

P. A. T. Book Review

***Teaching Religious Education: Researchers in the Classroom* by Julian Stern (Continuum International Publishing, London, 2006) ISBN 0-8264-8767-X (£14.99).**

This is a book about research into religious education, largely financed by Westhill Endowment, a charitable trust which organized the seminars on which its content is based. It sets out to answer three questions that school teachers might pose-

- How can recent research improve my RE teaching?
- How can I help my pupils engage in dialogue about religion?
- How can I be more “inclusive” in RE?

I thought members of the Professional Association of Teachers would be glad to know that there existed a body called the Professional Council for Religious Education, so the concept of bringing professional standards to tuition applied in this sphere also. Sadly since this book came out it has changed its name to National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE). It can be accessed at www.natre.org.uk.

One of the Westhill Trustees, Colin Johnson, tells us that a participant in the Westhill Seminars has been elected to what is now the NATRE Executive and another has joined the group which plans the themes for *RE Today*, a publication for classroom RE teachers.

The book contains eight chapters, respectively dealing with inclusiveness, exploring texts of the Bible, the Qur'an and the Bhagavad Gita, dialogue, inclusiveness again, teaching methods, human rights, ethnography, and the future of RE research. At the end is a bibliography, a glossary of acronyms (welcome indeed), and an index in very small type (I would guess four point, which is ridiculous).

The book considers RE to be a subject that is non-confessional (it does not seek to convert the child to any particular faith or non-faith), multi-faith (teaching about a number of religions), and respectful of atheism and agnosticism.

Using a magnifying glass, I was able to detect from the index that the book appears to pay little if any attention to religious teachings on either morality or sexuality, which seems strange.

Francis Bennion, Chairman Emeritus.

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