

SACRE NEWS



Issue 32

FROM THE CHAIR...

HEAT and LIGHT



As the autumnal evenings give way to winter nights, the warmth of summer seems but a distant memory. The same can be said of political heat.

The intense public debate over the News of the World phone hacking scandal was quickly overshadowed by even more heated discussion of the unprecedented riots in Britain of last August. That discussion took place against the background of many graphic images of the disturbances, perhaps none more haunting and shocking than that of the flame engulfed Reeves Corner furniture store in Croydon – a local family business for over 100 years - which was burnt to the ground in one night.

The ensuing debate about criminality, community, responsibility and materialism that it generated was certainly not cool! Three months on, however, talk of mending 'broken Britain' and questions about



the real nature of the 'Big Society' are being informed by more measured assessments about what could and should be done to avoid a



repetition of the riots.

Indeed, with Diwali and Chanukah, some faith communities are celebrating festivals of light at this time of year and in the Christian calendar, Advent is a reminder of the approach of Christmas.

In the darkness it is perhaps better to have a little more light and little less heat

At the beginning of October, the first RE Community Weekend took place at Wokefield Park, near Reading. It was a rare opportunity for a range of stakeholders in RE to meet and consider the huge challenges facing RE at present and ways in which the community might respond to the crisis circumstances.

Unsurprisingly, as with any family gathering, the occasion was not without some heat of its

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own but more importantly it managed to cast a brilliant spotlight on at least one key message:

The RE community has to take control of its own interests.

The detail of the various challenges facing RE has been well rehearsed elsewhere. The slow demise of local education authorities, the exit of schools from local authority control, the exclusion of the RE from the EBacc, the climate of economic austerity, changes in the law in relation to RE in academies have been the



headline grabbers. They serve to indicate areas in which we, as members of the RE Community, can and must become more proactive.

What is clear is that the various stakeholders in RE need to work together in a smarter, more coordinated fashion and that the Religious Education Council is the obvious catalyst or facilitator for achieving this. Prudently, the REC is structuring itself to undertake this task more effectively. NASACRE together with organisations representing RE teachers, lecturers, inspectors, advisers and consultants will be working ever more closely on the REC curriculum, assessment and qualifications committee. That committee is to review the RE curriculum, its most appropriate forms of assessment, and advise on suitable public qualifications for RE in England. It will also seek funding for that enterprise and advise on the management of such a project, drawing on and working with REC member organisations and other partners in conducting the review.

Close collaboration outside of the formal committee meetings will be essential if the RE community is to take charge of its own destiny. This is a mighty challenge in itself given that the RE community covers diverse interest groups with their own networks, not least the various communities of faith and belief themselves.

Within this broad remit, NASACRE is seeking to lend particular weight to work on what good RE and good collective worship should look like.

It is clear that the Coalition administration does not see advice and guidance as a primary function of government departments. NASACRE has therefore put in place arrangements to enable it to lead in producing guidance on collective worship in order to support SACREs and schools. We intend to seek partners from other interested organisations to help produce this and to adopt a similar approach in making the case for RE in the curriculum and in exploring how best to assess RE

A NASACRE priority for 2012 is, in partnership with REC member organisations, to engage with headteacher and governor organisations to promote the case for RE in the curriculum and to



articulate how we see it falling within the 2012 School Inspection Framework - especially in relation to how SMSC* will be treated in arriving at inspection judgements.

Many individual SACREs are facing acute difficulties at this time as LA structures on which we all rely start to buckle under the strain of their new financial realities. New problems are on the horizon even as we address the immediate challenges. For example, there is the semblance of a worrying trend toward children's social care starting to dominate Children's Services departments to the detriment of educational support. At the same time,

academies and free schools are increasing in numbers.

In these circumstances it is vital that both the RE Community and government continue to remind LAs of their statutory functions in relation to RE and that SACREs and NASACRE continue to remind LAs of exactly what resource is needed to deliver those functions effectively. Such information, set out on the NASACRE website, has proved helpful to SACREs in the past 12 months and should be revisited periodically.

Our recently published RETool for SACRE self evaluation looks at relations with the academies sector and helps SACREs assess how effectively they encourage academies to see themselves also as stakeholders in their local area, specifically by devising ways in which an academies presence is incorporated into the SACRE itself.

Such cooperation not only supports good working practice with advice and builds positive relationships within a locality but also affirms the value of RE and demonstrates the mutual benefit to partners of working together for pupils and communities.

Cooperation and partnership are the watchwords as we move forward into the New Year and the brighter days of spring.

With real hope for and faith in the future, may I wish you all a happy New Year.

Bruce Gill

*SMSC - Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

Faith in the Future

Following the shocking devastation and lawlessness of the August riots, the pronouncements and responses made in the heat of the immediate aftermath of those events have given way to more measured assessments in light of the emerging information.

At the end of October the BBC reported Ministry of Justice figures on the people arrested in connection with the riots which included:

- 90% were male though only 5% were over the age of 40
- Of those defendants whose ethnicity is known: 46% were black, 42% were white, 7% were Asian and 5% were classified as "other".
- 35% of adults were claiming out-of-work benefits (national average of 12%)
- Of the young people involved, 42% were in receipt of free school meals compared to an average of 16%
- 13% of those arrested overall were gang members but in London the figure was 19%
- More than 2,500 shops and businesses were victims of looters and vandals, and more than 230 homes were hit by burglars or vandals



The information on the educational background of the young people so far brought to justice was particularly instructive with large proportions of them with either SEN or having been excluded from school or both.

- Two-thirds of the young people in court were classed as having some form of special educational need, compared to 21% for the national average
- More than a third of young people who were involved in the riots had been excluded from school during 2009/10. (DfE records show 6% exclusions for all Year 11 pupils).
- More than one in 10 of the young people appearing before courts had been permanently excluded (The figure drops to 0.1% among all those aged 15).

The Communities and Victims Panel announced at the end of August and chaired by Darra Singh, CEO Jobcentre Plus, is due to publish interim findings at the end of November.

The panel is exploring:

- why people took part in riots
- why the riots happened in some areas and not others
- how key public services engaged with communities before, during and after the riots
- what motivated local people to come together to take civic action to resist riots in their area or to clean up after riots had taken place
- how communities can be made more socially and economically resilient in the future, in order to prevent future problems
- what they think could have been done differently to prevent or manage the riots

Darra Singh had also been the chair of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion which reported in 2006 under the title **Our Shared Future**. His involvement in the Communities and Victims Panel, coincidentally mirrors two strands of thinking that are of particular relevance and interest to SACRES. **Our Shared Future** noted tensions linked to ethnicity and faith but did not wish to overstate these. It stated that cohesion is not just about race and faith and integration is not just about assimilation. It defined an integrated and cohesive community as one where:

- there is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country
- there is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment
- there is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny
- there is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common
- there are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods

Schools are increasingly recognising the very positive contribution that good RE and good collective worship make toward fostering community cohesion and the RETool for SACRE self evaluation helps SACREs to assess their own effectiveness in supporting schools with this work.

Interestingly, of the six issues that are the focus of the report of the Victims' Panel at least three converge on territory we associate with the benefits of good collective worship. As stated in the joint NASACRE and AREIAC position statement on collective worship:

“Collective worship can be shaped and planned to meet the needs of each school, its pupils and communities. Inclusive collective worship enables the school community, in a range of settings, to reflect on different values, beliefs and expressions of humanity found within and beyond the school, thus ensuring that all pupils, of any faith and of none, contribute to the spirit of the school and to each others’ growth as human beings. Collective worship can be a combination of the whole school together, year groups, Key Stage groups, class groups and house groups and at any time of the day. It can follow a concept, theme, teaching, belief, text for a week, exploring it from different faith and non-faith perspectives and exploring what it means for each person and the school and society as a whole. Unlike congregational worship, it does not necessitate prayer, but does require reflection. Unlike a purely secular assembly, it does include religious views and expression. Taken seriously it helps inspire pupils to live for higher principles, contributes to higher aspirations and enables the school to conspire to work, grow, live and flourish together as a community.”

This is not to mention the fact that young people in receipt of good RE:

“...value the opportunities they have to explore the beliefs and ideas of others, and to engage in dialogue with those from whom they differ. They feel that their learning in RE helps them to become more confident in their own beliefs and background and in expressing their own values. They also recognise that their experience of diversity helps them to be more aware of others and to support strongly the school’s promotion of community coherence.”

Ofsted inspection report of RE in London secondary school adjudged as outstanding

The examples of good practice within our schools are real grounds for cautious optimism and point to the solid foundations upon which we can have faith in our capacity to build a more positive future.

Bruce Gill
NASACRE Chair



London and SE SACRE (and Guernsey!) conference

We met at the London Sivan Kovil Temple in Lewisham on 13th October 2011 and were made welcome throughout the day with excellent catering. The aim of the conference was to consider how SACREs can fulfil their responsibilities for RE and collective worship in uncertain times.

Our first session considered the increasing diversity within society, with a wide range of both faith and culture. The meeting agreed that SACREs have a distinctive role in this and should 'reach out' into this diverse society. We also considered the fact that there are many inequalities in the composition of some SACREs, discussing the process of co-opting 'minority' groups.

The second session was led by Helen Harrison and Jo Malone from 'Face to Faith', an innovative schools programme (part of the Tony Blair Foundation) for 12-17 year olds across 17 countries and growing. It aims to connect students worldwide via emerging technologies, such as facilitated video-conferences and a secure website.

In the afternoon, we had the excellent guidance of John Keast as he explored the key issue of what RE looks like with all the uncertainties that abound at this time. John outlined in his talk how, in 2011, the situation with RE is critical but not fatal. He made comments about the relationship between established RE practice and academies and free schools, linking in the current role of Ofsted, LAs and SACREs.

He shared his concerns over changes to Initial Teacher Training and the current review of the National Curriculum and the disappointing outcome to the debate about RE within the new English Baccalaureate.

He encouraged us to remember that RE has an essential and unique contribution and is still a legal requirement. He suggested that there has been a significant response from the RE community with an overt swell of support for RE. He explained how he saw the role of the RE Council developing a national forum with a clear national voice that would be able to influence policy and promote a positive image and public understanding of RE.

He concluded by adding that now was the time for leadership, change and an opportunity for the RE community to work together



Martin Sweet
Croydon SACRE

NASACRE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

Date: Wednesday 23rd May 2012

Venue: Small Meeting House, Friends Meeting House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Time: (provisional) 9.30 for 10.00 start, finish 4.00.

Keynote address: Prof. Robert Jackson

Attendance Fee: £70 per person.

Further notice will be given in due course.

NATRE Spirited Arts competition 2012

Following the success and impact of previous Spirited Arts competitions, information can now be found on the NATRE website about this year's 'Art in Heaven' competition. There are five themes:

- The Turning Point of the Story
- Where is God Today?
- Hope for the World
- Beginning / Ending
- The Poisoned Pool

Responses to these inspirational themes can be as a drawing, painting, art, video, sculpture or other medium. They each provide opportunities for thought provoking RE.

All information on such things as how entries should be sent, what should be included and closing date can be found on the downloadable entry form.

Please advertise this competition to your schools.

<http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/2012.php>



Developing Encounter in RE

WESTHILL/NASACRE Awards 2011/12 Herefordshire SACRE

Research has demonstrated that encountering people of different faiths is one of the most effective ways of breaking down barriers and overcoming prejudices and misconceptions. The Westhill/NASACRE project run by Herefordshire SACRE bears this out in the experiences of pupils, teachers and faith community representatives.

Part 1: The Training Day

Holmer Primary School was the venue for a gathering of representatives from Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities, to receive training in developing workshops that would draw the most out of pupils in their encounters with people of different faiths and beliefs.

Those present tried out five activities which modelled an interactive approach to engaging pupils in workshops, including materials and strategies such as:

- encountering stories and stimuli that make pupils stop and think;
- activities enabling pupils to handle texts and explore different interpretations;
- exploring a range of viewpoints from believers within and beyond the faith communities;
- enabling pupils to articulate responses through a variety of means of expression;
- helping pupils to apply the lessons from their encounters into their everyday lives;
- reflecting on the impact of their encounter for their school and local communities.

Part 2: The KS4 conference

A bright Tuesday morning in October, Muslim and Roman Catholic pupils from the Al-Hijrah High School, Birmingham, and St Mary's RC High School, Hereford, converged on Wigmore High School, a rural comprehensive set in the beautiful countryside of North Herefordshire. Head of RE, Kate Mayglothling, outlined the day, introducing the theme of "Where's the meaning in my life?" and challenged the pupils to make the most of the opportunity ahead of them.

The programme for the day enabled mixed groups to attend four workshops. Each speaker had used their experience at the training day and had developed an interactive workshop to explore where the meaning is in their own lives. These included sessions on:

- music as a means of communicating devotion to God for one Christian;
- the use of food at the heart of community celebrations in Judaism and beyond;
- how the Qur'an and her faith brings peace and happiness to one Muslim;
- and how God, science and art form the frame of reference for the way another Muslim views the world and makes sense of life.



In their final group session, pupils presented some of their responses to the day:

- one group’s rap presentation included the line, “Now we know about different religions we make different decisions”;
- another group said that they recognised that there were many more things linking them than separating them;
- another used the term “harmony” to sum up the message of the day.

The vast majority of pupils said that they had enjoyed the day, that they valued talking with people of different faiths, and that they understood more about what matters to other people as a result.

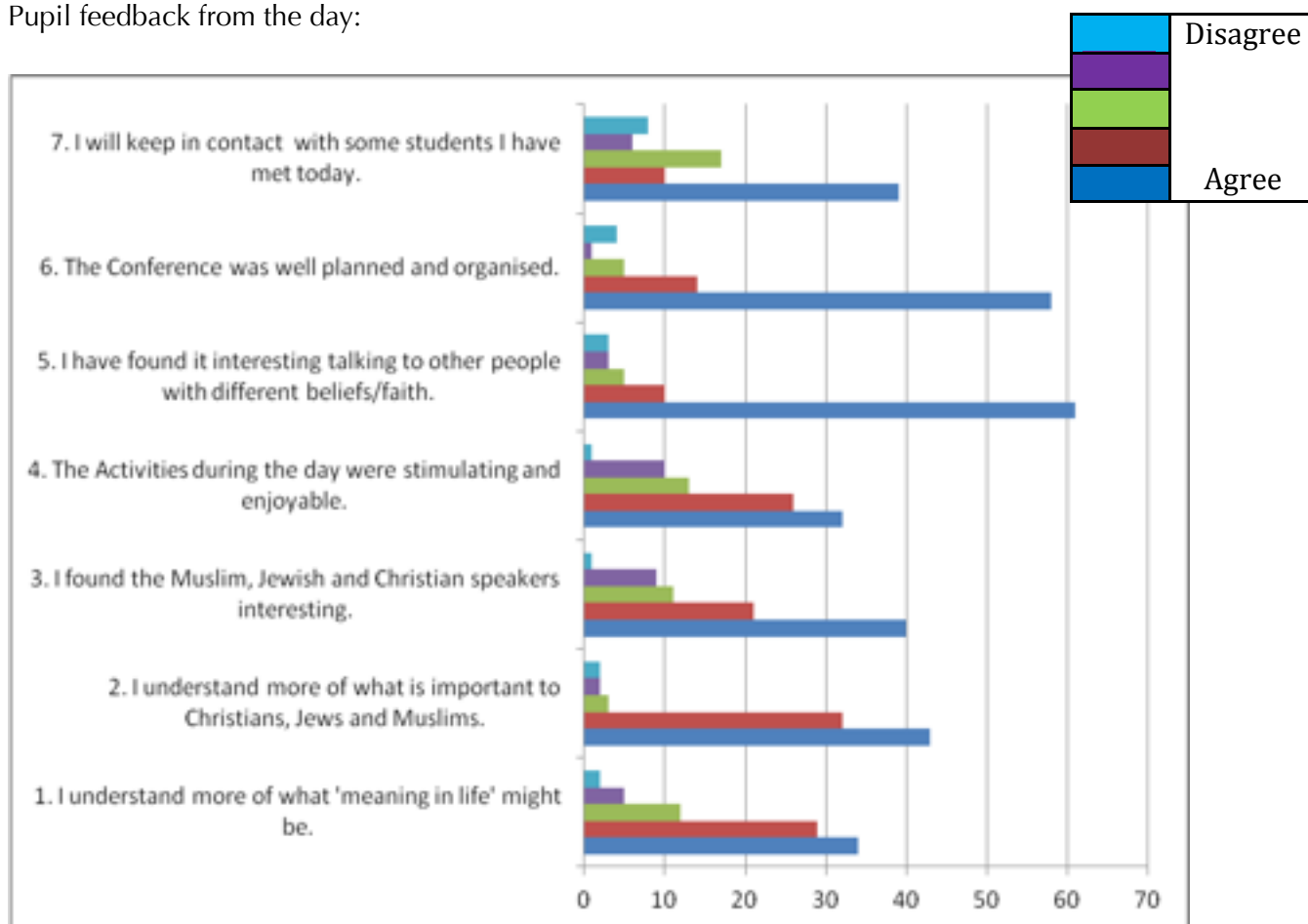
Part 3: The case study

All the details of the project, including the principles for planning engaging workshops, some model workshop structures, the programme and full description of the KS4 encounter day with pupil evaluations, can be found on the NASACRE website www.nasacre.org.uk

Epilogue

As the pupils from St Mary’s and Wigmore dispersed, the pupils and staff from Al-Hijrah High School joined together with the visiting Muslim workshop leaders in their midday and afternoon prayers in the school hall. This moment of calm was a reminder of how some of the ideas and practices spoken about throughout the day wove like a thread through the lives of many of those present.

Pupil feedback from the day:



Stephen Pett

Research on Parental Religion and Parental Engagement

This research consisted of an online questionnaire, which centred around the impact of parental religious belief on the way parents interact with their children's learning.

Summary: The headline results from the research are that parents who responded are already doing those things which the literature shows to be the most beneficial for children's achievement: showing moral support, modelling an interest in learning, and learning together with their children.

Parents from Christian backgrounds were clear that their faith had a positive influence on their engagement with their children's learning, and were able to find support and guidance from within their faith communities. Agnostic parents were more likely to mention providing support for learning and fostering independent thought, and parents who were atheists were more likely to mention having conversations with their children.

We hope to continue this research in the future, on a much wider scale. Future research would include working directly with groups to support parental engagement in children's learning, in ways that are sensitive to, and supportive of, faith beliefs. If you would like more information about the current research or future developments, please contact me through the following email address:

janet.goodall@warwick.ac.uk

Janet **Goodall** and Kathryn **Ghent**

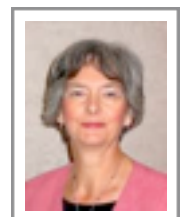
Change of Editors

Geoff Teece has stepped down as editor of **SACRE News**. He incorporated this responsibility into his role as secretary of NASACRE for many years and, when I took over from him as secretary in 2004, he agreed to continue to produce the newsletter which he has done ever since. He always got the job done, even when it meant cajoling reluctant contributors to produce promised pieces. He always met deadlines; he was meticulous in the detail; he was thoroughly dependable and it was a pleasure to work with him.

So, after many years of service to NASACRE, we will no longer have Geoff's wise counsel at executive discussions or his direct support for all things SACRE-related. We wish him well in his continued service of religious education and thank him for what he has given to NASACRE.

The Executive is pleased to announce that **Sharon Artley** is now editing our newsletter. Sharon is an independent consultant working in RE; she is consultant to Middlesbrough SACRE and, as a former RE teacher, a very valuable member of the NASACRE Executive. She is also a whizz at ICT and, having worked closely with her on producing the training CD, I can vouch for her skill and imaginative expertise in this field. Sharon is involved in some national projects - REsilience, Celebrating RE and the RE CPD Handbook. We are very fortunate to have her on this job! Welcome Sharon... and thank you from us all for taking it on.

Julie **Grove**



BOOK REVIEWS

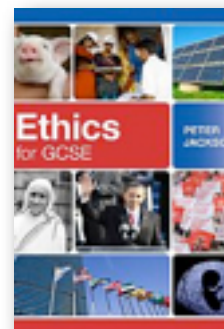


ETHICS FOR GCSE

Peter Jackson (2011)

ISBN: 9780281055647

SPCK Publishing



This book focuses on ethics from a Christian perspective, and has been designed for pupils taking OCR Syllabus B (ethics), AQA RS A option 2A, or Edexcel GCSE 2R501 Unit 2.2-2.4. The material is divided into 12 familiar topics, each following a sequence of introductory stories, initial discussion questions, glossary, expository introduction to the topic, “going deeper”, summary of main points, and revision questions.

In broad terms, the book does “what it says on the tin”, in an attractive and accessible way. I enjoyed reading through it. Pupils will find it stimulating and helpful, though at £15 a copy one wonders how many schools would be able to afford a full set for a large and enthusiastic GCSE group. Moreover, independent of any exam course context, the book is robust enough to stand on its own, and to offer a brisk and bracing trot through a wide range of topical issues that might be engaged with, not only in RE/RS but also in General Studies, Citizenship, etc – and in KS5 as well as KS4.

Topic One deals with attitudes towards animals. No doubt this will appeal to many pupils, and is certainly a valid ethical issue. However, I struggled to find any evidence that this topic is central to, or even mentioned in, the exam course specifications of the three named ethics courses. Perhaps the author wished to avoid being seen to favour any one of the three specification formats, but the sequence and arrangement of topics does seem nevertheless rather idiosyncratic.

A major concern for me is that the book uses the well-worn device of opening up each topic in a pupil-centred and subjective way, and then moves on to an objective exposition of the ethical debate around that topic. The book is of course seeking to enable pupils to give a competent overview of the debates and stances on a range of ethical topics, but the teacher will need to be aware that these provocative opening up activities will not bring the pupils themselves to a place of internal rest and equilibrium; rather, that time may need to be given to assist pupils to come to terms at a personal level with what they have been handling and their reactions to it.

The book necessarily contains a great deal of factual information – scientific and technical, legal and institutional, historical and social – in addition to its specific material on Christian ethical teachings. Though the presentation is lucid and orderly, some pupils will struggle to keep up to speed with it all, and in places there is a feeling that the sheer weight of background material overshadows the ethical issues and debates themselves. Some of the language is quite heavy, again perhaps necessarily, though I wonder how many pupils will grasp the nuances of “casuistical” (p. 55).

A few minor quibbles may be noted. A Latin phrase is mentioned **in vitro**, (p. 20) several pages before it is explained (p. 29), while the chosen font means that some pupils will read “ius” as “lus” in places. The timescale in Lesley’s story (p. 31) does not add up. The text box “Learn to pray” (p. 130) is intended to be an example (a rather odd example, surely) of what can be found out from looking up a church website, but the link with the accompanying exposition is not spelt out. In a passing reference, the “pornography industry” is given a simplistic gloss (p. 85).

On the specifically Christian material, the author is at pains to cover the different denominational positions, and divergencies within denominations, but the result is rather bitty, and it is difficult to gain a sense of Christianity as a whole having a coherent ethical tradition. Similarly, the author takes pains to differentiate between Old and New Testament teachings, and between conservative and liberal approaches to the Bible. It would have been helpful here to make the point that the Catholic Church also regards the Bible as authoritative; its **magisterium** is essentially concerned with explaining, applying and building on the biblical foundations. At the end of the book, the author offers a few paragraphs on the deontological understanding of ethics without mentioning God or the concept of God's will. In a book on ethics from a Christian perspective, this is surely a rather significant omission.



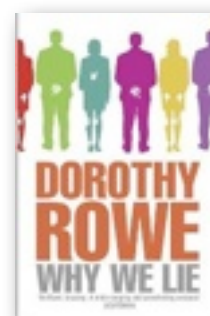
Michael Metcalf

WHY WE LIE

Dorothy Rowe (2011)

ISBN: 9780007357970

Fourth Estate Harper Collins



Dorothy Rowe presents an expansive and breathtaking investigation of the lies we tell ourselves and the reasons we tell them. Encompassing the latest findings from neuropsychology about how the brain functions and how the mind constructs reality; exploring the relationship between this and fantasies, beliefs, myths, theories and hypotheses; she proceeds to set out an analysis of the powerful influence of parenting in early childhood in shaping an individual's sense of self and identity for better or worse. Drawing on her years of experience of working with people suffering from clinical depression she notes;

"People change their ideas when they voluntarily examine their own ideas and the consequences of their ideas and decide to change".

Fundamental to this is the need to confront the fantasies, beliefs, or views we have formed of ourselves and the deep seated fears of uncertainty and aloneness that seem integral to such a challenge to our prevailing world or self view. Denial and repression, for example are two means whereby we lie to ourselves.

The lies she explores are both epic and banal in scope but all in their way are significant - not least because of the manner in which they interconnect. Politicians, bankers, news and media tycoons are all people, so issues such as genocide, the Iraq War, Afghanistan, the machinations of International News Corporation, banking and the financial crisis all fall with her analysis as do observations on the personality traits of individuals such as Heinrich Himmler, Adolf Hitler, Tony Blair, George Bush, Gordon Brown and David Cameron.

She acknowledges the importance of fantasy but rails against delusion which she sees as:

"a theory that has no connection to the real world, but only to the fantasies, memories, needs and desires of the person who holds it and who insists that the delusion is the truth."

Rowe therefore has little time for most organised religion and her discourse only just manages to escape becoming a rant, albeit an elegant and academic one, against it.

She gives prominence to the Golden Rule and does, eventually, distinguish between the ideals to which many faiths aspire but the various interpretations of those faiths that fall far short from their ideals.

Her messages reach a crescendo in the closing chapter of the book which delivers a number of hard truths. These include, that everything is connected to everything else and that ideas do not circulate around the world but a multitude of interpretations of ideas do.

Why We Lie is invaluable reading for all with an interest in the place of religion and belief in the school curriculum and how the conversation between religion and belief might best be developed.



Bruce **Gill**, NASACRE chair

GOD COLLAR

Marcus Brigstocke (2011)

ISBN: 0593067363

Fourth Estate Harper Collins



I fell over this book in a charity bookshop and, since it was originally £11.99, the £2.00 outlay seemed like a bargain, especially since it was 2011 vintage and in very good condition. I had no real expectations except that, in declaring the author was 'on a journey in the hope of filling his God-shaped hole', the blurb on the back was intriguing. The book did not disappoint.

Brigstocke establishes his relationship with his reader immediately and cleverly, acknowledging that, if 'you're inclined to explore the feeling of precarious uncertainty with me, I'd be glad of your company'. He is on a search. He is fairly certain it's probably fruitless, but he can't let go. He admits to being lost, confessing he is 'to theological exploration as Eddy 'The Eagle' Edwards was to ski jumping'.

The reasons for his search come from a profound sense of loss at the death of his closest friend. He wishes desperately that he had a faith in God because he recognises the beauty of religion and he finds no answers to life's questions in atheism. He is open to people of all faiths, finding in them a certainty he admires and, in all humility, wishes to find.

In declaring his genuine curiosity about the possibility of God, and working his way through fifteen chapters of angst, liberally seasoned with humour, he reveals a great deal about himself, his joys and his prejudices. And all with a fluency and style that belies his dyslexia; it engages and delights... as long as you can cope with the occasional expletive!

What emerges through these pages is a man who loves people, who is forensically observant, painfully sensitive, consistently eloquent without being precious and deeply spiritual. He returns in his conclusion to the hurt that prompted his search, giving his reader the most outrageous but moving testimony to real friendship.

In his postscript he acknowledges his reason for giving God a capital G throughout; it's not out of respect but just in case he's wrong in doubting God's existence... but then he'd rather be happy than right. It's intelligent polemic, a well informed, vicious and funny rant but, above all, it makes you think.



Julie **Grove**

TO BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY

During Celebrating RE month, people from all walks of life provided statements about the value and importance of RE. They can all be found on the Celebrating RE website <http://www.celebratingre.org/>, but here are one or two to brighten your day:

Religious Education is perhaps a misunderstood subject. It is not just about religion and who believes in what God or the different religious practices that exist today and throughout history. True, it gives us a context through which to view the history of the world and to see how it has shaped our lives and cultures today. But it is also an invaluable tool to aid in the teaching to our children of a profound lesson that we continue to learn for the rest of our lives: what it is to be human. Intolerance continues to be one of the greatest dangers we face today. Without an understanding and acceptance of one another's journey through life, there can be no progress. No matter what we believe in or subscribe to, we each of us have a right to be understood and accepted for who we are. Religious education broadens our awareness of one another and encourages tolerance, understanding, inquisitiveness and consciousness. We are all spiritual beings on a human journey, and religious education can be the catalyst for our understanding and acceptance of how each of us chooses to manifest and express this journey in our lives. If we can teach children from an early age tolerance of one another's differences, from specific personal differences to religious and cultural differences on a global scale, there is great hope for a world with less conflict and pain and instead a world of open-mindedness, awareness and love; a world in which we can all be who we are without fear; a world in which "different" is celebrated.

Samuel Barnett, Actor

RE is a vital subject for our schools if we are to produce a tolerant and caring society. It is significantly through their RE lessons in schools that children become aware of the diverse nature of multi faith Britain. Without RE, far too many negative stereotypes and unthinking prejudices would exist as a result of ignorance. RE enables children to understand why communities and individuals may dress, practise and believe differently to themselves. Without RE being taught in schools, social harmony and community cohesion would be virtually unachievable.

Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, Department of Religious Studies, University of Wolverhampton

I taught RE for 15 years and it is the most demanding of all curriculum subjects, but also the most exciting because you're using pupils' own views and opinions for learning about what really matters in life.

Of course RE lessons – the same as all religions - are about the power of story. Storytelling goes across the religions. The importance of narrative in all religions is vital. The very point of education is growth, says Plato - it's 'to make good men and good women act nobly.' Teachers carry a massive responsibility shared with rabbis, imams and religious teachers from all faiths because you can change a child's life, heal or hurt, inspire or disparage. You all want for your own children, if you have them, the best teachers. In RE lessons, the power of story to move you to compassion and care sits alongside powerful arguments about euthanasia, abortion or life after death. The point is that RE is a subject where relationships are a bit different because you're not just imparting knowledge but talking about the nature of God.

Gervase Phinn, Teacher, author and speaker

BACKPAGE - SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ...

January			February		
1st	<i>Secular</i>	New Year's Day	1st	<i>Pagan</i>	Imbolc/Candlemas
	<i>Christian</i>	Circumcision / Naming of Jesus	2nd	<i>Christian</i>	Presentation of the Lord
	<i>Japanese</i>	Ganjitsu	3rd	<i>Japanese</i>	Satsubun / Bean Scattering
5th	<i>Sikh</i>	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh	5th	<i>Muslim (Sunni)</i>	Birthday of the Prophet Muhammed
6th	<i>Christian</i>	Epiphany	6th	<i>Chinese</i>	Teng Chieh
	<i>Orthodox Ch.</i>	Christmas Eve	8th	<i>Buddhist</i>	Parinirvana (or 15th)
7th	<i>Orthodox Ch.</i>	Christmas Day		<i>Jewish</i>	Tu B'Shevat
	<i>Rastafarian</i>	Ethiopian Christmas Day	10th	<i>Muslim (Shi'a)</i>	Birthday of the Prophet Muhammed
14th	<i>Hindu</i>	Lori / Makar Sankrant	20th	<i>Hindu</i>	Mahashivratri
16th	<i>Buddhist</i>	Shinran Memorial Day	21st	<i>Christian</i>	Shrove Tuesday
18th	<i>Christian</i>	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	22nd	<i>Christian</i>	Ash Wednesday
23rd	<i>Chinese</i>	Yuan Tan (New Year - Dragon)	27th	<i>Orthodox Ch.</i>	Great Lent / Orthodox Fast
25th	<i>Buddhist</i>	Honan Memorial Day			
27th		Holocaust Memorial Day			
28th	<i>Hindu</i>	Sarasota Puja			
	<i>Sikh</i>	Basant / Vasant			
30th	<i>Zoroastrian</i>	Jashn-e-Sadeh			

Dates courtesy of the Shap Working Party calendar - for more details see www.shap.org

ON THE WEBSITE ...

Do keep an eye on the website where you will find:

- 🕒 News updates
- 🕒 Information about NASACRE
- 🕒 News about events
- 🕒 News on projects
- 🕒 The Newsletter Archive
- 🕒 The FAQ archive
- 🕒 Agenda items for your next SACRE meetings
- 🕒 A membership list
- 🕒 Exemplar documentation



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Please also check your details and if necessary update the membership section and add to the exemplar documentation. Contact us at web@nasacre.org.uk

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