Ethical and Religious Education in Schools in England

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1 Introduction

I feel greatly honoured to be asked to present a paper at this conference. I hope that what I share about the experience of education in England[1] may prove to be some help to you as you consider the education system of your great country and the intellectual, moral, cultural and spiritual development of its children and young people. Your situation is different and the challenges facing you are distinct. Nevertheless, there are surely things in common between Ukraine and England and other countries in the continent of Europe, in our histories, our faith traditions and our educational approaches, that can help us to learn from one another's experiences and gain wisdom from one another's insights. I certainly look forward to learning from you in the experience of this conference.

The paper will study in turn: (i) the system of different kinds of school, (ii) the arrangements for religious education and (iii) the provision made for the ethical dimension of education. In the case of each of them, it will seek to address the main issues raised for education in a contemporary society in which there is a plurality of faith perspectives.

2 Schools in England

2.1 The Main Categories of School in England

Schools may be divided administratively and financially into the following broad categories:

- **Mainstream state schools**: These are schools that work in partnership with other schools and with local education authorities from which they receive funding. In many of these state schools, the local education authority employs the school's staff, owns the school's land and buildings and has primary responsibility for deciding the arrangements for admitting pupils. 88 per cent of all schools are in this category and they provide for 92 per cent of all school pupils.[2]

- **Mainstream independent schools**: These schools do not receive funding from the local education authority. The local education authority does not employ the school's staff, own the school's land and buildings or have responsibility for

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[1] This paper will focus on education in schools in England and will make only occasional references to the situations in the other countries of the United Kingdom (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, the statistics quoted in this paper are taken from *Statistics of Education: Schools in England 2000*, (Norwich: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2000) and can be found on the website of the Department for Education and Skills at www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics/DB/VOL/v0192/vol04-2000.pdf.

deciding the arrangements for admitting pupils. However, these schools must be registered by law and they are subject to inspection by government inspectors. 7 per cent of all schools are in this category and they provide for 7 per cent of all school pupils.

- **Special schools**: These are schools for children with special educational needs who cannot be educated satisfactorily in an ordinary school. Some of these are state schools and some are independent. 4 per cent of all schools are in this category and they provide for 1 per cent of all school pupils.

Home education: In addition to schools, it should be noted that there is legal provision for parents to educate their children at home if they wish to do so. At the present time, about 140,000 children in the UK of compulsory educational age (1.5 per cent) are educated at home.[3] Parents have to obtain permission to educate their children at home and the educational provision they make is subject to inspection by the education authorities.

2.2 The Religious Character of Schools

2.2.1 The Independent Schools

As might be expected, many of the independent schools have a faith basis and this is usually, but not always, Christian. Most of them are long-established schools at both primary and secondary levels and they include the prestigious (and expensive!) schools of Eton, Harrow and Rugby.

There has also been a significant development in the past thirty years or so of small new Christian schools being established, mostly at primary level. Some of these are linked with local churches but some are inter-denominational, accepting pupils from different churches and some pupils whose parents have no Christian commitment. The largest grouping of these schools is the Christian Schools' Trust which has 40 member schools in England. Most of these schools are very small but it is noteworthy that their academic performance has often placed them at or near the top of the league in their local education authority area.

2.2.2 The State Schools

What is often surprising to people from other countries is the discovery that many of the state schools in England are church schools, especially at primary level, and, even more surprising, that both collective worship and religious education are required by law in *all* state schools, whether church or not.

25 per cent of the 18,000 state primary schools in England are Church of England (the main Protestant denomination in England) and 10 per cent are Roman Catholic. In addition, 28 schools are Methodist, 47 schools are of mixed

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[3] This statistic comes from the website www.home-education.org.uk.

denomination or other Christian beliefs, 25 schools are Jewish, 2 schools are Muslim and 1 school is Sikh. This means that 65 per cent of the state primary schools are of no particular religious denomination.

Out of 3,500 state secondary schools in the year 2000, 5 per cent are Church of England, 10 per cent are Roman Catholic. In addition, 27 schools are of mixed denomination or other Christian beliefs, 5 schools are Jewish and 1 school is Sikh. This means that 84 per cent of state secondary primary schools are of no particular religious denomination.

It is important to note that the state schools that are listed as being of no particular religious denomination are not necessarily secular. They may in some cases be very Christian without being denominational, i.e. without being identified as being Church of England or Roman Catholic or Methodist. Their Christian ethos may come more from the faith commitment of their headteacher and a sufficient proportion of their teaching staff rather than from whether a particular denomination owns the school buildings or is responsible for admission arrangements. As a result, celebrations of Christmas in primary schools may differ little between faith-based schools and other schools. In the same way, some faith-based schools may in practice be quite secular in their ethos and curriculum because the headteacher and a significant proportion of the teaching staff do not have a strong commitment to a Christian faith.

2.2.3 The Government Welcomes New Faith-Based Schools

In September 2001, the Government announced that it welcomes new faith-based schools into the state sector in places where there is clear local agreement.[4] This applies particularly at secondary level where there are plans to double the number of faith-based schools and to lower the financial commitment required of their religious funding bodies.

This is part of the Government plan to diversify the kinds of schools available. The plan is to greatly increase the number of specialist schools which emphasise a particular area, such as sport, languages, or science. The planned diversity also includes the number of faith-based schools. The Government paper says:

> 'We want faith schools to come into the maintained sector to add to the inclusiveness and diversity of the school system.'[5]

These new schools may be either church schools or schools set up by non-Christian faith communities. Not only are Muslims and those of other non-Christian traditions interested in setting up new schools or in bringing existing schools into the state sector, some Christian denominations, especially the Church of England,

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[4] This was expressed in the Government's White Paper, *Schools - Achieving Success*. ('White Paper' is the term used for publications that give expression to new government proposals when they are published for discussion.)
[5] *Schools - Achieving Success*, ch. 5.31.

are also planning to increase significantly the number of their schools in the state sector.

The church schools and other faith-based schools have a distinctive ethos and character and they have tended to do better than other schools in terms of their academic results.[6] They are proving popular with parents, including those of religious outlooks which are different from that of the school's governing body and those of no religious commitment. Some parents are attracted more by what they see as the moral quality of the faith-based schools than by their religious basis and they value the level of discipline and an emphasis on human relationships and on pastoral care more than the school's academic results.

It is important to note here that being faith-based does not mean that a school is necessarily closed to pupils from other Christian denominations or other faith communities or to those of no religious commitment. In some areas, church schools are so popular that it is difficult to get children accepted unless their parents are regular church attenders. In other areas, especially in the inner city areas of Birmingham or Bradford where the local community may be predominantly Muslim, the church primary schools have mostly Muslim children. In one town in the north-west of England, 8 of the 24 Church of England state schools have a majority of Muslim pupils.

The initiative by the Government to welcome the setting up of new faith schools within the state sector has been generally welcomed by the faith communities. The Church of England seems particularly keen to embrace the challenge that this initiative presents to its resources.[7] Muslims seem eager to have state funding for more of their schools. In many places, Muslims are more in favour of schools which have an explicit faith basis, even one that they do not themselves share, than of schools which claim to have no faith basis and effectively promote secularism as an alternative to religious faith. They may chose a church school for their children simply because it recognizes the importance of faith.

However, the Government initiative has not proved universally popular and there has been some strong opposition expressed in the media, especially by people of a more secularist outlook. In spite of this, it seems clear that there is majority support for the development of new faith-based schools and that the Government will press ahead with its plans.

2.2.4   Can Faith-Based Schools be Distinctive without being Divisive?

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[6] For example, at A Level examinations (the examinations taken by students on completing their Sixth Form studies), Church of England state schools achieve an average of 16.2 points, Roman catholic state schools achieve an average of 15.7 points and other state schools achieve an average of 15.3 points.

[7] A study has been made of this for the Church of England by Lord Dearing in his report entitled *The Way Ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium* (London: Church House Publishing, 2001).

The answer to this question depends partly on how inclusive or exclusive is the purpose of faith-based education. The Chairperson of the Church of England Board of Education has recently provided a definition of the purpose of Church of England schools as being 'to provide a high quality of education based on Christian values, enabling pupils to achieve their God given potential, as human beings made in the image of God, for the benefit of society or the wider community'.[8] He goes on to say:

> 'Church schools should seek to help nurture in the Christian faith those who come from Christian homes, and offer pupils of other faiths or none a positive experience of being in a Christian community which respects and seeks also to understand them.'[9]

Such a statement of purpose combines an emphasis on the nurture of children from church-going families with one on service to all in the local community, regardless of their faith perspectives. A similar balance comes through in a recent report on church schools:

> 'Church schools are places where the faith is lived, and which therefore offer opportunities to pupils and their families to explore the truths of the Christian faith, to develop spiritually and morally, and to have a basis for choice about Christian commitment. They are places where the beliefs and practices of other faiths will be respected.'[10]

Living the faith should, I suggest, find expression in the whole ethos of the school – the atmosphere that pervades it but is difficult to express in words – and in not only its written curriculum but also the hidden curriculum of the values that it upholds, and not only in the explicitly religious education that it provides but in every subject area of the curriculum.

Faith-based schools *may* be divisive but they do not *need* to be divisive. They may become narrowly tribal, promoting attitudes of suspicion towards others outside the 'tribe' and indoctrinating their pupils into closed attitudes of mind which do not respect fellow human beings. This may be the case with some denominational schools in Northern Ireland but I suspect that the exclusive attitudes some pupils show may be more the result of parental upbringing than of what teachers do in their schools. It is important to note, in relation to Northern Ireland, that the integrated schools now beginning to be established in order to bring together children from the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities still have a faith basis in law and some of them have a quite strong Christian ethos.[11]

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[8] Alan Chesters, *Distinctive or Divisive? The Role of Church Schools* (The Hockerill Lecture 2001), (Hertford: Hockerill Educational Foundation, 2001) pp. 5-6.
[9] *Distinctive or Divisive? The Role of Church Schools*, p. 6.
[10] *The Way Ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium*, ch. 3.12.
[11] I ascertained this in correspondence with a teacher from Northern Ireland who recently completed a PhD thesis at Oxford University on schools in her country.

I would also add that my personal experience is of being brought up in the Republic of Ireland and receiving my secondary education in a Roman Catholic school where, for most of my time in the school, I was the only person who was not a Roman Catholic. I gained immensely from the experience because, although the school was distinctively Roman Catholic, the attitude of the teachers and of the other students was so open towards me and my different family background. I was valued as a fellow human being made in the image of God and warmly welcomed as a member of the school community. As a result, I gained a deeper understanding of what it is to have a Roman Catholic faith without being put under pressure to change my denomination.

3. Religious Education in the Schools of England

3.1 The Legal Requirements for Religious Education and School Worship

The main requirements of the law in England concerning Religious Education (RE) and school worship are as follows:

- RE is legally required for all pupils and is part of the basic curriculum for all state schools in England.

- All pupils shall take part in an act of collective worship each school day. These acts of worship must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character but they must not be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination. They are considered to be broadly Christian if they reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief.

- Teachers have the right to withdraw from teaching RE or participating in acts of worship.

- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE lessons and from acts of worship.

- Every state school is required to make provision for RE for all pupils at the school unless their parents withdraw them. This applies whether the school is faith-based or of no particular religious denomination.

- RE syllabuses agreed by local education authorities are required by law to reflect the fact that the religious traditions in England are in the main Christian. They must be non-denominational in the sense that they must avoid promoting the beliefs of a particular Christian denomination. They can include teachings *about* particular denominations and their beliefs but they must avoid promoting any of them over any other Christian denomination.

- RE syllabuses agreed by local education authorities must also take account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in the country.

- The agreed syllabus of a local education authority is decided by a conference that it sets up. This conference must include representatives of (i) the Christian denominations and other religions present in the area, (ii) the Church of England (as the Christian denomination established by law in England), (iii) professional teacher associations, and (iv) the local education authority.

These requirements make the RE syllabus a local concern. Provided the broad national requirements for RE are met, the detail is decided by the conference set up by the local education authority in a way that takes account of the main religious groupings present in the area.

Two model syllabuses were produced by the national curriculum authority in 1994. These were the result of co-operation between representatives of the main religions. Local education authorities are not required to adopt either of them but they are free to do so if their conference so wishes. The existence of the national model syllabuses makes what is taught no less a local concern.

The model syllabuses follow the legal requirement that RE should be predominantly Christian and their units of work are structured so that all pupils study Christianity in each of the four 'Key Stages' into which their education from 5 to 16 years is divided.

The model syllabuses suggest that five other world religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) should be studied at some stage during the pupil's time at school before he or she reaches school leaving age. The local education authority's conference decides which religions, in addition to Christianity, should be studied in their area and at which stages they should be studied.

3.2 The Current State of RE and Worship in Schools

The requirements of the law and the extent to which these requirements are met in actual practice can differ quite significantly. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the agency that is responsible for the inspections of schools, has reported that, while RE is sometimes well provided for and well taught, the subject is not in a healthy state in a number of schools and that the law on collective worship is often not observed strictly.[12] Similar reports have come from other official reports.[13]

The main findings of these reports were that:

- RE is not taught at all in a substantial minority of schools and in many schools where it is taught, not enough time is provided for it.

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[12] Office for Standards in Education, *Religious Education and Collective Worship*, (London: Ofsted, 1994).
[13] See, for example, Brian Gates, *Time for Religious Education and teachers to match: A digest of under-provision* (London: RE Council, 1994).

- A high percentage of those who teach RE do not have a specialist qualification in the subject. Those who do have a specialist qualification are generally effective and responsible for good work seen especially with pupils preparing for examinations in RE.

- While collective worship is widely provided for in primary schools, many secondary schools are not meeting either the spirit or the letter of the law on collective worship.

I suggest that, although RE and collective worship are generally linked in education in England and are often the responsibility of the same teachers in a school, it is helpful to keep them separate. This is because of the particular theological and philosophical problems that are involved in making acts of worship a legal requirement in schools.

3.3   Issues in Religious Education

Because I take religious worship to be separate from religious education and to be particularly problematic in a school context, I will focus in this section on issues in the teaching of Religious Education as a school subject.

3.3.1   Religious Diversity

Plurality is a fact of life in contemporary England. This would be true even without the presence of religions other than Christianity. There is diversity among Christians in that they hold sometimes widely differing beliefs about matters that may seem quite central for them and this has been the case through the history of the Christian faith. At the same time, there are central beliefs and practices that shared among Christians which make it possible to identify them as Christian in a meaningful sense of the word.

The presence of those of significant numbers of those who follow non-Christian faiths and of those who identify themselves as not holding any religious beliefs make plurality even more a fact of life.

The quality of life in a plural society depends on people learning to live together and to respect each other's rights without feeling that they are compromising their own deeply held beliefs. A main function of education today in increasingly plural societies must therefore be to prepare children to live in a plural world. Religious Education, perhaps more than any other school subject, studies the deeply held beliefs and cherished practices of different communities within a society. This makes the work of the teacher of RE both centrally important and very demanding. It requires ways of approaching religious plurality (both within faiths and between them as well as with those of no religious faith) which do all of the following:

- enable children and young people to make up their own minds about religious faith;

- respect the rights and wishes of parents;

- do not conflict with the teacher's own beliefs and values;

- promote harmony and respect between people of differing beliefs and practices;

- promote the values of respect for truth and respect for persons;

- respect the integrity of the different religions and do not misrepresent them; and

- enable people to learn from one another and their different beliefs and practices.

I suggest that ways of approaching religious plurality which do all of these things areneeded in all schools. Even if the school has a strong adherence to a particular religious denomination, it has to prepare children and young people to live in a plural world without compromising their deeply held beliefs and values.

3.3.2 Indoctrination and Commitment

Truth matters to all religious people, indeed it matters to all human beings. We want to believe things because they are true and not simply because it is fashionable to believe them. If we believe that certain things are true, then we probably want other people to come to believe them too.

Some people conclude from this that religious commitment may be a handicap in religious education. Indeed, it may lead teachers to attempt to indoctrinate their pupils into their beliefs. Because they are not 'neutral' in matters of religion, they will seek to 'impose' their religious beliefs on their pupils.

The difficulty with this view is that it is just as much a problem for the person who does not have a religious belief as for the one who does. It is arguable that there is no 'neutral' position in matters of religion – even the person with no religious belief may indoctrinate others into their view of religion.

In addition, attempting to teach from a 'neutral' position as if all views of religion were equally valid is something that neither teachers nor students may find satisfactory. The neutral approach makes faith a matter of private and arbitrary choice and, in the process, religion itself is actually distorted. In England, many faith communities see the neutral approach to religious education as a *secular* approach, one which assigns religious faith to the margins of life, making it a private affair or a personal hobby.

Far from being a handicap, I suggest, the teacher's personal faith commitment can actually be a positive resource in the classroom. It is not something to conceal,

pretending that it is not there, but something to handle with care without indoctrinating children and young people.

The teacher's faith commitment can serve to demonstrate to pupils how important faith can be in a person's life without the teacher imposing his or her beliefs on them. He or she may live their faith in a way that is open without being compelling pupils to adopt it for the wrong or inadequate reasons, e.g. simply because the teacher holds it.

3.3.3 'Learning about' and 'Learning from'

It has come to be widely accepted among religious educators in England that an important aim for RE is to help pupils to learn *from* religion as well as to learn *about* religion. This makes the study of religion relevant to pupils' lives and experiences. If teachers can get this right, their pupils will come to see the relevance of religion to the things they care about and the questions that concern them.

This makes religious education a matter not only of intellectual knowledge but of the personal development of the whole person of the learner. It is not only a matter of knowing that certain things are true or false but also of understanding the implications of them for life in the world and of learning to live out this understanding.

This makes the understanding of religious beliefs in the whole context of people's lives and of the traditions and communities in which they are experienced an important dimension of religious education. It is rather more than learning to merely recite lists of the beliefs or practices of different religions but of appreciating the way in which they function in the daily lives of people.

4   Ethical Education in the Schools of England

Personal, moral and social education has long been an element in education in schools in England. Since 1988, this has been formalised in a legal requirement on state schools to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils. School inspectors are now required to report on how well the school is doing in promoting this.

This development of the whole person is also seen as a whole school issue - it cannot be restricted to RE and become thereby the responsibility only of those involved in that aspect of school life. Also clearly important to personal development, taking place as it does through personal relationships, is the ethos of the school. This pervades all aspects of the life of the school, including teacher-pupil relationships in the classroom or the playground or sportsfield or in after-school activities.

4.1 Promoting personal development throughout the curriculum

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published a discussion paper *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development*[14] (February 1994) which argued that the promotion of spiritual and moral development in all schools can be a whole-curriculum matter. It goes on to say that 'to move to such a place where subjects see themselves in this way might seem to require a sea-change in attitudes and approaches, but certainly the potential is there'.

The school, and here this means each teacher, in every subject across the curriculum, is encouraged to create opportunities which:

- provide pupils with knowledge and insight into values and beliefs;

- enable them to reflect on and develop their own beliefs and values, aspects of life and experiences so that they develop spiritual awareness and self knowledge;

- encourage pupils to consider life's fundamental questions, and relate religious teaching to those questions;

- encourage pupils to explore meaning and purpose, values and beliefs;

- teach the principles which allow pupils to distinguish right from wrong;

- enable pupils to make moral decisions;

- foster values such as honesty, fairness, respect for truth, justice and property;

- encourage pupils to express moral values across issues affecting their school community;

- encourage pupils to respect other people and relate to them positively;

- encourage pupils to take responsibility, exercise initiative, participate in community and develop an understanding of citizenship;

- create opportunities to work cooperatively, and to participate cooperatively in the school community;

- teach pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions, and the diversity and richness of others, to gain understanding of societies, families, school and communities; and

- provide opportunities to enrich pupils' cultural learning experiences.

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[14] Office for Standards in Education, *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development*[14] (London: Ofsted, 1994).

For some teachers, the responsibility that they were now given for the personal development of their pupils was seen as an added burden. For others it was a welcome return to educating pupils in a more holistic manner, which gave importance to the whole person, the whole curriculum and the whole of life. For each teacher in every part of the curriculum, it was a challenge to enhance their teaching styles and resources.

4.2 Moral development through the teaching of Mathematics?

When it is suggested that moral development can be promoted through the teaching of every subject in the curriculum, a frequent reaction is to say that this is surely not the case with the subject of Mathematics. 'Mathematics is mathematics', objectors may say, 'What has it to do with morality?' I often respond to this by pointing to the example of a mathematical task that is often set in textbooks and examinations in the West. The task is often expressed in the following way:

> 'If you invest 100 pounds in a bank account at an annual rate of interest of 5 per cent, how much is your investment worth to you after one year?'

The answer is easy – it is worth 105 pounds. Then to make it more interesting, there is often a supplementary question which asks what the investment is worth after two years. This is more complicated because it depends on whether or not the 5 pounds earned as interest on the investment is left in the account or not for the second year. To me as a school pupil or as a young teacher of Mathematics, this seemed to be a morally neutral task. I have come to realize more recently that it is far from neutral because, if the teaching of mathematics is dominated by examples like this, it will tend to convey the belief that what is of first importance in life is what we receive for ourselves. The implicit message is that it is more blessed to receive than to give, a moral message, which is opposed to the Christian emphasis on love and giving to others.

This was brought home to me a few years back when I was speaking at a teacher's conference here in Kiev and I described this mathematical task to them. I quickly realized from their responses that such mathematical tasks related to capitalistic practices, so familiar to me having been brought up in Ireland, were not familiar to them having been brought up in Ukraine. There were differences of cultural and perhaps moral values between our cultures. But people brought up in socialist societies are not the only ones who may object to an abundance of such mathematical problems in school textbooks. I now realize that questions about gaining interest on the investment of money are also far from being morally neutral to Muslim people, for example.

Mathematics has been developed and applied in a wide range of human situations. It can be taught using contexts which allow pupils to develop and use their mathematics while, at the same time, reflecting upon and discussing spiritual and moral dimensions of human issues which arise in those contexts. For example,

work using censuses as a context can provide practice on number and data-handling while, at the same time, encouraging pupils to consider the value of the individual 'lost' when population numbers are rounded or when people are missing from a census return. Work on statistics of literacy in different parts of the world can remind pupils of the value of being able to read and write.[15]

4.3 Shared Moral Values

There are, I suggest, many beliefs, values, attitudes and practices which are common to Christians and those of other faiths and, indeed, to those who would disavow any religious commitment at all.

Common or shared values are neither free-standing nor neutral in relation to our religious perspectives or worldviews. Common ground is not neutral ground. Shared beliefs and values are only so because they are *shared* among those of *different* basic outlooks. They gain their authority for the individual not from the fact that they are shared but from the different basic sources from which people of different perspectives derive them. It is important that we have shared beliefs and values so that we can understand, communicate with and cooperate with one another. It is also important that we recognise that they have different bases - not least when we come to work through our disagreements as we seek to learn to live together with people of different basic outlooks.

An adequate values education will also need to show how the whole area of moral values appears very differently to people of different perspectives. Christians, for example, who add values in relation to God to those in relation to society, (human) relationships, the self and the environment, are not adding just *another* category to the list: it is the kind of addition that can transform the whole perspective and provide both justification and motivation for adopting the values in question. To them it can make a great difference that God is seen as three persons-in-relation because this sets human relationships in an altogether different light. That God is seen to be love and that such love is believed to have taken Jesus Christ to death on a cross can make an ethic of enlightened self-interest seem seriously deficient. That Jesus Christ is regarded as having risen from the dead can bring a sense of meaningfulness to mortal life that might not otherwise be there.

If we emphasise only the differences between outlooks, we increase a tendency towards a strong form of moral relativism that easily gives way to nihilism and despair. If we emphasise only that which is shared by different perspectives, we give the impression that all that matters is that we agree on everything and that our deeply held beliefs are of no importance. Walking the tightrope between those

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[15] These examples come from a publication for teachers of Mathematics with which the writer of this paper was linked – *Charis Mathematics* (Nottingham, The Stapleford Centre, 1997). Details of this publication and of others produced for teachers of other subjects including Science, English, French and German can be found on the website www.stapleford-centre.org.

extremes is the way to promote both a respect for truth and a respect for other people.

4.4 Morality and Religion

It is sometimes argued against the position set forth in the previous section that morality and religion are logically independent. Ethics is an autonomous domain. Morality does not require religious underpinning, it is said, and anyway non-religious people are often very moral and sometimes more so than some religious people. Religious beliefs and values, it may be argued, are of a different kind from moral beliefs and values.

It is undoubtedly the case that non-religious people are often very moral and sometimes seem rather more so than some religious people. However, it does not follow from this that it is not possible to base morality on religious beliefs and, in particular, on those of the Christian religion. The absence of agreement on the foundations of ethics, after centuries of debate, would seem to make it at least a bit premature to rule out the possibility of a Christian foundation.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to share insights from the experience of education in schools in England in the hope that some of them may prove helpful to planning for education in a different country and a different culture with a different history. Some insights may be irrelevant, some may have some relevance but may need to be re-interpreted in order to be applied and some may have a very direct relevance because of those things that are common to us in our different countries.