

Fallon, Anne, 1995, *The relevance of Religious Education in a Changing Post Primary Curriculum: An Enslaving or Liberating Force?*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The author holds that the hunger for God in the human heart must be developed within the educational system. This thesis describes the needs of adolescents and the psychology of religion. The nature of religion has been the subject of much scholarly work through philosophy, theology, psychology and literature. The psychological viewpoint has much interest among religious educators.

While there are different views expressed by the psychologists on the relevance of religion, those who proved most critical, were, so because of the manner in which it is presented. It is also clear that no psychologist would advocate total absence of the religious dimension to life. Religious education, as described by the Roman documents, presents a view of the sacred which may be glimpsed in the structures of secular experience. It has the power to burst the casing of what constricts seeing, feeling and hearing.

Creative freedom is at the core of humanity, so theology understands the human role in the mystery of creativity as evidence of the imprint of the Divine. Religious education is also analysed within the context of the debates taking place in Ireland. Our students will be ill—prepared for the present-day life unless we convince them of the need for a sense of integrity, develop in their minds a sense of discernment, and give them experience in the area of critical analysis and thinking. Therefore, the relevance of religious education within the changing curriculum is discussed. The extent to which the curriculum is changing can be gauged from the vast amount of literature available and discussion going on at present within the Irish educational system.

It is argued that if society and culture do not accept and accommodate the multiple social manifestations of the hunger for God in the human heart, it will become impoverished. A culture that turns its back on religious faith will lose the ability and the will to give human direction to economic growth, technological advance, business enterprise and market forces.

This dissertation also shows that no school is value free. In naming the ethos of a school, you are in fact liberating people. It gives parents an opportunity to choose the type of school they want for their children. as we move into the second millennium, it is essential that the Christian school establishes and maintains its identity.