

# Education, Religion and Society

Essays in honour of John M. Hull

Edited by Dennis Bates, Gloria Durka  
and Friedrich Schweitzer

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# Education, Religion and Society

*Education, Religion and Society* celebrates the career of Professor John Hull, the internationally renowned religious educationist who has also achieved worldwide fame for his brilliant writings on his experience, mid-career, of total blindness. In his outstanding career he has been a leading figure in the transformation of religious education in English and Welsh state schools from Christian instruction to multi-faith religious education and was the co-founder of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values. John Hull has also made major contributions to the theology of disability and the theological critique of the 'money culture'.

This volume brings together leading international scholars to honour John Hull's contribution, with a focus on furthering scholarship in the areas in which he has been active as a thinker. The book offers a critical appreciation of his contribution to religious education and practical theology, and goes on to explore the continuing debate about the role of religious education in promoting international understanding, intercultural education and human rights education. A possible basis for integrating Islamic education into Western education is suggested and the contribution of the philosophy of religion to pluralistic religious education is outlined. The contributors also deal with issues relating to indoctrination, racism and relationship, and examine aspects of the theology of social exclusion and disability.

This unique book, which includes a complete list of John Hull's writings up to the beginning of 2005, provides both an excellent introduction to contemporary issues in religious education in the West and the most complete critical account yet of the work of one of the great creative influences on religious education.

**Dennis Bates** is an honorary research fellow in the University of Birmingham School of Education, having recently retired from Manchester Metropolitan University where he had responsibility for religious studies. **Gloria Durka** is Professor of Religious Education at Fordham University, New York and has served as the President of the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education. **Friedrich Schweitzer** is Professor of Religious Education and Practical Theology at the Protestant Faculty, Tübingen University.

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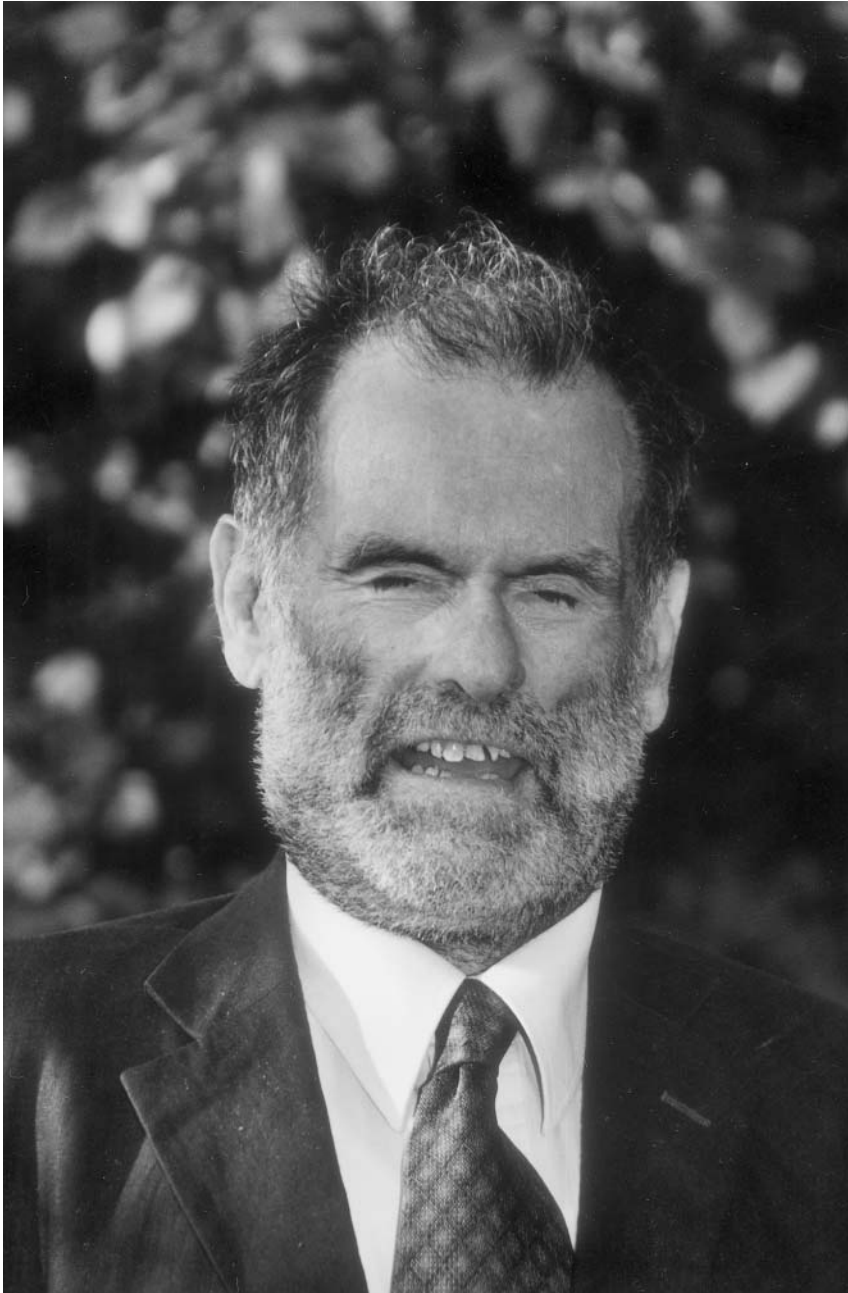
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Professor John M. Hull (photograph by Dennis Bates).



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**Fedor Kozyrev** has a scientific background in biology and soil science but later undertook theological and teacher training in St. Petersburg Theological Academy and became a teacher in a state gymnasium. He then entered teacher training and is now Director of the Religious Pedagogy Centre at the Inter-Church Partnership and Head of the Department of Religious Pedagogy at the Russian Christian Humanitarian Institute. He is currently undertaking doctoral studies at the Herzen State Pedagogical University on the subject of non-confessional religious education in Russia and has published a number of articles on theology and religious education.

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**Charles Melchert** was, until his recent retirement, Professor of Education and Religion at the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, USA where he was also Dean of the Faculty and later Director of the Doctoral Programme. He is now Adjunct Professor at Lancaster Theological Seminary in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Among his recent major publications is *Wise Teaching: Biblical Wisdom and Educational Ministry* (Trinity Press International 1998). He is currently working on a book with the provisional title *Practice What you Teach: Patterns of Truth and Self-Deception in Education and Ministry*.

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# Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the publishers and editors of *Panorama: International Journal of Comparative Religious Education and Values* for permission to include as the introductory chapter of this volume a revised and enlarged version of the article 'In Celebration of Professor John Hull: Christian Theologian and Educationist' first published in Volume 14:1 of that journal, Summer 2002. Thanks are also due to Professor Brian Gates of St. Martin's University College, Lancaster, UK, for his helpful critical comments on drafts of the introductory chapter.



# General introduction

This book honours the contribution made by John M. Hull, Emeritus Professor of Religious Education in the University of Birmingham UK, to religious education and practical theology both in the UK and internationally over a period of more than three decades. It is written and edited by an international and ecumenical body of scholars all of whom have had some association with John Hull over his long career and wish to register their esteem for him and his work in the year he has celebrated his seventieth birthday. Those who know him will never use the word 'retirement' in his hearing – except perhaps in relation to themselves. Professor Hull has recently moved from the University of Birmingham School of Education, his location for thirty-six years, to the post of Honorary Professor in Practical Theology in the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education a short distance away where he will be able to pursue his wider teaching and research interests in theology.

This move is eminently appropriate. Although a committed educationist, John Hull has always seen himself first as a Christian practical theologian applying his theology to the theory and practice of religious education and, more recently, also to disability and the money culture. Writing in the early 1980s, he defined 'practical theology' as 'theology seeking to be related to the problems and possibilities of human life both inside and outside the community of faith' (Hull 1984: 208). Throughout his career, he has endeavoured to bring religious education into the mainstream of educational thought and practice by arguing for the replacement of a Christian nurturing approach to the subject by a secular, multifaith approach in state or 'county', now 'community', schools and the replacement of legally compulsory daily school worship by secular assemblies.

To many, the paradox is that he has advocated these changes on Christian theological grounds not only on educational grounds. Furthermore, he has also argued that it is necessary for the Christian churches to adopt the same critical, reflective approach to nurturing their children into the faith; and he has worked to produce viable syllabuses and curriculum materials in both community and church sectors. As will be seen in the critical appreciation below, it is this contribution to religious education both in the church and

## 2 *General introduction*

state sectors based on an overt Christian commitment that has made his thinking of such interest not only in the UK but to religious educationists in other countries in which the religious denominations often retain responsibility for religious education in state schools or run their own educational institutions.

The term 'practical theology' is now coming to be used more often in the UK and certainly reflects more accurately the purview of John Hull's work which extends well beyond religious education. He has written movingly and powerfully about his own traumatic personal experience of total blindness, and is working towards the forging of a theology of disability. He has also written extensively on the distorting influence of the 'money culture' and the imperialist legacy on theology, religious belief and religious experience in western societies. It will be interesting to see where Professor Hull's interests will take him in his new position.

In planning this festschrift, it was felt that he would be most honoured by a book in which respected colleagues wrote on their present research interests in the areas to which he has devoted and continues to devote his professional life. The majority of contributors chose to write on various aspects of religion and education in which he has such a well-established reputation but three essays in Part 2 reflect aspects of his later interests – disability and self deception. The result is a book which offers valuable insights into the current concerns and interests of religious educationists and theologians from a number of cultural and religio-educational contexts in Europe (including Russia) and the USA, as they grapple with the problems which the post-modern cultural ethos is posing across the developed world.

Many of the contributors are members of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV), an ecumenical and inter-faith organization jointly founded in 1977 by John Hull and Professor J.R. Peatling to promote international exchange between religious educationists. ISREV meets biennially in various locations throughout the world, most recently in Philadelphia 2004, and its deliberations and the continuing debates of its members between conferences are often published in leading journals, notably the *British Journal of Religious Education*, *Panorama* and *Religious Education*. Freidrich Schweitzer and Gloria Durka are long-standing members of ISREV and offer the following reflections on the impact of John Hull's work in Germany and the USA respectively:

### **John Hull and religious education in Germany**

From a German perspective – and similar remarks could undoubtedly be made from the perspective of other countries in central and northern Europe – John Hull has been by far the most influential theorist of religious education from another country. The evidence for this is plentiful; John Hull's bibliography includes an exceptional number of articles translated into German and two of his monographs are available in German translation

(Hull 1992, 1997) as are two volumes of edited extracts from his writings (Hull 2000a, 2000b). Through ISREV as well as through other organizations, conferences, lectures, etc. he has been in personal touch with most of the leading figures in German religious education over the last twenty-five years. In 1995 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Frankfurt which indicates that his leading role has been acknowledged well beyond personal impressions.

John Hull's publications are used by many religious educationists in this country and are regarded with great respect. This is quite remarkable because national discussions still play a major role in religious education due to its relation to national regulations for schools and education. Consequently, attention to writers from other countries tends to be limited and translations are rare. From a German perspective, John Hull stands for a modern type of religious education which is based on educational rather than on catechetical criteria. In this sense, his work is in line with similar attempts of German religious educators of his generation like Karl Ernst Nipkow. Many German religious educators also respect him as a key figure in the process of internationalizing religious education as an academic discipline; his work as editor of the *British Journal of Religious Education* testifies to this through its many international contributions, often resulting from John's personal invitation or encouragement.

Most recently, his decisive involvement with the development of an interfaith approach to religious education has received much attention. Many religious educators in Germany perceive the Birmingham approach as the model from which they have received inspiration for their own attempts in Germany. John Hull's participation in the Nuremburg Forums on intercultural and inter-religious education has been especially important in this respect. Beyond this, the Birmingham approach has been an important point of reference for most German writers interested in making religious education more inclusive of religions other than Christianity.

## John Hull and religious education in the USA

John Hull is known in the United States (US) as a theologian of education. His thinking was first introduced to academic circles in the 1970s through the *British Journal of Religious Education*. This period was one of rapid growth and development for the profession of religious education in the US. The Association of Professors and Researchers of Religious Education, formed in the late 1960s, was gaining membership and its annual meetings were becoming forums for lively conversation and academic debate on the theory and practice of religious education. The Religious Education Association, founded in 1903, was the sponsor of the journal *Religious Education*, a forum for interfaith dialogue.

Working in an environment of separation of church and state, US religious educators in a variety of institutions were drawn to John Hull's

description of the nature of religious education. His edited collection, *New Directions in Religious Education* (Falmer Press 1982), not only helped US religious educators to identify the key issues surrounding religious education in Britain but brought together significant articles on the nature of religious education, religious education in a pluralistic society, the design of the curriculum and methods in teaching religion. John Hull's own introductory essay expressed his interest in developing an approach that is not restricted to the learning of observable facts about religion, but one in which 'pupils should learn from religion in ways which will enrich them and deepen their humanity, rather than merely informing them' (Hull 1982: xv).

John Hull's concerns resonated with that of many US religious education theorists, and their interest was enhanced by the founding of ISREV. An invitational seminar to encourage the exchange of thinking and research, ISREV first met in the US in Schenectady, New York in 1980. It was here that scholars from the US and other countries had the opportunity to meet John Hull in person, listen to his lecture on the theme 'Christian Nurture and Critical Openness', and probe it in depth in a variety of working sessions. His lecture was later published and made available to a wider audience (cf. *Understanding Christian Nurture*, British Council of Churches 1981). Many US religious educators became members and were able to initiate regular exchanges of ideas and concerns with John Hull whose writings became more widely read in the 1980s. His book *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning* (SCM 1985 and Trinity Press International 1991) appeared on required reading lists of university and theological school courses, thereby introducing his thinking to scores of students who began to seek out his other writings. Practitioners also became familiar with John Hull as they were drawn to his works on teaching children and young people such as *God-talk with Young Children* (Trinity Press International 1991) and curriculum projects, for example, *A Gift to the Child* (Simon and Schuster 1991). Teachers were impressed by the fact that his work drew from his own experience as teacher, scholar, writer and thinker.

It was no surprise, and most appropriate, when in 1992 John Hull was honoured in the US by the presentation to him of the William Rainey Harper award of the Religious Education Association of the USA and Canada. By then he was recognized as one of the most influential religious education scholars in the English-speaking world whose work had enhanced US religious education theory and practice. John's keynote address at the Conference, 'Adult Learners: Making Critical Connections', personally introduced him to professional religious educators who were moved by his passion, wit, commitment and courage in the face of his blindness. What he wrote about in *Touching the Rock: An Experience of Blindness* (SPCK 1990) was known to many, but his presence at this meeting gave compelling witness to his remarkable career and vocation.

## The structure of the book

After the introductory section, the book is divided into three parts: the first, reflecting the interest of John Hull in socio-political and educational issues worldwide, deals primarily with international, intercultural and philosophical dimensions of religious education; the second examines important topics in the theology of education, disability and social exclusion; and the third explores significant recent developments in the theory and practice of religious education. The contents of the three major parts of the book are discussed in more detail in their respective introductions.

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Dennis Bates, Gloria Durka, Friedrich Schweitzer

# John Hull

## A critical appreciation

*Dennis Bates*

This introductory chapter gives an overview of John Hull's career, including brief outlines of his thinking in the major areas in which he has been engaged; this also includes curriculum development work undertaken by and with his colleague of many years, Michael Grimmitt. The essay concludes with a critical assessment of his work to date including those aspects of it shared by Michael Grimmitt and others.

### Upbringing, education and early career

Born in 1935 in the state of Victoria in Australia, John Hull trained as a teacher in the University of Melbourne and taught for three years (1956–59) in a Melbourne Church of England grammar school. His father was a Methodist minister of conservative evangelical persuasion and it was in such a faith that John was brought up. The centrality of the Bible to Christian faith in these formative years left an indelible imprint on him. In 1959 he came to Britain to study theology and his traumatic encounter with the 'higher criticism' of the Bible at Cambridge University (1959–62) caused a 'crisis of faith' (Hull 1997: 6). As a result of this his conservative evangelicalism gave way to a theology strongly influenced by the then current 'New Theology' with its utilization of the language of depth psychology and its embracement of secularity as part of God's purposes for humanity 'come of age'.

Rather than undermining the centrality of the Bible to his faith, however, this fresh orientation seems to have enhanced it. For him the Bible continued to be the primary reference point for Christian belief and his expository gifts and sheer pleasure in working with the text are reflected in many of his writings, but brilliantly so in his recent book *In the Beginning There was Darkness* (SCM Press 2001). After Cambridge, he resumed his teaching career for four years, teaching religious education in a London grammar school. During this time, he also undertook part-time doctoral research in New Testament Studies at London University. His thesis, which was completed at the University of Birmingham, was later published under the title *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (SCM Press 1974).

In 1966 Hull was appointed lecturer in divinity at the free church sponsored Westhill College of Education in Birmingham and in 1968 succeeded Edwin Cox as lecturer in religious education in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. During his two years at Westhill he worked closely with Edwin Cox, who was one of several religious educationists, among them Harold Loukes, Ronald Goldman and J.W.D. Smith, who were rethinking the character and aims of Biblically focused Christian religious education in face of research evidence of poor learning in the subject and an increasingly secular and pluralistic social environment. Cox argued for a more child centred, 'open ended' approach to a subject which would still 'largely involve teaching of the sources and faith of Christianity' (Cox 1966: 68), albeit with 'some consideration' of the teaching of other religions and even secular philosophies. John Hull learned much from Edwin Cox as his warm dedication of a recent book to him indicates (Hull 1998: viii), but his own thinking was soon to go well beyond that of his colleague.

The real transformation of religious education which occurred during the following decade and in which Hull was to play a crucial role, owed much to the thinking of Professor Ninian Smart who, in the year that John Hull was appointed to Westhill College, had resigned from his chair of Christian Theology at the University of Birmingham, to become founding professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the new University of Lancaster. In his Heslington lectures (Smart 1968), Ninian Smart called for the abandonment of faith-nurturing aims in state school religious education and their replacement by 'a sensitive induction into religious studies, not with the aim of evangelizing but with the aim of creating certain capacities to understand and think about religion' (ibid. 97). On a shrinking globe and in an increasingly pluralistic as well as an 'open and religiously uncommitted society' (ibid. 91), Ninian Smart held that Christianity should be studied alongside the other great world faiths which should no longer be presented in the light of Christian missionary theology (as the agreed syllabuses had presented them to date) but empathetically and fairly using phenomenological methodology. In a review article published in 1970, John Hull concludes that 'we must have the type of neutral religious education advocated by Ninian Smart . . . and . . . this approach is *consistent with* the nature of Christian thought' (Hull 1984: 96).

## **Christian education and secular education**

If Ninian Smart's thinking was the major inspiration behind the transformation of religious education, John Hull was the driving force behind securing its wider acceptance. Unlike Ninian Smart, who was seen by many teachers as an academic with unrealistic notions of what was feasible in schools, John Hull was an 'insider', a trained teacher, a religious educationist and prominent member of the Christian Education Movement (CEM) which had long been the major organization supporting teachers of religious

education in UK schools. Most important, he became editor in 1971 of the CEM journal *Learning for Living* (renamed the *British Journal of Religious Education* (BJRE) in 1978), the only British religious education journal of any standing; this role gave him a unique platform from which to influence thinking.

Hull was in broad agreement with the suggestions of the Lancaster Schools Council project working paper (Schools Council 1971) which combined the child centred experiential methods of 1960s liberal Christian religious education with Ninian Smart's phenomenological method and six dimensional typology of religions. However, he had already shown tentative concern in 1970 about how far Smart's approach took account of 'the personal growth of the pupil' (Hull 1984: 96); and after the surge of the world religions movement during the 1970s he became concerned during the early 1980s that RE was seeing 'an exaggerated emphasis upon the observable facts about religion' (Hull 1982: xv). Not surprisingly, religious education in the University of Birmingham became increasingly focused on pupil centred 'learning from' religion as will be seen below. However, the early 1970s saw John Hull involved in another crucial debate which was to have a major impact on his thinking about religious education in all areas. It was Paul Hirst, one of a group of philosophers of education based in London University, whose thinking was a dominant influence in UK philosophy of education during the 1960s and 1970s, who provided the spur for Hull to develop his own Christian theology of education, religious education and Christian nurture.

Hirst had called for an objective, secular approach to the study of religion in state schools in an important article published in the mid-sixties (Hirst 1965); but in an article in *Learning for Living* (Hirst 1972) which formed the substance of a chapter in his later book *Moral Education in a Secular Society* (1974), he went further, arguing that the very notion of 'Christian education' was 'a contradiction in terms' since education is essentially a rational, critical process that cannot presuppose the truth of the beliefs of any religion or ideology. The aim of education was the 'development of people who are rational, autonomous beings in every area of life' (Hirst 1974: 81). In an editorial discussion of this in the BJRE (Winter 1975), John Hull argues that, contrary to Hirst's contention, it is possible to generate and support a 'free, open and enquiring' view of education from within Christian theology (Hull 1998: 20). In a series of articles written from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s and in his work on Christian nurture for the British Council of Churches (BCC 1976, 1981) Hull builds upon his thinking in *School Worship: an Obituary* (1975) and develops his case for a Christian theology of education, religious education and Christian nurture which embodies the critical principles of contemporary educational theory. The approaches he adopts to religious education in state schools and Christian nurture in the churches are very similar: in a BJRE editorial published in 1972, John argues that: 'the day of closed nurture is over and the churches in all their

educational work, including that which takes place on Sundays, must accept the risks of a critical education' (Hull 1998: 8).

John Hull finds a basis for a Christian theology of 'critically open' education from a number of sources: most fundamentally, it derives from the Christian doctrine of God as 'Person', authoritative but not authoritarian: 'a God who gives himself in covenant relationship with men and women whom he calls to walk before him, not as slaves but as sons and daughters, advancing in love and trust and responsibility with him' (Hull 1984: 203). As he puts it in another article: 'Critical openness is the pedagogical technique adopted by a God who is personal and desires us to be persons' (ibid. 216). He also contends that 'the spirit of critical openness . . . is central in New Testament Christianity' (ibid. 201), citing as evidence, for example, the many 'appeals to Christians to maintain an alert, watchful, vigilant, inquiring and discriminating spirit' (ibid.) to distinguish between true and false Messiahs, prophets, miracles etc. In the 'in-between age' after the coming of the Messiah and before his second coming 'nothing was clear and sharp' (ibid.). We shall return to Hull's theological justification for critically open religious education and Christian nurture below.

### **School worship and education**

The issue of daily worship in state schools, compulsory under the 1944 Education Act, was John Hull's earliest major research topic in religious education. His interest in it dated back to his having to organize it in the south London grammar school in which he taught in the early 1960s. He had already written several articles on the subject, in the earliest of which, published in 1969 (cf. Hull 1984: 5–16) he had suggested that it be abandoned. In an important book (Hull 1975) he brings his thinking together in a focused and incisive way, exploring the subject historically and conceptually in some depth. In essence, he contends that worship on the one hand, which assumes belief in its object, and education on the other, which subjects all things to critical scrutiny, are mutually incompatible (ibid. 89). How can state schools have open, critical, multifaith religious education and at the same time have daily acts of Christian worship? Worship should therefore be discontinued in state schools and replaced by school assemblies the content of which could relate directly to school activities and interests including the free, voluntary expression of the beliefs of different groups; but there would be no assumption of belief on the part of the whole school and therefore no need for any group or individual to feel the need to be excluded. John admits that this book was 'a hard book for a Christian to write' (ibid. ix); however, as the 1988 Education Reform Act was to show, his 'obituary' for school worship was to prove somewhat premature (cf. Francis and Davies 2002).

## Religious education and Christian nurture

The 1970s, his last years with the faculty of sight, were years of intense activity and achievement for Hull. He was active in virtually all areas of religious education. In state school religious education he was a key member of the agreed syllabus conference which produced, after five years work, the controversial 1975 Birmingham Agreed Syllabus, the first truly multifaith syllabus to appear in Britain. The conference included representatives of all of the major faith communities in Birmingham and co-opted secular humanists onto working groups. In John Hull's view 'The result is a syllabus which can be taught by any well informed and enthusiastic teacher, regardless of his faith or lack of it, to any interested pupil, regardless of his faith, or lack of it' (Hull 1984: 114). The syllabus received much criticism and Hull wrote several articles and editorials defending and justifying its approach (ibid. Part II: 27ff.).

He also wrote many articles which dealt with problems facing religious education teachers as they grappled with the 'new RE', including thematic teaching (ibid. Part III: 123ff.) and the problem of the relation between teachers' personal beliefs and the teaching both of their own faith and faiths or 'stances for living' to which they were not committed (ibid. Part IV: 175ff.). His distinction between 'convergent' teaching and 'divergent' teaching, with its recognition that both those who wished to teach from their faith stance (convergently) in the context of nurture and those who wished to teach neutrally (divergently) in secular education could be equally 'professional' and 'confessional' in their motivation and practice, was a useful corrective to more simplistic thinking. John was also a member of the working group which produced the Schools Council's *Groundplan for the Study of Religion* (1977), an important attempt to provide a framework of aims and objectives for the study of religion. During this period also he travelled widely, lecturing in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. He found that 'the British problems were not isolated' (Hull 1984: 1) and one of John's most significant achievements during this hectic decade was his joint founding in 1977, together with Professor John R. Peatling, of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV).

In addition to his work in state schools, John Hull remained deeply interested and active in the Christian nurture of children and young people and adult Christian education in the churches, and made significant contributions to these areas. His thinking was a major influence on the British Council of Churches reports *The Child in the Church* (1976) and *Understanding Christian Nurture* (1981). He sought to rethink Christian nurture within the churches in the light of social and educational change. John's discussion in *School Worship: an Obituary* encapsulates the essence of his thinking. Nurture is not indoctrination; a true Christian nurture is a 'womb' not a 'straitjacket', it is open as education is open (Hull 1975: 108). A child nurtured in the Christian way 'will be brought up in his native tradition in such

a way as to enter into dialogue with it, to become aware of it, so that he may appropriate it or reject it' (ibid.).

At the root of John's thinking both about Christian nurture and religious education is his conviction of the centrality of respect for personhood to the Christian view of humanity: 'autonomy or critical openness is an essential attribute of personhood' (Hull 1984: 216). Created in God's image, 'God has called us into fellowship with himself, having made us mind as well as spirit' (ibid. 217). A nurture which claims to determine what the child will become – 'to finish a person' – denies 'the integrity, the uniqueness of that person' (Hull 1975: 107). The New Testament teaches 'the idea of Christian man as unfinished man . . . the achievement of personhood . . . is a life-long task' (Hull 1984: 202). In an important essay published in 1994 which takes account of discussion and criticism of the concept of 'critical openness', especially in relation to Paul Hirst's 'rational autonomy', Hull draws the following distinction between them:

whereas autonomy could perhaps suggest a certain isolation, even a self enclosed independence, or it might suggest individualism, . . . critical openness is intended to suggest that one is in a community, a learning community, in which one both speaks and listens, being both critical and receptive.

(Hull 1994: 253–4)

John Hull's contribution to the development of thinking about the nurture of children in the church was recognized by his twice being elected President of the National Christian Education Council – formerly the British Sunday School Union – most recently in 2002. For a closer examination of his theological justification of a 'critically open' approach to religious education, with a discussion of his Biblical hermeneutic, see Wilna Meijer's essay, Chapter 5 below.

## Turning points

Two events, in 1979 and 1980 respectively, marked major changes to the political and social environment of religious education in Britain and to John Hull's life, professional interests and personal consciousness. These were the coming to power of a Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher in 1979; and, after a life in which he had experienced constant battles to retain his sight, the onset of total blindness in 1980. There can be no doubt that after successfully and remarkably adapting himself to the limitations imposed by his blindness during the early 1980s, Hull's life, thinking and professional interests developed in new directions clearly influenced by these changes. His work on his experience of blindness and the theology of disability; and on the money culture and its effects on religion, spirituality and education show this unequivocally.

A turning point of another kind occurred in 1979 when John Hull was joined by Michael Grimmitt, who came from the post of Director of the then 'RE Resources and In-Service Training Centre' located in Westhill College of Education and had worked with Hull since 1974 as reviews editor of *Learning for Living*. The author of a pioneering textbook for multifaith RE (Grimmitt 1973, 2nd edn 1978), Grimmitt came to the University of Birmingham with a strong commitment to a multifaith view of religious education and with extensive experience of RE curriculum development and initial and continuing professional teacher education. Sharing similar theological positions and philosophies of RE, and with complementary interests, John Hull and his new colleague formed a strong team which, under Hull's vigorous leadership and building on the previous work of both of them, was to establish the University of Birmingham's School of Education as an internationally reputed centre for teacher training and research in religious education, attracting research students from all over the world.

It was Grimmitt's contribution which was the major creative influence upon the curriculum development aspect of the work of the 'Birmingham team' as Trevor Cooling calls it (Cooling 1996: 168). His and John Hull's thinking were firmly in the tradition of the person centred liberal ecumenical Christian education of J.H. Oldham in the inter-war period and, in the 1960s, that of J.W.D. Smith, Harold Loukes and Ronald Goldman (cf. Bates 1984, 1986, 1992). As indicated above, it was the rethinking of Christian religious education along experiential and developmental lines by Loukes, Goldman and Smith which, together with Ninian Smart's phenomenological 'religious studies', formed the complementary facets of the Lancaster Secondary RE project's bipolar 'implicit/explicit' religion schema (Schools Council 1971). According to this, RE was to be 'a dialogue with experience and a dialogue with living religions so that the one can interpret and reinforce the other' (Schools Council 1971: 43). It is clear that this formula has strongly influenced Grimmitt's view of the nature of religious education up to the present (cf. Grimmitt 2000: 37–8). In his influential book of 1973, Grimmitt applied the Lancaster schema with changed terminology – 'existential' (personal 'quest for meaning') and 'dimensional' (phenomenological study of religions) – to classroom practice (Grimmitt 1973: Chapters 5 and 6). The 'existential' aspect was deeply informed by the 'new theology' and especially Paul Tillich's language of 'depth' and 'ultimacy'.

This was developed further in his work with Garth Read on the 'Christians Today' project at Westhill RE Centre in which the 'learning from' and 'learning about' distinction was first mooted (cf. Grimmitt and Read 1977: 7–8). It was also in his work on this project that he formulated his view of education as 'a process by, in and through which pupils may begin to explore what it is, and what it means to be human' (ibid. 20). In an essay published in 1982, it is clear that this human development focus of education is intended in part as a means of ameliorating the 'antipathy' of the ethnic minority religious communities, especially Muslims, 'towards the

current stress on objectivity and openness in RE' (Grimmitt 1982: 140). He also expresses the view that 'other theological perspectives' (ibid. 141) than 1960s radical theology were necessary in order for the approach to be acceptable to these communities. The outcome of this second phase development was a rationale for multifaith RE which would be made acceptable to the major faith communities by basing it on the common ground of human development and avoiding any very overt Christian theological underpinning. 'Ultimate questions' however, retained distinctly Tillichian overtones.

Grimmitt develops his thinking fully in a major study which was primarily written to advocate the contribution of religious education to personal, social and moral education (Grimmitt 1987). In this, he outlines a revised bipolar curriculum strategy based around the interaction of 'Shared Human Experience' and 'Traditional Belief Systems'. It is the 'ultimate questions' of meaning and value arising from the former that have allegedly given rise to the beliefs and values of the latter. These 'ultimate questions' form the basis of the 'Adolescent life-world curriculum' which is intended to interact with the 'Religious life-world curriculum' which shows how five world faiths respond to these questions (ibid. Part 2: 267–388). However, RE is not simply 'learning about' religion; much more importantly, it is 'learning from' religion, that is 'what pupils learn from their studies in religion about themselves – about discerning ultimate questions and 'signals of transcendence' in their own experience and how they might respond to them' (ibid. 225). The overriding aim of the whole process is the pupils' personal development or their 'humanization' (cf. ibid. Chapter 2 and 230ff.) and the selection of curriculum content in RE should be determined by how far it facilitates this process. In order to achieve this:

subject matter must be chosen which has the potentiality for reflection on, and re-evaluation and re-interpretation of the self . . . what is studied (and how it is studied) must have the capacity to prompt young people to ask: 'Who am I?'

(ibid. 206)

The impartial role of the teacher is also emphasized by Grimmitt: 'Despite their title, "religious" educators are essentially "secular" educators concerned with the educational value of studying religion' (ibid. 258).

That John Hull shared this broad approach was clear early on in his work on the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus of 1975. As he writes in an article published in the year of the syllabus's publication, it incorporates alongside the study of religions and secular humanism an 'existential' aspect 'in that at each point an attempt is made to relate the material studied to the pupil's life' (Hull 1984: 114). His commitment to it became even more explicit later when he writes of the need for pupils to 'learn from religion in ways which will enrich them and deepen their humanity' (Hull 1982: xv). Most recently his support is further confirmed in his outline and discussion of the