

**Report on Lambeth Syllabus**  
By Rev Dr R H Allaway (Baptist Representative on Haringey SACRE)

**General Preliminary Observations**

I will restrict myself to **Christianity**, since I have no expertise in other faiths, and will concentrate on Key Stages 1 and 2, since I am a governor at that level.

Looking over the Christian components, I see a tension between the needs of good educational practice and religious diplomacy. The best way for children to learn is to get them actively involved in doing things, but I know parents in my own tradition would be deeply unhappy if they thought their children were in any way joining in the worship of other faiths. Even where children were only involved in the practices of their own faith, this could still seem demeaning to those practices if they were ‘only play acting’. (eg the doll christening in Unit 2)

There is also a problem in that the need to learn ‘things’ tends to focus on outward ‘religion’ rather than spirituality. I have been depressed to hear, over the years, well educated youngsters of other faiths or none claim that, whereas other faiths embrace the whole of life, Christianity is only about Sundays. This is not true. Within my own, evangelical, tradition, for example, most believers will have a daily ‘quiet time’ of prayer and Bible study, often first thing in the morning (following the example of Jesus). Even if children may not be aware of this, they will certainly be conscious of giving thanks in prayer before meals and parents reading them Bible stories and praying with them. Many occupations have Christian associations that will, for example, meet for prayer and fellowship in occasional lunch breaks. The syllabus nods in the direction of these things, but looking at a video-diary of ‘a day in the life of’ a Christian believer would reveal more than a visit to an empty church.

One final general observation: The table to the right shows the figures for normal church *attendance* between the denominations in Greater London and in Haringey. The figures for Greater London are accurate, from the 2005 English Church Census. Those for Haringey are estimates, extrapolating from the known differences in numbers of churches in the same census. What is clear, even just from the

| Denomination | Greater London | Haringey |
|--------------|----------------|----------|
| Anglican     | 15%            | 10%      |
| Baptist      | 7%             | 7%       |
| R Catholic   | 31%            | 19%      |
| Independent  | 5%             | 4%       |
| Methodist    | 3%             | 3%       |
| New          | 6%             | 10%      |
| Orthodox     | 3%             | 6%       |
| Pentecostal  | 25%            | 34%      |
| URC          | 1%             | 1%       |
| Others       | 4%             | 6%       |

Greater London figures, is that the average child who attends a church is likely not to be Anglican, but Pentecostal or Roman Catholic, and so the picture of ‘typical’ Christianity in Religious Education needs to reflect this. (Historically, ‘Free’ Churches have always dominated Tottenham: Quakers in early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Baptists in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pentecostals now.)

### **Key Stage 1, The Natural World**

Good starting point that Judaism, Christianity and Islam can all share. It is more relevant at this stage of child development, to concentrate on a sense of wonder before nature, which this does.

#### **Key Stage 1, Unit 1**

All is acceptable here. If Jehovah's Witness children are in class, teacher will need to be sensitive to the fact that they celebrate neither birthdays nor Christmas!

Teacher should explain to any Muslim children that Jesus=Isa, Mary=Miryam and John=Yahyah.

#### **Key Stage 1, Unit 2.**

I am not happy with this unit.

Equating baptism with naming misses what baptism is about in **any** church tradition. It is the rite of incorporation into the Christian Church. If 'Christian names' are adopted at this time, that is purely incidental.

All churches baptise adult converts and all would recognise immersion as one way of doing this. Baptisms like those by the Archbishop of York, broadcast on TV in Easter 2006, would be recognised by everyone from Roman Catholics to Pentecostals. If children are to be introduced to baptism, this should be the starting point.

They could *then* be taught that many churches are also happy to baptise children of Christian parents, combining it with naming / thanksgiving. Other churches keep these things separate, and only baptise those old enough to request it for themselves.

As for the 'Christening' of a doll ... I recognise that it makes good educational sense for children to participate in acting something out. Theologically, though, it makes me cringe. Since I do not believe in infant baptism myself, it should not bother me. Putting myself in a paedobaptist's shoes, however, knowing what it is supposed to mean, it seems sacrilegious. How can a dead *doll* belong to the Christian Church? Also, does this not involve non-Christians in Christian worship?

If all the above seems a bit 'heavy' for Key Stage 1, then do nothing at all about baptism at this point.

#### **Key Stage 1, Unit 3**

OK

#### **Key Stage 1, Unit 4**

Note that many small congregations in Haringey cannot afford a building of their own, so share that of another church, or hire, say, a school hall.

A visit to a second place of worship should not be just an extension activity. It is vital that pupils grasp the breadth of Christianity (that elaborate church and simple meeting house are both genuine expressions of Christianity) as well as those things that all share (what is "really important"). This 'diversity in unity' is itself an important thing to learn about Christianity. It is one of the good things about Christianity in Haringey. Pupils should see videos of the buildings being used for Sunday worship.

Maybe the church visits should be left till Units 7 and 8, and the pupils just experience videos of different worship, especially music. Better still, Christian children in class could sing songs from their churches and talk about how they feel in the services.

### **Key Stage 1, Unit 5**

OK

### **Key Stage 2, Unit 6**

OK, though learning about St Nicholas (the real, original one) might be more useful than St Lucia, especially as he lived in Turkey, and there are many Turks in Haringey!

### **Key Stage 2, Unit 7 & 8**

These are much better than Unit 4. Maybe church visits could be left till here and in Unit 4 watch and listen to recordings of different Christian worship.

### **Key Stage 2, Unit 9**

**Session 3.** I don't like to be pedantic, but you should note that most Christian theologians do **not** see most of Jesus' miracles as demonstrations of his deity, since he performed them in the power of the Holy Spirit, and promised his disciples they could do the same. His deity is rather shown in his character, and confirmed in his death and resurrection. Otherwise, this seems OK.

### **Key Stage 2, Unit 10**

Pilgrimage in the sense of visiting a 'Holy' place is only in the 'catholic' tradition (in its widest sense). Evangelicals would only use it in the sense of 'Pilgrim's Progress', travelling through life towards God. The nearest thing for them to the catholic pilgrimage would be going to attend one of the big Bible Conventions (Keswick, Spring Harvest, etc), but they go there for the people, not the place.

It would be good to give a local slant to this. Modern Catholic visits to Lourdes could be compared to trips to the 'healing well' at Muswell Hill in the Middle Ages. Evangelical Christians, like those who travel to hear speakers at Keswick, travelled to Billy Graham's meetings in Haringey Stadium in the 1950s.

If, on the other hand, the idea of the journey of life as a 'pilgrimage' is pursued, it would be a good point to introduce different Christian patterns of initiation (if not dealt with in Unit 2) along the lines of Unit 13, but simpler

### **Key Stage 2, Unit 11**

Why not study some great **local** Christians of the past, such as Thomas Barnardo and Gladys Aylward, particularly as they both expressed their faith in helping children. Since many children will have a Jamaican background, why not Sam Sharpe, Baptist deacon, who led a non-violent slave revolt there, instead of Martin Luther King?

### **Key Stage 2 Transition**

**Rules** are a good topic to compare and contrast faiths. There should perhaps be more attention to the question of **authority** - who interprets the rules - since this is the main reason for differences within religions. I would hope it would be brought out that Christians make a Person (Jesus) central, the Book is a means to learn about him, whereas for Muslims (and Jews) the Book itself is central.

**Theme 5:** Eastern Orthodox do not use the Apostles Creed, and would omit ‘and from the Son’ from ‘who proceeds from the Father’ in the ‘Nicene’. (Note: the written version of the latter in Lambeth syllabus leaves out ‘catholic and’ before ‘apostolic’.) Baptist and Pentecostal traditions tend not to use the historic creeds, anyway. They express their faith in song.

‘Jesus is Lord’ [Romans 10:9] would better correspond to the Shema and Shahadah. I would be happy to prepare something on this myself, helping the pupils to investigate the development of simple creedal statements in the New Testament.

### **Key Stage 3, Transition**

See comments on **Key Stage 2 Transition** above. One point I would make, when talking about food and drink: ‘Free Church’ (Methodist, Baptist, etc) Christians tend to be ‘Teetotal’, so use grape juice instead of wine for communion. I would want Muslims to be freed from any false impression that Christians are unaware of the dangers of alcohol.

### **Key Stage 3, Unit 12**

Good

### **Key Stage 3, Unit 13**

I like the idea of different life-paths, though there are more than just two. (eg Eastern Orthodox will give everything – including first communion (!) – to a baby, while many Roman Catholics will have first communion before confirmation.)

Once more I stress that **all** denominations nowadays would see the baptism of adult converts as the ‘default’ pattern, with the baptism of children (for those who do it) as a secondary, derived pattern, so they should be introduced in that order.

### **Key Stage 3, Unit 14**

I don’t know about, “Explore the influence of American history and slavery on the development of majority black Baptist churches.” It would surely be more apposite to explore how British Christian racism influenced the development of ‘majority black’ churches here, such as the New Testament Church of God. Whereas ‘Southern Baptists’ in the States supported slavery and segregation, forcing the formation of ‘Black’ Baptist denominations, British Baptists led the struggle to abolish these things. In the nineteenth century, a Black Baptist Pastor from the USA, Peter Stanford, was invited to pastor Baptist Churches in Canada and England, where he married an English woman!

### **Key Stage 3, Unit 15**

It would be worth pointing out that Elisabeth Fry was a Quaker, and many Quakers lived in Tottenham and influenced its history in the nineteenth century.