraph 50 gave a broad general aim:

> 50. Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes.

Paragraph 57 on the definition of 'worship' stated that

> 57. 'Worship' is not defined in the legislation and in the absence of any such definition it should be taken to have its natural and ordinary meaning. That is, it must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.

Paragraph 58 began tersely: 'collective worship and assembly are distinct activities' and then attempted to move organisers into aiming at greater pupil participation. 'Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear. Collective worship can, nevertheless, be related to the day to day life, aspirations and concerns of the school.'

Criticisms

These clauses provoked serious criticism. The National Union of Teachers gave an interesting example of teachers' feelings in its comment on Draft Circular X/94. Even the draft that became paragraph 50 (quoted above) seemed

> inappropriate in the context of today's schools. 'To provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God' makes breathtaking assumptions about pupils' backgrounds and in our view is not the right language for the Circular. It may also be offensive to various faith communities whose deity is known by other names.

Humanists also attacked the phrase 'reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power' in paragraph 57.[89]

Churches' comments

The Churches Joint Education Policy Committee[90] supported 'in principle ... paragraph 50'. It considered

> there should be no conflict between the aims of collective worship and the purposes of education ... Attending worship is one of the occasions when the pupil as a person, and the school as a community, and life as a whole, are placed *sub specie aeternitatis* (seen within the dimension of eternity ....) (3.2)

The Committee acknowledged the 'concerns of the teaching profession' (1.1 and 2.2). Its section (5) on 'Theological Aspects of Collective Worship' (reproduced here as Appendix A) raised all sorts of issues which called for exploration by theologians and educationalists. It clearly understood the 'right of each pupil or staff member to respond or not to respond' to 'a range of "worshipful" activities' (5.4). But the nearest it came to overt criticism was in its first recommendation (1.1) which said: 'Serious attention should be given by the DfEE to the concerns of the teaching profession and the problems identified by the churches. This could involve improved advice in a formal Circular ...'

The Church of England Board of Education[91] reported more open criticisms. The Diocesan Boards seemed to feel that paragraph 50 'offered a broad base for agreement' (p. 13) but 'a recurring theme ... was the very narrow "definition" of worship made available to schools' (p. 7). 'There is a recognition that the word "worship" has to bear a broader definition than given to it in Circular 1/94 to include "stillness, silence", etc.' (p. 10).

Paragraph 57 attracted sharper comment.

> The main criticism ... was that it offers a 'too simplistic view of the nature and theology of worship'. The general feeling was that by offering a definition of worship the DfE had narrowed the real opportunities and possibilities opened up by the Education Reform Act 1988. (p. 14f)
>
> While we would affirm such ideas many do not. For example those who are Buddhist cannot accept paragraph 57 ... Doctrinal statements

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[89] E: BHA (March 1995), p. 5

[90] F: CJEPC (1995)

[91] F: Church of England (1996)

> of this nature in a government document are destructive of the kind of consensus which is crucial if worship is to be developed in schools. (p. 17)

At the Board's seminars 'one member noted the "theological imperialism" of the government usurping definitions of worship' (p. 25). The Board's Report (p. 33) referred to the CJEPC document (section 5) as lending 'force to the argument that paragraph 57 ... is not only too simplistic, it does not even begin to address the nature of worship when that worship is constrained by a school context.'

So the Board's Policy on collective worship included the following (p. 350):

> (iv) The Board encourages schools to adopt a policy for worship broadly based on paragraph 50 of Circular 1/94 ...
>
> (v) It is the view of the Board that the paragraphs of Circular 1/94, which many regard as contentious (particularly numbers 57, 59, 63 and 65), confuse the policy and purpose of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

These comments by the churches reflect not only Christian theology but also educational issues and the sensitivities of other faiths and world views.

Two LEA interpretations

The Education Service was not uncritical either. One authority known to the authors refused to accept the interpretation offered by the Circular and OFSTED's guidance, challenging the Chief Inspector. It went on to write to its schools and agreed to support any school which followed the County Council guidance on collective worship based on Gorman's statement about worship quoted above (p. 56).

Suffolk[92] was another authority which demonstrated that it would not be directed by the government's definition of worship as indicated by Circular 1/94. It offered the following commentary on paragraphs 50 and 57:

> 50. Bearing in mind the government's desire to preserve the 'long tradition of religious freedom' (9) and the requirement for collective worship to take account of the 'family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the pupils' (paragraph 64); we take the use of the clause 'to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God' not to imply the imposition of religious belief, but rather to leave open the possibility, for those who wish to, to respond in this manner. It is not

[92] C: Suffolk (1995), p. 7

> the responsibility of schools to encourage or discourage religious faith. Such an inclusive approach is often a matter of presentation e.g. 'As we reflect on ... let us all consider how we might each respond and some of you may wish to respond with your own private prayer.'
>
> 57. This clause is difficult when considered against others. Given that collective worship should be appropriate for all pupils (54) and that non-Christian pupils should be able to join in (65), we interpret the term 'be concerned' to mean two things:
>
> 1. that pupils who believe in God have the opportunity to respond personally.
>
> 2. that from time to time as pupils reflect on issues of life and death the possibility of a 'divine being or power' might be the focus of reflection, provided once again that this is contextualised appropriately i.e. 'some people believe ... etc.'

The guidance acknowledged that

> Worship is a difficult term to define and much more so as an activity within a county school. A description or definition of worship will to a considerable extent reflect the character of the worshipping community. Therefore, in considering the meaning of collective worship in school we must carefully take into account the character of the school community. DfE Circular 1/94 recognises this ...

The following framework was offered by Suffolk, suggesting how staff might develop a programme of 'meaningful, relevant assemblies' (p. 21):

> A Framework for School Assemblies
>
> Reflection on a range of personal, social, moral, or spiritual issues, which should be considered in a manner which is consistent with the agreed school values.
>
> Response to affirm and celebrate the agreed school values and to act in accordance with these; to encourage the pupils to aspire to higher values and visions of the good life; to encourage them to commit themselves to positive ways of living. As appropriate, this could be structured around five key responses:
>
> i. celebration
>
> ii. acknowledging failures and shortcomings
>
> iii. expressions of thankfulness
>
> iv. commitment
>
> v. action

8. The place of other faiths and world views

Avoid divisiveness

The National Society, writing about the 1988 Act,[93] considered that the Act had been drawn up in 'essentially a spirit of tolerance of, and respect for, religious traditions other than one's own, based upon a fuller understanding of them.' It continued: 'This spirit needs to be exercised in the context of the historical fact that the major religious traditions in this country have been and still are Christian.'

The parliamentary debates about the religious changes showed an awareness that Britain was increasingly a multicultural society, though members of faiths other than Christian totalled only about 5% of the population and their distribution was not uniform throughout the country. As was typical in debates about collective worship, the presence of significant numbers of agnostics or atheists was not stressed. But overall the Act maintained the British tradition of freedom of conscience.

The Anglican Bishop of London stressed his aim 'to avoid damaging divisions within a school and its surrounding community'. Baroness Hooper also stressed the value of collective worship in helping members of a school 'develop their sense of community'. The Act required only the majority (quantified by some as at least 51%) of acts of worship to be 'broadly Christian'.

Respect integrity

One basic principle widely stressed is the 'integrity' of pupils and teachers. The Islamic Accord[94] called 'for Muslim pupils to be able to participate in school activities without compromise to the integrity of their faith', and felt that this was impossible under the 1988 Act. LEAs made the same point (e.g. C: Birmingham, p. 10) and the Evangelical Alliance wrote that evangelical Christianity shared 'a respect for the integrity of pupils from non-Christian homes – and non-Christian teachers who feel unable to lead school worship'. In the 1995 Anglican seminars 'with regard to worship in multi-faith schools there was general agreement that pupils should not be made to feel any pressure to worship a God in whom they did not believe.'[95]

[93] F: National Society (1988), p. 7f

[94] E: Islam: Islamic Accord

[95] F: Church of England (1996), p. 28

Celebrate diversity

Some found educational value specifically in celebrating diversity, bringing differences between faiths to pupils in such a way as to develop pupils' understanding and tolerance. Warwickshire[96] said that

> the act of worship ... should provide a rich mixed diet rather than flavourless gruel. So children will be able to recognise those positions with which they can identify, see the validity of alternative view points, and also realise that school gives value to the right to be an individual.

The National Society[97] similarly wrote: 'Sometimes the maintenance of harmony within a multi-faith school will be best achieved by expression of the differences that exist through provision for different forms of worship.'

Celebrating, or taking note of festivals has been another common suggestion, e.g. Sunderland.[98] But OFSTED[99] reported of primary schools inspected: 'Diwali and the Chinese New Year were the most frequently reported non-Christian festivals but they were given prominence in only a minority of schools.'

Seek common themes and reflect

On the other hand many sought to avoid divisiveness. The Free Church Federal Council[100] talked about 'multi-faith' dialogue. LEA advice made many suggestions including (as shown above) presenting 'broadly Christian' material which contained concepts, such as Creator God, that could be acceptable to members of faiths other than Christianity. Brenda Watson[101] proposed 'interfaith assemblies' which focused on 'general themes of deep religious significance to which various religious traditions can contribute insights', e.g. awareness of mystery.

Westminster[102] pointed to another aspect.

> The language of prayer and sacred texts is a storehouse of spiritual values for faith communities and offers schools a resource of

[96] C: Warwickshire, p. 20

[97] F: National Society (1989)

[98] C: Sunderland, p. 39

[99] A: OFSTED (1994b), sec. 66

[100] F: FCFC (1990)

[101] B: Watson (1993), p. 163

[102] C: City of Westminster, p. 33

> considerable potential; used with respect both for the traditions themselves and for the children or young people, they can enrich ideas and feelings in different ways from conventional language and symbolism.

Laurie Rosenberg, responding as a Jew to John Hull[103] pointed out that: 'the law has to recognise that Christianity is no longer the sole purveyor of the language of faith, that groups other than Christians have made an impact on the British heritage ...'

Quakers in their response to the Churches Joint Education Policy Committee suggested that valuable worship can be held in a multi-faith context, especially when silence is the basis of prayer. Several LEAs (e.g. C: Suffolk) stressed the importance of opportunity for 'reflection'. The Church of England[104] reported 'The testimony of an evangelical headteacher working in a school serving a multi-faith community is that spirituality from within which encompasses all faiths, and all can comfortably share in stillness, silence and reflection.' Interestingly, most Church of England Boards of Education encouraged 'an inclusive approach to worship' when asked: 'How best can schools meet the needs of the challenge of conducting daily worship in schools in a multi-faith/no faith community?' (*ibid.* p. 10).

Separate assemblies and the 'determination' procedure

Parliament may have 'sought to provide a framework which ... does not break the school up into communities based on the various faith groups of the parents', but some groups have felt bound to exercise their right to ask for separate acts of worship. The 'determination' procedure was set up to enable this under paragraph 12 of the 1988 Act. Separate acts of worship are not a new idea: in 1956 the City of London School was holding separate acts of worship for Christians and Jews after a common assembly.

Currently many of those seeking separate acts of worship are Muslim. The Muslim Educational Trust[105] wrote:

> Islamic assembly/collective worship should be available for all Muslim pupils, especially in those schools where they are a majority. The MET believes that this should be standard practice in schools and headteachers should not wait until parents request such worship. Every school should try to provide prayer facilities on-site so that

[103] B: Hull (1995), p. 40

[104] F: Church of England (1996), p. 8

[105] E: Islam: MET (1992), p. 10

> their Muslim pupils can fulfil their religious obligation by performing those of the five daily prayers which happen to fall within the school day.

Notice also needs to be taken of the Muslim claim[106] that 'the current right of withdrawal has proved insufficient' through parental language difficulties and/or the attitude of headteachers. Also the 'determination' procedures are said by teachers' organisations and by Muslims to be too complex to work satisfactorily and 'current methods are unfair to non-Christian communities.'[107] (Taylor[108] has a useful survey of how the system operated in 1990, and clearly SACREs continue to vary in their interpretation of the law.) So Muslims ask that governors and headteachers should be permitted to act on their own discretion. But others might argue that the 'determination' procedure can offer a school some protection against a vocal pressure group.

John Hull[109] spoke of determinations as a 'vexed question' and commented:

> Defenders of the current legislation sometimes speak as if it was one of the achievements of the legislation that each religious community now has the opportunity to hold its own acts of worship. It should not be too readily assumed that the various religious communities regard this as a great favour. In my view, most religious communities would like their children to stay with children from other communities unless the religious basis of the activity becomes so explicit as to become alien.

Baroness Hooper made it clear that the act of collective worship in school cannot be understood as an act of confessional worship in which practising Christians and members of other faiths might participate. They have their churches and mosques, their synagogues and temples; let them worship there. The educational context of the act of collective worship in schools is quite different. This important distinction is blurred by the determination procedure, which assumes that worship should take place in faith-specific groups and so be the same as the worship conducted by practising believers. Bradford is an example of an area where Muslims are holding such acts of worship in schools.

[106] e.g. E: Islam: MET (1995), p. 3

[107] E: Islam: Islamic Accord

[108] C: Taylor (1991), pp. 143–155

[109] B: Hull (1995), p. 32

It is difficult to gauge how many determinations are currently granted. In its analysis of SACRE reports the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority remarks:

> The value of the SCAA analysis very much depends on the quality of the reports received from SACREs and their response to requests for corrections to the information derived from them. The information given ... about determinations ... depends heavily on these reports and is unlikely to be complete. [110]

The details about determinations given in the 1996 SCAA analysis of SACRE reports are reproduced here as Appendix E. However, it is important to note that the analysis is made from a total of only seventy-five reports received by January 1996; Ealing, for instance, reported eighteen determinations in the previous year, but is missing entirely from the 1996 figures because its report had not been received.

A Humanist comment

The British Humanist Association raised a different aspect. It accepted the value of school assemblies 'to stimulate the children's sense of community and to celebrate shared values'.[111] But it offered a salutary reminder that multicultural Britain included many 'who live decent moral lives without believing in a God or gods'. Their views also need to be taken into account when devising acts of collective worship.

Conclusion

The Churches Joint Education Policy Committee[112] argues that 'there is a need ... for theologians and educationalists to explore how far schools should or can produce an act of collective worship which is at the same time both "open" for non-believers and "closed" for believers.' This is clearly not easy and its paper entitled *Collective Worship in Schools* includes an 'Aide-memoire on "other faiths" ' (reproduced here as Appendix B) giving points arising from a consultation between representatives of Christian churches and other faith communities.

The basic challenge facing a school in its approach to worship, then, consists in creating an experience

> which neither imposes nor compromises belief or unbelief, but rather recognises the integrity and dignity of all members of the school community;

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[110] A: SCAA (1996)

[111] E: BHA (1995), p. 2

[112] F: CJEPC (1995), sec. 5.5

> which is essentially educational, and stimulates the possibility of reflecting inwardly, sharing outwardly and living upwardly.[113]

9. A 'daily' act of collective worship?

Problems

The 1988 Act's requirement for daily collective worship took no notice of earlier representations from the NAHT and churches. In 1985 the NAHT had said that the frequency needed careful consideration. The Church of England's submission to the DES in September 1987 'strongly affirmed that quality and variety within each week's pattern of worship should form essential elements of the pupils' experience', without actually stipulating the precise frequency. The (ecumenical) British Council of Churches was more specific in its submission (September 1987):

> Our concern is for quality rather than quantity. We doubt whether the most skilful and committed of teachers can produce worthwhile assemblies daily; perhaps one full school assembly each week should be the minimum requirement.[114]

OFSTED evidence[115] shows that the frequency requirement is not being observed, especially in secondary schools. Suffolk[116] tends to confirm this:

> A recent survey of Suffolk headteachers has shown that the requirement for daily collective worship is seen as a problem, but mainly within the secondary schools. Primary heads have indicated the daily requirement does not cause significant disruption to the school day. Some welcome the regular opportunity for the school 'family' to come together. However, secondary Heads indicated that it does cause significant disruption.

Solutions proposed

The Secondary Heads Association seems to be moving towards requesting the removal of the requirement for 'worship' on a 'daily' basis while retaining some clear requirement, perhaps for 'regular weekly assemblies'. Following a survey of its members (Summer 1994) the

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[113] C: City of Westminster, p. 27

[114] F: National Society (1989), p. 16f

[115] A: OFSTED (1994b)

[116] C: Suffolk, p. 17

NAHT was (in 1995) pursuing a policy of proposing a change in the law (section 6(1)) from a requirement of a daily 'act of collective worship' to

> (a) an assembly, at least weekly, 'to address spiritual, ethical and moral issues'
>
> (b) it shall be the responsibility of the Governing Body in consultation with the head of each school to determine the nature and frequency of any act of worship.

The Muslim Educational Trust[117] told Gillian Shephard that British Muslims were 'increasingly coming to the view that there should be no statutory requirement for collective worship', but discussion about this issue continues amongst Muslims.

The Christian churches expressed themselves more cautiously about a change in the law. The Churches Joint Education Policy Committee[118] recommended that 'since a change in the law is unlikely in the near future, discussion should be encouraged with the DfEE about the interpretation and application of the daily requirement of the Act.'

The Church of England found a range of views in the Diocesan Boards and seminars.[119] There was 'some dissatisfaction with the law as it stands, ... but there [was] no unanimity on what should be put in place of the daily requirement.' It produced the following statement of policy:

> (i) In the light of all the evidence and opinion, the Board's own carefully considered opinion is that collective worship should be maintained in schools as part of the pupil's educational experience.
>
> (ii) The Board does not wish, at the present time, to press for a change in the law on the daily requirement for school worship. It regards the present law as providing a sufficient framework within which schools can explore effective forms of worship.
>
> (iii) The Board does, however, recognise that an argument has been made for change in the legislation as applied to the daily provision of worship. The Board, therefore, wishes to continue purposeful discussions with the DfEE, OFSTED and other interested parties, including other churches and other faith communities, in order to work towards an acceptable agreed framework for collective worship.

As CJEPC put it, at least 'more immediate alternative measures could be discussed which might enable schools to deliver their responsibilities in worship and also avoid bringing the law into disrespect' (p. 1, sec. 1.2).

[117] E: Islam: MET (May 1995), p. 4

[118] F: CJEPC (1995), p. 1, sec. 1.2

[119] F: Church of England (1996), p. 34

It should be noted that the minimum requirement in Scotland, a country with a strong Christian tradition, is 'not less than once a week at the primary stages, and at least once a month at the secondary stages.'[120]

10. Assessing current attitudes

In spite of the quantities of advice, guidance and largely anecdotal press coverage available for perusal, there is relatively little hard empirical evidence published to indicate what is actually happening in schools, or the attitudes of pupils, staff and parents to collective worship.

Survey results

Evidence emerges from a British Social Attitudes survey of the widespread support among the population as a whole for some form of collective worship in schools. Andrew Greeley, examining the results of the 1991 survey, concludes that the results suggest that support for daily prayers in schools is strong in Britain: some 70% of the respondents believed that such an activity probably or definitely should take place. The results, when broken down by denomination, were as follows:

No religion	45%
Presbyterian	77%
Church of England	82%
Roman Catholic	87%
Other Protestant	90%
Free Church	95%

Reflecting the widespread survey finding that women tend to be more positive towards religion than men, 74% of women were in favour of daily prayers in schools compared with 66% of men. There was also an inverse relationship between support for daily prayers in schools and educational level: 84% of those leaving school aged fifteen or younger were in favour; 65% of those leaving between ages sixteen and eighteen, and only 53% of those leaving education at nineteen or above believed that daily school prayer should take place. [121]

Francis and Kay[122] report the results of a survey of 13,000 pupils aged thirteen to fifteen undertaken in sixty-five schools in different parts of

[120] SED Circular 6/91

[121] B: Greeley (1992), pp. 51–70

[122] B: Francis and Kay (1995)

England and Wales. Because the research was focusing on the Christian model of religious belief, the analysis left out pupils who belonged to non-Christian faith communities. A whole battery of questions was used relating to religion and values; one of them asked whether schools should have a religious assembly every day. Overall, 73% of the pupils felt they should not, 6% felt they should and 21% were not certain. When the responses were analysed by gender there was little difference between male and female. However, when they were analysed according to church attendance it was found that 17% of all weekly attenders felt there should be daily religious assemblies in schools, whereas the figure was 8% for occasional attenders and 3% for those who never attended. The authors conclude their analysis of religious assemblies as follows:

> If pupils were given a vote on the retention or abolition of a daily religious assembly, it is clear that the stipulations with regard to collective worship in the 1988 Education Reform Act would not have been passed. Even weekly church-goers can only muster 17% of their number to support daily religious assembly. The vast majority of pupils, whatever age group or sex, do not want such gatherings. What the survey cannot answer, however, is if it is mainly the word 'daily' which sticks in the throat of these young people.

Kay, in a chapter entitled 'Religious Education and Assemblies: Pupils' Changing Views'[123] combines the above survey with an earlier one undertaken at Culham College Institute by Leslie Francis in 1986. This latter survey reported on answers to a questionnaire by 4,948 eleven-year-old pupils attending Church of England, Roman Catholic and county primary schools within Gloucestershire. Using a semantic grid of bi-polar adjectives, and taking six subject areas of the primary curriculum (RE, school assemblies, English, Maths, games and music lessons) the survey showed that while both sexes ranked assembly as low in importance, they also ranked it as moderately pleasant – in this respect it ranked higher than English. Also, when comparisons between RE and assembly were made, RE was rated lower than assembly on five of the six pairs of adjectives.

In the discussion of the two survey studies, Kay concludes that 'school assembly is favoured more highly than RE by pupils at the age of eleven, but that this position has been reversed by pupils in the middle of secondary school age range' (p. 275). He goes on to suggest that primary school pupils gave collective worship a positive rating on the grounds of its friendliness and pleasantness although they did not rate it as very important.

[123] In B: Francis, Kay and Campbell (1996)

> In essence we may suggest that the positive evaluation of assembly in the primary school does not stem from a perception of the importance assigned to it by pupils. Rather it is the other features of assemblies (friendliness, pleasantness) which make it attractive to pupils. In the mid-secondary school these other features of assembly have been removed. (p. 275)
>
> If the present government's policy towards school assemblies is to succeed, it will have to ensure that pupils think more highly of the importance of assemblies and, at the same time, improve the physical conditions under which they are held. What should give the government some incentive to improve the implementation of its policy is that, until the age of eleven, pupils appear to prefer participating in religious worship to learning about it. (p. 276)

OFSTED evidence

In his annual report for 1993–4,[124] Chris Woodhead includes his remarks about collective worship under the heading of spiritual development (secs 70 and 71). In respect of primary schools he writes:

> The teaching of RE and acts of collective worship made the most powerful contributions to spiritual development ... Almost all schools provided a daily assembly. Although not all such gatherings were judged to contain an act of worship, compliance with requirements was judged favourably in over four-fifths of schools inspected. Where acts of worship occurred, they generally made very positive contributions to promoting and sharing a wide range of values, but they often lacked spiritual quality.

With respect to secondary schools, again OFSTED found that RE and collective worship made the strongest contributions to spiritual development.

However, the great majority of schools failed to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Many staff did not wish to lead collective worship, making it difficult to organise acts of worship in small groups, and accommodation difficulties frequently made it impossible to organise an assembly for the whole school.

In the next annual report for 1994–5[125] there are clearer statements about the extent to which schools meet the legal requirements for collective worship (secs 213 and 214). In respect of primary schools:

> Most primary schools comply with legal requirements for collective worship. Virtually all voluntary aided primary schools hold daily

[124] A: OFSTED (1995b)

[125] A: OFSTED (1996)

assemblies of a predominantly Christian character, though slightly fewer voluntary controlled and county maintained schools do so.

Turning to the position in secondary schools:

> A significant number of secondary schools fail to meet the legal requirements for collective worship. Most non-compliance is attributed by schools to a lack of suitable accommodation. However, some schools are ingenious in overcoming such difficulties, for example by scheduling collective worship across the school day or organising it in form groups. Where teachers are reluctant to lead collective worship these attempts break down, even if well prepared material is provided.

In June 1996, at a meeting with the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, David Trainor HMI reported some findings relating to collective worship, derived from analysis of a sample of OFSTED inspection reports. With his permission, a summary of these findings is provided in what follows.

> In the first year of OFSTED inspections it was clear that judgements about collective worship were far from consistent. At the beginning of the academic year 1994/95 OFSTED issued guidance to registered inspectors in *Update 9*, designed to create a more consistent approach. The essence of that guidance was:
>
> Worship is commonly and normally understood to refer to activities which recognise the existence of a God or Gods; 'worthship' is about the promotion of shared values and is not the same thing.
>
> Since the law requires a majority of these acts of worship to be of a 'broadly and mainly Christian character' they should show some recognition of the distinctive nature of Christianity as distinct from other major world faiths.
>
> All kinds of activity could legitimately pass the test of being 'worship' so long as the focus of worship is on a God or Gods. That is to say, there should be some kind of transcendental quality to worship, but we should not expect particular ingredients to be present before we judge an activity to be worship. OFSTED has expressed concern about reports which said 'if only there had been ... it would have been worship'.
>
> Given that many schools organise assemblies which promote shared values and are important in fostering pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, we asked that inspectors should evaluate and comment upon the quality of what schools provide, even if at the end of the day they deem that provision not to meet fully the requirements of the law.
>
> Most of the 350 reports from the autumn term 1994 analysed state clearly whether the legal requirement for collective worship is being

met, though judgements are not always framed in the same manner, or found within the main findings.

> Overall, primary schools appear to comply with the law. Very few voluntary schools do not comply, and where that is the case the reasons appear to be that they withdraw pupils from assembly for other activities, such as instrumental music tuition, or to cater for pupils with special educational needs. About 13% of county primary schools in the sample did not comply with the law. In the main that was because while their assemblies were thought to promote values they were not acts of worship. Again in county schools there were pupils withdrawn for other educational activities, and in some schools the act of worship did not take place every school day.
>
> Although the majority of primary schools observe the law, large numbers of teachers there exercise their right to withdraw, and the integrity of the act of worship is compromised by the fact that not all teachers attend. In many cases it is only the teacher(s) leading the act of worship who attend.
>
> Overall, secondary schools do not comply with the letter of the law. About 83% of county schools and about one-third of the voluntary schools in the sample do not comply. The principal reasons relate to a lack of space to bring pupils together in sufficiently large numbers. Most schools have rejected any notion of rotating groups of pupils through their existing large spaces on the grounds that this would provide severe logistical problems and would tie up senior members of staff for an unreasonable period.
>
> Given that there is a lack of space some schools rest on what they can provide, but a surprisingly large number in the sample (about 40%) attempt to provide worship in tutor groups. Often the school management provides good quality guidance for this, related to whole-school themes, but only in one school was this seen to result in pupils getting anything that could be regarded as a regular experience of worship.
>
> The reports sampled witness to a continuing range of views about what constitutes worship. A significant proportion of the assemblies seen were judged to be good quality acts of worship. However, many whilst regarded as promoting attitudes and values, and commended for a strong contribution to pupils' moral and social development, were not regarded as acts of worship. There is a worry, therefore, that schools may be found in breach of the law when they are, in fact, making a worthwhile attempt to implement its spirit. To take three examples:
>
> An act of worship is provided daily, but some pupils are withdrawn for teaching of various kinds. Whatever the manifest intentions of the school, the latent message that pupils receive may be that worship is of no consequence in the order of the school's priorities.

A collective act of worship takes place on a few days of the week, but the rest is up to form or group tutors and is of poor quality, though tutors are not availing themselves of their right to withdraw from this activity.

An act of worship takes place on four days of the week. On the fifth there is a deliberate use of an assembly for secular purposes, including a celebration of values of a non-religious kind. An inspection team might well wish to judge the school as meeting the spirit of the law, but it does not meet the letter.

A few schools with sixth forms [in the sample] do not provide daily collective worship for them. That is perhaps not altogether surprising, given that their peers in Sixth Form and FE colleges are not required so to meet.

Over more than half a century, pupils in the maintained schools of England and Wales have experienced, to a greater or lesser degree, a gathering for collective worship enjoined in the 1944 Education Act and intended to foster their religious and moral development and the community life of the school.

For the greater part of that period local education authorities and RE organisations rather than central government have provided guidance and suggestions about the content and character of collective worship. However, with the fuller description of education's purposes in the 1988 Education Reform Act, and of collective worship in DfE Circular 1/94, those concerned with OFSTED inspections have been called upon to assess the extent to which schools meet the criteria relating to collective worship, set out in legislation. This has enabled this kind of assessment of current attitudes to be attempted, and reveals a certain disparity between principle and practice. What legislative changes, if any, lie in the future, and what changes in practice may develop within the educational community, remain to be seen.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Theological Aspects of Collective Worship

(An extract from the Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee paper, *Collective Worship in Schools*, 1995.)

5.1 Collective Worship is an activity designated by, and peculiar to, the law of England and Wales. It is not the same as an act of worship in a particular faith community. In Christianity, the believing community (in church or at home) offers and takes part in corporate worship through Jesus Christ. Where such a corporate body does not exist or where Christians only appear as individuals (alongside other individuals who either do not believe or are believing adherents of other religions), the full worship appropriate to a Christian community is impossible. In other faith communities, similar sensitivities are to be observed. The nature and diversity of the composition of the school, when collected together, therefore, poses the danger of a syncretism of the common elements of the religions represented in it, which would produce a model of common worship which was false to each religion. Since worship, prayer and religious meditation are always set in the context of a particular faith (its experience, history and the implications of its terminology), it is not possible with integrity to speak of common worship. The distinctiveness of each religion is the way in which (or the Person through whom) the Transcendent is revealed.

5.2 Given this theological aspect – that proper worship is distinctive of each religion – some have argued that the only recourse for the school is always to disperse pupils contemporaneously into separate religious communities, in order to engage in their particular worship. Although acknowledging, as the law does, the right to seek a 'determination' for such separate worship, it is significant that those representatives of the faith communities who have been consulted want to preserve, but do not generally wish to over-emphasise, this option. They feel that it could prove divisive of the school's community and might result in undesirable

consequences within or outside the school. Some feel that it might not, in some neighbourhoods, contribute to the development of a harmonious environment. Others claim that in some schools 'faith' worship has not produced friction but has taught respect for differences.

5.3 The situation is further complicated by the fact that the religious insights (and the related experiences of worship) cannot be necessarily or absolutely tied to any age-related theory of child or intellectual development. The depth of a genuine experience of worship may not be at all age-related, though an articulate and rational description of it by the worshipper may be so related.

5.4 There is, however, a range of 'worshipful' elements in which members of the school community can engage or to which they can respond – provided that there is respect for the right of each pupil or staff member to respond or not respond, to participate actively or passively or to 'opt out mentally'. This range includes:

- the sense of the transcendent;
- the awareness of the infinite and of one's position within it;
- the acceptance of life as given;
- the sense of mystery and wonder;
- the celebration of personal fulfilment and of those who have given service to others;
- the concern for the created world and for all life;
- the acknowledgement of moral demands.

All these might provide opportunities and procedures for Collective Worship. But the leader must neither infringe the integrity of particular believers nor appear to require hypocritical responses from pupils and staff. Sincerity and integrity are essential in the practice of worship – and not merely in the act of believing – and in the celebration of experience or diversity.

5.5 There is a need, therefore, for theologians and educationalists to explore how far schools should or can produce an act of Collective Worship which is at the same time both 'open' for non-believers and 'closed' for believers . Does the broadly Christian character of Collective Worship in schools, which certainly, according to Christian scripture, requires sincerity and a free response from those who attend, also demand of all attenders a precise acknowledgement of Jesus, to which some members of the school cannot subscribe? The law requires a majority of acts in a school to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian

character [ERA 1988 paragraphs 7(1) and (3)]; this is defined in Section 7(2) as requiring worship 'to reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief'. But does this not only allow for the worship of the Creator God but also require pupils (and staff) to express in words of worship a recognition that they accord a special status to Jesus as Lord and Son of God – when the majority of pupils are too young to understand or come from homes where there is no such commitment? Sensitivity in the use of all language of worship (and acceptance of the integrity of those members who cannot participate sincerely in some language) is, therefore, needed if the occasions are to win respect and be as educationally effective and inclusive as possible. But the worship must not totally deprive other pupils or teachers of a fuller acknowledgement of the person of Jesus.

5.6 But even if there is a theological case for arguing that there are some concepts and concerns which all religions address, the distinctiveness of each religion's worship must be respected. This means that the broadly Christian collective worshipping activity must involve, in each school term, some of the essential beliefs, events, festivals and concerns distinctive of Christianity – and as the religion foremost in British history there is a natural justification for this.

5.7 There is, however, no doubt that whatever is done on those occasions where the school tries to provide a majority of broadly Christian acts, there are tremendous opportunities to provide a balanced and broad 'diet' of variety, diversity and flexibility. The use of significant events in the history of religions (festivals, saints' days, the work of moral or social 'pioneers') and in the lives of secular individuals or the activities of charitable organisations, should be an opportunity not just for moral (or financial!) appeals but for challenging pupils and staff to understand and respond to such examples of excellence or humility or dedication or altruism. In so doing the 'affective', and not merely the cognitive, aspects of religion and of education will be harnessed. Pupils will begin to appreciate not only differences between religions (and the reasons for apparently similar festivals or concerns) but also the need to embody in their own lives – and in the whole life of the school and of society – the highest of which the human spirit is capable.

5.8 It is clear that there is a vast resource of material and approaches in which the school (when collected together as a whole or in year or house groups) can be involved without offence or hypocrisy. What is needed is for the educators, monitored and assisted by the theologians, to develop a range of suggestions and examples of good practice. For a theological study of all religions would support the view of one assessment of Christianity and of Jesus – that the highest cannot fully be expressed in words but must be represented in actions.

Appendix B

Aide-memoire on 'other faiths'

(An annex to the Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee paper, *Collective Worship in Schools*, 1995.)

The Officers of CJEPC consulted representatives of other faith communities, as requested during their committee deliberations in November 1994. The following points emerged from this consultation:

a) There was complete agreement among these representatives that the worship of the gurdwara, mosque, synagogue or temple could not be transferred into the context and actions of collective worship. (Any exploration of the worship of other faiths should occur within the classroom RE lesson and the advice of local faith community leaders might be sought.)

b) Pupils (and staff) from other faith communities should not be expected, in collective worship in schools, to engage in any words or actions of another faith.

c) It would be proper, within the context of collective worship, to involve pupils of different faiths in the kinds of common celebration, reflection and exploration to which the CJEPC's Full Statement alludes (e.g. in 5.4) that might count as 'collective worship' but could not be described strictly as Christian or Jewish or Muslim etc. worship. (Again, headteachers or governors in any doubt about causing offence during such activities might consult local faith leaders.)

d) The involvement of pupils on such occasions of collective activity is to be encouraged – allowing for the fact that the apparently passive and the silent might, at any point, opt in or out mentally, emotionally or spiritually. Those in charge of such occasions must always respect the sincerity and integrity of each pupil and not expect them to engage hypocritically in any words or actions. Pupils (and staff) present in the hall or room must be allowed to observe or participate actively, as and when they wish.

e) The levels of response may vary between schools and between age ranges (for example, in participation in hymns or songs). As with prayers, however, so with hymns or songs – pupils (and staff) should be allowed to observe or to be silent and not be expected to say or sing anything which would be insincerely uttered. Equally the willing pupil should be allowed – even encouraged – to make a sincere contribution.

f) The faith communities are anxious to contribute their treasury of spirituality to the school's programme for the spiritual, moral and social education of pupils throughout the whole curriculum and not least through its collective worship.

g) They hope that however large or small their own communities might be in any area of the country their pupils (and their parents) may, through collective worship, be one means whereby schools might become harmonious communities whose example can influence the life of all these pupils now and in adulthood, in work and in leisure. To achieve this result, however, will require an active, properly funded INSET programme for headteachers and their colleagues who lead such occasions of collective worship.

Appendix C

The Islamic Accord

The Islamic Accord identifies issues which affect our ability to live as Muslims within the broader community and helps achieve a united response to those issues.

This provides a way of looking at the wide ocean of our shared faith and belief rather than dwelling on small islands of difference.

The Islamic Accord will bring the consensus of Muslim opinion to the attention of government, media and the general public.

The Islamic Accord has identified the issue of the educational needs of young Muslims as a prime concern.

Collective Worship

We welcome the clear reiteration of the right of withdrawal from collective worship for pupils and teachers.

We agree that a straightforward and consistent method of seeking a determination from 'mainly Christian' collective worship should be applied nationally as current methods are unfair to non-Christian communities.

We refuse to accept the participation of Muslim pupils in any act of collective worship which conflicts with Islamic belief.

We call for Muslim pupils to be able to participate in school activities without compromise to the integrity of their faith.

Action

We will campaign for the repeal of Section 7 of the Education Reform Act 1988 which is divisive in its emphasis on specifically Christian worship.

Appendix D

Education for Living: A Humanist Perspective

(British Humanist Association)

Humanists have been at the forefront of those who believe that schools have a key role in promoting an appreciation of right and wrong and a personal commitment to moral values. These values must permeate the whole life of a school and underpin the learning of all subjects.

It is the mark of every good school that it:

- establishes a caring, thoughtful ethos

Children learn best by example. The quality of day-to-day relationships between adults and young people is of paramount importance. It is in this way that children come to recognise the worth of each individual and to value basic principles such as truth, fair play and concern for others.

- helps each pupil to develop a life stance that gives meaning and purpose

Imaginative programmes of personal, social and moral education can provide insights and opportunities which complement knowledge gained elsewhere.

- recognises the contribution of every subject to values education

Time is needed to consider the values underlying knowledge: the nature of truth in the sciences, arts and humanities; values which inspire novelists, scientists, artists, musicians and athletes; values affecting individuals, families, communities and nations; values relating to human responsibility for our planet.

- arranges assemblies to stimulate the children's sense of community and to celebrate shared values

Assemblies which are open and exploratory are always more effective than those conducted in a narrowly religious context. They centre not on dogma but on 'worth-ship', i.e. on the worth and value of the ideas, behaviour and activities that the school and community seek to promote.

Such occasions enable a school to celebrate and reflect on human achievements and aspirations.

These practices are central to the happiness and health of all young people. They are vitally important to the welfare of school communities and to the wider society.

Collective worship

The most universally contentious aspect of the 1988 Act is that concerning collective worship. It states that such daily gatherings must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Not only that, but Circular 1/94 advises that such worship should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.

These and other clauses have been widely condemned as unworkable, divisive and reactionary by head teachers and their staffs, by leaders of the religious organisations concerned with education, and by Christians and non-Christians alike. They have also been heavily criticised on the grounds of incompatibility with the 'open, fair and balanced' criteria which apply elsewhere in the curriculum. They are causing much consternation in our schools and in the faith communities.

In practice, many authorities and schools interpret the 1988 Education Act broadly and with sensitivity. The desire not to divide the school community has resulted in efforts to ensure respect for the varying beliefs of pupils and parents. In the words of Hampshire's booklet *Collective Worship in County Schools* (1994):

> [worship] is the recognition, affirmation and celebration of the worthiness of certain realities and values, held to be of central importance in the community ....

Unfortunately there are also schools where the Act is rigidly and narrowly followed, with the result that many teachers and pupils feel marginalised and excluded. The case for legislative change remains overwhelming, if only to prevent this fragmenting of school communities.

Appendix E

Determinations 1995–6

(Taken from *Analysis of SACRE Reports 1996*, School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.)

The following details were given in this year's SACRE reports:

Berkshire	13 granted 1993–4, none in 1994–5
Bradford	9 renewals this year, 67 determinations altogether
Brent	5 new primary, 1 new secondary
Cambridgeshire	1 renewal during the year, 2 altogether, both primary
Coventry	1 new primary, 2 renewals (2 primary, 1 secondary)
Derbyshire	9 renewals
Gloucestershire	1 renewal (Muslim worship only)
Harrow	1 new (middle school), 2 renewals (primary)
Hounslow	2 new determinations, 13 renewals
Kirklees	8 renewals (all primary)
Lancashire	4 renewals (all primary)
Leicestershire	12 renewals
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1 request to be considered at a future meeting
Redbridge	1 new secondary determination
Rotherham	No new applications, 5 determinations altogether, all primary
Surrey	2 new determinations, both primary
Tameside	1 renewal
Trafford	1 application to be considered at a future meeting
Wolverhampton	1 renewal (2 schools, joint application, same Governing Body, both primary)

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