

# The Contribution of Religious Education to the Creation of Responsible Citizens: European and African Perspectives

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## THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO THE CREATION OF RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

What are the relationships between European and African values and/or between civic and Christian values? What is the response of Catholic Religious Education to the new political, social, cultural, and religious situation in Europe, especially considering the huge migration influx? Authors of this book raise many important questions connected with migration and education for further reflection. Therefore, texts coming from Africa and Eastern Europe are of particular value, as their voices are still often not heard or not understood by Western Europe. The plurality of approaches and exchange of perspectives coming from different continents provide an opportunity to overcome some misunderstandings and mental borders in a global dialogue. [...]

The book contains very creative reflections on the evolution of civic education and religious education, on the mixture of religious and secular elements within education, on appreciation and understanding of differences between value systems of different ethnic groups, and on the sense of belonging to one's locality, country, continent. The book also contains certain interesting suggestions concerning the use of methods and techniques in the service of Catholic Religious Education. These proceedings represent a source of mutual knowledge, experience, questions and opening of perspectives, so important for Churches, societies, schools, as well as for local, regional and national governments etc.

**Prof. Elżbieta Osewska, Ph.D.**

Since all the subtopics that lead to the definition of civic education (religion, peace, pluralism, gender, interculturality, identity, dialogue...) can really be understood as binding in this context, they form part of the transformation process, which becomes the basis of new educational ideals. As ideals are mostly perspectives of never-ending processes, it seems that - and the articles point to this - here we face the permanent task of educational and educational-scientific criticism, forcing us to discover new educational ideals without being sure that we will ever be able to see the end of such a transformation process, i.e., to reach the end of it one day. [...] Perhaps this, as paradoxical as it may seem, is what religious education and citizenship education have in common: the ideal as a permanent search and effort.

**Assoc. Prof. Ivica Pažin, Ph.D.**

Ana Thea Filipović - Tomislav Kovač - Jean-Paul Niyigena (Eds.)

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Catholic Faculty of Theology – University of Zagreb





Ana Thea Filipović - Tomislav Kovač - Jean-Paul Niyigena (Eds.)

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## EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES



Catholic Faculty of Theology – University of Zagreb



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# THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO THE CREATION OF RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS: European and African Perspectives

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# Contents

<i>Preface</i> .....	5
<b>PART ONE: Perspectives and Discourses</b> .....	11
Religious Education and Citizenship Education in Schools Faced with the Challenges of the Modern World .....	13
<i>Marijana Mohorić</i>	
The Specific Contribution of Religious Education to Civic Education: An African Perspective.....	35
<i>Jean-Paul Niyigena</i>	
Decolonial Perspective on Religious Education and Citizenship: Considerations on Power .....	59
<i>Richard Atchadé</i>	
<b>PART TWO: Tasks and Dimensions</b> .....	77
The Contribution of Religious Education to Citizenship Education: Theoretical, Empirical and Didactic Aspects .....	79
<i>Ana Thea Filipović</i>	
Religious Education and the Challenges of the African Political Reality .....	107
<i>Gaston Ogui Cossi</i>	
“The Right to have Rights” (Arendt): Human Rights and Religious Education.....	123
<i>Bernhard Grümme</i>	

Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue as a Challenge for Catholic Religious Education.....	141
---	-----

*Tomislav Kovač*

Religious Education and Religious Pluralism: Contribution to a Peacebuilding Education .....	165
---	-----

*André Mujiyambere*

### **PART THREE: Places and Contexts ..... 179**

Religious Education in Public and Catholic Schools in Croatia: How to Promote an Open and Dialogical Identity? .....	181
---	-----

*Josip Šimunović – Gordana Barudžija*

Relationship Between the Church, State, and Society in Benin and Croatia: An Experiential Comparison.....	203
--	-----

*Odilon-Gbènoukpo Singbo*

The Role of Religious Education in the Advocacy of the Common Good in the Democratic Republic of Congo .....	223
---	-----

*Martinien Bosokpale Dumana*

Citizenship, Gender, and Religious Education in Kenya: A Contextual Approach .....	235
---	-----

*Mary N. Getui*

<i>About the Authors</i> .....	252
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# Preface

In recent times, education for responsible citizenship has become a very important social, political, educational, and religious topic. At the level of educational policies, the need for citizenship education arises from the desire for the school to be a place that trains students to play an active role in society, teaching them how to live responsibly in increasingly diverse democratic communities of a globalised world. In the last 30 years, and earlier, numerous countries have introduced citizenship education into school programmes, either as a separate subject or more often as cross-curricular content that is mediated through different school subjects and extracurricular activities.

In Europe, the religious dimension of citizenship education and the contribution of religious education to responsible citizenship is highlighted at the level of educational policies and religious pedagogical research, especially after the war in the former Yugoslavia, and even more decisively after the terrorist attack on the United States of America on 11 September 2001. It then became clear that the Western societies, after the increasing trend to privatise religion, must re-evaluate its public role. This includes an educational confrontation with religious content, interpretations, and views, as well as the use of religion as a resource for humanising people and society.

Viewed from a religious perspective, questioning the religious contribution to more responsible civil coexistence and social cohesion is certainly not the main role of religion, but it surely brings to light one of its important impacts. In the present time of

great geopolitical tensions in the world, economic crises, growing global mistrust as well as the existential health and climate crisis, the school must open young people to hope and a meaningful life. It must educate them for active and responsible citizenship so that they will not fall victims to the powers of the economy, politics and media, including their comprehensive surveillance. The Church and its theology, reflecting on the role of religious education in schools, has the opportunity to show its ability for dialogue and a prophetic-constructive participation in public discourse. Through religious narratives and values, the religious perspective can contribute to the acquisition of the skill of critical thinking in democratic societies.

The African continent remains more religious than Europe. Africa faces many challenges for which it needs to strengthen citizenship education. For example, there are ethnic and tribal conflicts, interreligious conflicts, corruption, and inequality. In this context, religious education in schools is called upon to go beyond the catechetical goals in order to integrate citizenship issues. In this perspective, religious education could contribute to citizenship education in Africa by teaching peacebuilding, tolerance, justice, equality, and other civic values, that are also Christian values.

The present proceedings contain papers of the International Scientific Symposium, that was organised by the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb from 14 to 17 July 2022, in Zagreb, Croatia, on the same topic as the title of this book. 13 Catholic theologians, educationalists, and philosophers from several African and European countries tried to deepen the issue from different points of view. One more author was, unfortunately, not able to elaborate his paper for publishing. The symposium focused on the contribution of Catholic religious education to the education for responsible citizenship in both public and Catholic schools. Historical and cultural background of the discourse on citizenship, different views on citizenship, the national and global



dimensions of it, as well as the challenges to citizenship education in the modern world, came to the fore. Civic education relates to human rights as values and is therefore a normative concept that includes moral and value education, also questioning the relationship between religion and human rights. The relationship between citizenship education and advocacy of the common good is also highlighted.

Empirical research has shown that the goals of citizenship education can be understood differently; therefore, its success is related to the general orientations of the school system. Didactic aspects prove to be very important, and they include not only the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills but also the creation of attitudes. The gender aspect of religious and citizenship education is discussed and presented, as well as the possible contribution of religious education to interreligious and intercultural knowledge and dialogue. The need to create an open and dialogical identity, the contribution of religious education to peacebuilding, as well as different understandings of relations between the state, Church and society are also presented. In addition, the contributions elaborate various other related topics and elements, such as political issues and the issues of power, virtue education, social education, pedagogy of recognition, inclusion, and interdisciplinary approaches. The papers are grouped into three units: Perspectives and Discourses (related to citizenship and religious education), Tasks and Dimensions (of citizenship education within religious education), and Places and Contexts.

The specific contribution of religious education to citizenship education, observed from the perspective of the two continents and different contexts, was notably at the centre of the Symposium. In an interconnected, globalised world, marked by increased migrations and pluralism, the dialogue between scholars from the field of religious education and related disciplines is of particular importance. Scientific exchange and cooperation among scholars

coming from African and European countries is intensifying. Africa, a huge continent with its 54 countries, is gaining an increasingly important role in the world today. According to Mark-Anthony Johnson, “notwithstanding widespread poverty and huge social problems, Africa, in general, is doing better than many imagine.”<sup>1</sup> Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world, and this will lead to a transition different from transitions happening anywhere else.

Theologians must not ignore the growing importance of African thinking, culture, and population. Our cooperation in the Symposium and the present proceedings is a humble contribution intended to critically examine and productively change the ambivalent historical and contemporary relations between Europe and Africa. A critical questioning of religious heritage on the horizon of postcolonial theories and from a decolonial perspective, as well as a dialogue between different contextual perspectives, can contribute to this goal. Some African theologians living in European countries also contribute to the better understanding and knowledge of different backgrounds, starting points and possible future orientations. At the same time, it might be useful to introduce a third perspective to the discourse, i.e., the views and experiences of the Central and Eastern European countries (the so-called Second world), of which Croatia is an example. It could open up new opportunities for mutual exchange and insights beyond the historical and specific relations that exist between the countries of the so-called First and the so-called Third world.

In addition to the topics that are specific to each continent, many social and educational challenges are common to both Europe and Africa. They include increasing pluralism, migration, and internationalisation; challenges of scientific and technological

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<sup>1</sup> Mark-Anthony JOHNSON, Africa poised ‘to play a major role in the world’ (31 August 2019), in: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/africa-poised-play-major-role-world-mark-anthony-johnson> (1 July 2022).

development; issues of ethics, spirituality and re-examining religious traditions; questions of social justice, common good, inclusion in the community, gender issues, as well as health and media education. All of this should enable readers to expand their knowledge and horizons in terms of the contribution of religious education to citizenship education.

We would like to thank the authorities of the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb, especially the dean, Prof. Josip Šimunović, Ph.D., and the vice-dean for science, Asst. Prof. Branko Murić, Ph.D., as well as our sponsors, the Institute of Missiology of the *Missio* Foundation from Aachen in Germany and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, that have financially supported our conference and these proceedings. We would also like to extend our thanks to Paulines Publications Africa, that agreed to print and distribute this volume in African countries. We hope that these proceedings will be an incentive for a better use of the possibilities religious education offers, notably in terms of education for responsible citizenship.

*Ana Thea Filipović*

*Tomislav Kovač*

*Jean-Paul Niyigena*





PART ONE

**PERSPECTIVES  
AND DISCOURSES**



# Religious Education and Citizenship Education in Schools Faced with the Challenges of the Modern World

*Marijana Mohorić*

## **Abstract**

School citizenship education is carried out in all countries of the European Union, as well as many other countries around the world. In the same context of formal education, the curriculum of religious education is represented to a somewhat lesser extent. Although the programming and updating of these curricula are shaped contextually, they are aimed at acquiring specific competencies intersected with skills, attitudes and knowledge for a better and more competent life in the modern world. Therefore, the paper specifies the challenges of current global movements that are reflected in a special way on the structural dimensions of these curricula in order to point out the developmental tasks of religious education, which are proposed to be updated in line with the “3G” perspective (get - give - guide).

**Keywords:** *educational challenges, implementation context, school perspective, citizenship competence, religious education.*

## **Introduction**

**E**ducation for responsible citizenship is an increasingly urgent need and a hot topic discussed in the context of defining educational policies. In this paper, the topic is first approached with a short analysis of contemporary social challenges, which we try to present in a synthetic overview. The work is articulated in four sub-sections in which we provide an overview of responses to the contemporary challenges in the context of the implementation of civic and religious education. In doing so, emphasis is placed on the contribution that religious education can provide in a special way. In order to achieve this, in the most complete and modern way possible, it is suggested that the curriculum of Catholic religious education be updated in line with the “3G” perspective. Given the thematic framework of this presentation, it is quite clear that it is not possible to completely exhaust the topic. Therefore, in this paper we will propose one of the possible approaches that is undeniably marked by the central European view of the challenges of the modern world in relation to religious and citizenship education.

### **1. From Challenges to the Challenge of the Modern World**

The current social and economic landscape is fast evolving in terms of lifestyles, job markets and human relationships due to the rapid progress of science and technology. At the same time the world is stuck in multiple crises of different kinds: economic, financial, labour, political crises encompassing participatory democracy, environmental and natural crises, demographic and migratory crises, war crisis, and last but no less important, the crisis caused by the last global pandemic. Moreover, in 2020 the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social



Affairs stated: "With the future being shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic and humanity's responses to it, critical insights are more important than ever."<sup>1</sup> Facing this challenge, many are trying to chart the paths of possible solutions, without looking at the root cause of the multi-form occurrence of the crisis. In that sense, we can agree with Pope Francis' note that there is "little in the way of clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded. [...] At this stage, I propose that we focus on the dominant technocratic paradigm and the place of human beings and of human action in the world."<sup>2</sup> Recognising the complexity of the situation, the Congregation for Catholic Education focused the problematics in this way:

The phenomena triggered by these crises reveal their dramatic character every day. Peace is constantly threatened and, alongside traditional wars fought by regular armies, the insecurity generated by international terrorism is widespread, leading to feelings of mutual distrust and hatred and promoting the development of populist, demagogic sentiments, which are likely to exacerbate problems, thereby radicalizing the clash between different cultures. Wars, conflicts and terrorism are sometimes the cause, sometimes the effect of economic inequality and of the unjust distribution of the goods of creation. From these inequities, poverty, unemployment and exploitation are generated. The statistics provided by international organizations provide a snapshot of the humanitarian emergency underway, which will also affect the future, if we measure the effects of underdevelopment and migration on young people. Neither are developed societies exempt from these dangers, since even there marginalization and exclusion have increased. Worth mentioning is the complex phenomenon of migration, affecting the whole world, leading to both encounters and clashes of civilizations, both fraternal hospitality and intolerant, rigid populism. We are faced with a process

<sup>1</sup> LIU ZHENMIN, *Recovering better: economic and social challenges and opportunities* A compilation of the United Nations High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (2020), in: <https://rb.gy/jexzun> (1 December 2022), 6.

<sup>2</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato Si. Encyclical Letter on Care for our Common home* (24 May 2015), in: <https://rb.gy/kd0lyz> (20 May 2022), no. 49; 101 (Hereinafter: LS).

which has been properly described as an epoch-making change. It highlights a decadent humanism, often based on the paradigm of indifference.<sup>3</sup>

The aforementioned paradigms are manifested by the two sides of the same phenomenon, the one that points to the real cause of the crisis (the indifference of decadent humanism), and the one that manifests itself as a solution (technocratic paradigm), glorifying subjectivity, individualism, power, control, manipulation, unlimited growth and ultimately transformation.<sup>4</sup> As Pope Francis points out, such a confrontation with reality, which has acquired global significance, is the result of the exaggerated or rather misinterpreted anthropocentrism which “continues to stand in the way of shared understanding and of any effort to strengthen social bonds.”<sup>5</sup> This situation results in a state of “constant schizophrenia”<sup>6</sup> in which one goes from glorifying technocracy to the point where the human being itself is denied a special value. Therefore, all the manifestations of the challenges of the modern world that cause different crises can be reduced to a fundamental challenge that needs to be faced at all levels of society, including school systems. The correct actualisation of anthropological thought and human activity is really needed. Pope Benedict XVI warned about this in 2009, pointing out: “[...] we need to affirm today that *the social question has become a radically anthropological question*, in the sense that it concerns not just how life is conceived but also how it is manipulated, as biotechnology places it increasingly under man’s control.”<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Christian anthropology can contribute more closely to the

<sup>3</sup> CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating to fraternal humanism. Building a “civilization of love” 50 years after Populorum progressio* (17 April 2017), in: <https://rb.gy/b0hvpv4> (11 May 2022), no. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *LS*, no. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 116.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 118.

<sup>7</sup> BENEDIKT XVI, *Caritas in veritate. Encyclical letter on integral human development in charity and truth* (29 June 2009), in: <https://rb.gy/whjvft> (1 May 2022), no. 75.

humanisation of society, which will not be based on the logic of technocratic paradigm, but on the logic of relational inclusiveness, which implies a correct attitude towards oneself, others and everything created. That requires “that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the ‘Thou’ of God.”<sup>8</sup> Obviously, it cannot be argued that this view is shared by all our contemporaries. The consequence is clear and manifested in an attempt to respond to the challenges that are not based on properly interpreted Christian anthropology. However, all these attempts, based on misguided anthropocentrism, result in practical relativism – typical of our time and “even more dangerous than doctrinal relativism.”<sup>9</sup> To be more exact, the consequences of misunderstood and applied anthropocentrism are far-reaching:

When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative. Hence we should not be surprised to find, in conjunction with the omnipresent technocratic paradigm and the cult of unlimited human power, the rise of a relativism which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests.<sup>10</sup>

In order to respond to this challenge, although in the context of different educational policies, points of contact and agreement should be sought to help young people mature into responsible citizens. That is why, although with varying intensity and achievements, subjects focused on citizenship education are being introduced in schools. In that context, religious education can make a great contribution precisely because it is based on anthropological postures that, if interpreted and applied correctly, cannot exclude responsible behaviour in society. In these efforts,

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *LS*, no. 119.

<sup>9</sup> FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium. Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World* (24 November 2013), in: <https://rb.gy/5fogco> (20 May 2022), no. 80 (Hereinafter: EG).

<sup>10</sup> *LS*, no. 122.

we come across various realisations in school contexts that are manifested as attempts to respond to the challenges mentioned here or as potential responses to the previously highlighted fundamental challenge.

## **2. School System Faced with the Challenges of the Modern World**

In this unpredictable and rapidly changing global environment, marked by urgent challenges for people and the planet, as well as for human progress and intercultural understanding, there is a strong incentive to rethink our approach to education and learning. In this case, the *International Commission on the Futures of Education* has clearly outlined the direction of updating education in relation to the contemporary challenges:

During the twentieth century, public education was essentially aimed at supporting national citizenship and development efforts through the form of compulsory schooling for children and youth. Today, however, as we face grave risks to the future of humanity and the living planet itself, we must urgently reinvent education to help us address common challenges. This act of reimagining means working together to create futures that are shared and interdependent. The new social contract for education must unite us around collective endeavours and provide the knowledge and innovation needed to shape sustainable and peaceful futures for all anchored in social, economic, and environmental justice.<sup>11</sup>

This effort in re-imagining education cannot ignore the complexity of the changes that educational systems around the world are going through, caused by two interconnected processes:

- 1) Establishing a global market based on the production of

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<sup>11</sup> INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURES OF EDUCATION, *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], Paris, 2021, in: <https://rb.gy/hjgzd2> (14 May 2022), 2.



globally competitive knowledge and technologies; 2) The expansion of culturally plural democratic societies governed by the principles of human rights, equality and the rule of law.<sup>12</sup> The driving force behind these processes is informed, highly educated, creative and motivated citizens. Accordingly, in education, the current principle of learning and teaching aimed at acquiring factual knowledge is abandoned and replaced with the principle of learning and teaching aimed at acquiring applicable and transformative knowledge. Such changes in access to education, learning and teaching are a guarantee for ensuring a better life for citizens in its three key dimensions: private, socio-cultural and professional. The term underlying these changes is competency.<sup>13</sup> In this context, it is of special importance to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve local and global challenges, and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world. Such roles are based on, and include, three interconnected and indivisible domains of cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural learning.<sup>14</sup> For this purpose, eight key competences, which all individuals need for “personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion, sustainable lifestyle, successful life in peaceful societies, health-conscious life management and active

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Understanding democracy and human rights*, in: <https://rb.gy/sdbauz> (25 May 2022).

<sup>13</sup> “The concept of competency implies more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it involves the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands. [...] The use of this broader range of knowledge and skills will be mediated by attitudes and values (e.g., motivation, trust, respect for diversity and virtue). The attitudes and values can be observed at personal, local, societal and global levels. While human life is enriched by the diversity of values and attitudes arising from different cultural perspectives and personality traits, there are some human values (e.g. respect for life and human dignity, and respect for the environment, to name two) that cannot be compromised.” ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, *The Future of Education and Skills - Education 2030. The Future We Want* (2018), in: <https://rb.gy/pz6yno> (16 May 2022), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ester CARE – Alvin VISTA – Helyn KIM, *Assessment of Transversal Competencies. Current Tools in the Asian Region*, UNESCO Bangkok Office, Paris, 2019, VIII-IX.

citizenship<sup>15</sup> are defined. Key competences are important for the realisation of both the individual and the community; they are a prerequisite for the development of national economies and knowledge societies in the European perspective.<sup>16</sup> In this way, the competences show the impact of both national and regional policies, as well as the efficiency of the educational institutions through which they are acquired. Given the challenges mentioned above, it is necessary, even in the school system, to overcome the regional perspective. In order to respond to this need to live in a modern society, the term global competence was introduced.<sup>17</sup>

Global competence is multi-faceted and includes cognitive development, socioemotional skills, and civic learning. It has four overlapping dimensions that students will need to interact successfully with people face-to-face as well as virtually in their communities and in other nations and regions of the world. Skills in these dimensions are also needed to examine and work toward the resolution of issues with local and global significance.<sup>18</sup>

There are four key aspects (dimensions) of global competences, and their acquisition should help students to: 1) Investigate the World; 2) Recognise Perspectives; 3) Communicate Ideas; 4) Take Action.<sup>19</sup> In such a school-oriented policy, citizenship education and religious education in schools can significantly contribute to the acquisition of the key and global competences. However, while the acquisition of citizenship competence is explicitly mentioned in the list of key competencies, that is not the case with religious competence. Recognising and evaluating the contribution of religious education to the processes of education, directed towards

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Key competences for lifelong learning*, Publications Office, 2019, in: <https://rb.gy/wge6go> (25 May 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Preparing our Youth for an inclusive and sustainable world. The OECD PISA global competence framework* (2018), in: <https://rb.gy/w6daqy> (30 May 2022), 4.

<sup>18</sup> ASIA SOCIETY – CENTER FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION, *Teaching for Global Competence in a Rapidly Changing World*, in: <https://rb.gy/pz2fq4> (25 May 2022), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 13-16.

the acquisition of key competences and ultimately the global ones, represents a necessary requirement, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

### 3. Citizenship Education in the Schools

The sixth place in the list of key competencies refers to citizenship competence which is defined as “the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.”<sup>20</sup> Like any other competence, this one has three core conceptual dimensions (cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioural) which are joined by six structural proportions (human-legal, political, social, cultural, economic and ecological).<sup>21</sup> The connection between the influence of institutional forms of education with the formation of the personality of citizens is unquestionable, although the significance and processualism of this influence have changed throughout history. In the American context, the institutional beginning of an explicitly designed citizenship education model occurred during the first two decades of the twentieth century. It was character-oriented formation aimed “toward producing model citizen properly indoctrinated with religious and spiritual thinking.”<sup>22</sup> After the First World War, this model changed and started forming, although not with explicit precision, in accordance with the previously mentioned three dimensions, among which the cognitive one was valued above all. During the development of democratic systems in the world, and in particularly in the

<sup>20</sup> COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, *Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning*, in: <https://rb.gy/hmtcrw> (14 May 2022), 10.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. UNESCO, *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives* (2015b), in: <https://rb.gy/dkswxu> (25 May 2022), 15.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Wayne C. MALONE, Civic education, in: *Peabody Journal of Education*, 46 (1968) 2, 110.

European context, parallel systems of education (schools, faculties, institutions) were developed to advocate democratic principles and ideas, so that political systems would have empowered citizens who would form a functional part of the democratic political system.<sup>23</sup>

In the middle of the last century, the international community, adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and, subsequently, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), opted to base education on globally accepted values. Accepting human rights as the key component of European political dialogue and gradually recognising the importance of education in this process, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the Recommendation on Teaching and Learning about Human Rights in Schools almost four decades ago.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the need to implement some form of education for democratic citizenship and human rights has become a top priority of education policies of the EU Member States. Contextual reasons also contributed to this. Amidst the multi-layered challenges, interest in citizenship education has grown over the past decades. Osler and Starkey explain this by the growing appearance of injustice and inequality, globalisation and migration, concerns about citizenship and political activism, anti-democratic and racist movements.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, after the adoption of the Lisbon strategy (2000), active citizenship gradually became one of the important goals and instruments of changing education policies in the European Union, included among

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Igor NIKIČIĆ – Zoran KOMESAROVIC, Perspektive utjecaja provedbe kurikulumu građanskoga odgoja i obrazovanja na skriveni kurikulum u školama, in: *Magistra ladertina*, 16 (2021) 1, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF EUROPE, Recommendation No. R(85)7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Teaching and Learning about Human Rights in Schools (14 May 1985), in: <https://rb.gy/bgzibo> (15 May 2022), 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Audrey OSLER – Hugh STARKEY, Education for Democratic Citizenship: a review of research, policy and practice 1995-2005, in: *Research Papers in Education*, 24 (2006) 4, 439-446.

the indicators of the formal education quality.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, citizenship education, or education for human rights and democratic citizenship, was defined in 2004 as “education, training and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights.”<sup>27</sup> Just six years later, the Council of Europe also specified how to go about it:

Education for democratic citizenship means education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law.<sup>28</sup>

Nowadays we are familiar with three basic models of integration of citizenship education in the school system, which in practice can be found in different combinations: 1) specific subject that may be obligatory or elective; 2) the inclusion of appropriate content in existing cases; 3) an intermediate topic.<sup>29</sup> Despite the fundamental orientations of modern education policies, it turns out that it is fairly difficult to establish any unified approach to citizenship education, even in the European context. Moreover, citizenship education is often the subject of controversial debates.<sup>30</sup> One of the reasons for that is the inability to influence

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Vedrana SPAJIĆ-VRKAŠ, *(Ne)moć građanskog odgoja i obrazovanja*, NCVVO – Istraživačko-obrazovni centar za ljudska prava i demokratsko građanstvo Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2015, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Igor NIKIČIĆ – Zoran KOMESAROVIĆ, *Perspektive utjecaja provedbe kurikulumu građanskoga odgoja i obrazovanja na skriveni kurikulum u školama*, 78.

<sup>28</sup> COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 7* adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 11 May 2010 and explanatory memorandum, in: <https://rb.gy/g81atw> (25 May 2022), 7.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Igor NIKIČIĆ – Zoran KOMESAROVIĆ, *Perspektive utjecaja provedbe kurikulumu građanskoga odgoja i obrazovanja na skriveni kurikulum u školama*, 83.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ksenija RUKAVINA KOVAČEVIĆ, *Građanski odgoj i obrazovanje u školi – potreba ili uvjet?* in: *Riječki teološki časopis*, 41 (2013) 1, 114-129.

the education policies of individual states that still retain primacy over their own education. In addition, problems arise in the interpretation of citizenship at the European level, as well as in its interpretation within individual countries.<sup>31</sup> Also, the difference between the general claims about the role of citizenship education in education and everyday life in school is very big.

By achieving the fundamental outcomes of the citizenship education curriculum in schools, students should grow into active citizens who possess the skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary for active and purposeful participation in the social life and the work of the school, the local community and the wider community, towards building a better society. However, this can only be achieved through lifelong learning.<sup>32</sup> This broader conception implies an education which aims to produce not only informed but also committed citizens, who are morally and socially responsible. In this view, schools have a responsibility to transmit the public values of society and to encourage pupils to commit to them.<sup>33</sup> However, it is not possible to create ideal active citizenship without expressing a vision of society that those who create the programme believe in or want to impose as the best possible solution for all members of society.<sup>34</sup> And here we come to the difficulty that relates to the aforementioned fundamental challenge and the source of the crisis of the modern world – the one related to fundamental anthropological questions.

In more concrete terms, the central position given to the holistic development of students presupposes humanism is at the

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Avril KEATING, *Education for Citizenship in Europe: European Policies, National Adaptations and Young People's Attitudes*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, 2014, 18-40.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Vedrana SPAJIĆ-VRKAŠ, *(Ne)moć građanskog odgoja i obrazovanja*, 16-17.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Terence Henry MCLAUGHLIN, Public values, private values and educational responsibility, in: E. PYBUS and T. H. MCLAUGHLIN (eds.), *Values, Education and Responsibility*, University of St Andrews Centre for Philosophy and Public Affairs, St Andrews, 1995, 30-32.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Berto ŠALAJ, *Modeli političkoga obrazovanja u školskim sustavima europskih država*, u: *Politička misao*, 39 (2002) 3, 127-144.

foundation of education. The priority given to the promotion of human dignity and the consideration focused on a person's well-being and capacity in relation to others and to nature should be held as the primary purpose of education, if it wishes to keep pace with the twenty-first century. According to UNESCO, the human values that form part of the purpose and the foundations of education are: "respect for life and human dignity, equal rights and social justice, cultural and social diversity, and a sense of human solidarity and shared responsibility for our common future."<sup>35</sup> There is also the need to reaffirm the humanistic approach to educational orientation and practice to stay relevant. After all, the humanistic approach and attention to holistic development cannot relegate religious education to the private domain. Besides, as British educator Robert Jackson points out, the increasing inter-communal, inter-religious tension makes religion no longer a private matter but a public concern whose role and importance are increasingly recognised in relation to the contribution it can give to education for responsible citizenship.<sup>36</sup>

#### **4. Religious Education in the Light of the Citizenship Education in Schools**

Considering the above, it is necessary to state that religious education grounded in universal human rights and civil toleration highlights tensions between liberal assumptions of citizenship and different religious perspectives, especially those based on confessional starting points. This raises some important questions. We highlight only two: 1) What if the way in which children are taught to live and exercise their citizenship in school is not

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. UNESCO, *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?* Paris, 2015a, in: <https://rb.gy/okvvuq> (25 May 2022), 38.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Robert JACKSON, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality. Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*, Routledge Falmer, London, 2004, 8-13.



congruent with the way parents would teach their children to live? 2) What if the central tenets of citizenship education are contrary to the religious beliefs of parents?<sup>37</sup> The answers to these and similar questions must be sought in the development of an understanding of the relationship between religious education and education for responsible citizenship.

The specific connection between the religious and civic dimensions of education was an important feature of the European reformation. At that time, Catholic and Protestant rulers assumed the right to decide on matters connected to education in most parts of the European continent. That's exactly why from the time of the enlightenment, the conjunction of the civic and religious remits of schooling has been questioned.<sup>38</sup> Fortunately, within the European Union, people have moved away from the reluctance to address religious beliefs in schools. This change in attitude emerged early in the twenty-first century. It is particularly evident in the last three reports about citizenship education in Europe.<sup>39</sup> According to the mentioned reports, it is possible to find a link between religion and citizenship education in several countries.<sup>40</sup> We can single out three reasons underlying this new approach towards religion as a feature of citizenship understanding: the first refers to a heightened sense of the importance of religion as a cultural phenomenon; the second involves the increasing recognition of religion as a source of positive civic

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Marilyn NAIDOO, Citizenship, Education, Religion and Religious identity in Public schooling in South Africa, in: <https://rb.gy/3qny1b> (1 July 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Kevin WILLIAMS – Helle HINGE – Bodil LILJEFORS PERSSON, *Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe*, CiCe Central Coordination Unit – Institute for Policy Studies in Education – London Metropolitan University, London, 2008, 2-3.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Citizenship Education at School in Europe, 2005, in: <https://rb.gy/62ynua> (July 25, 2022); Citizenship Education in Europe, 2012, in: <https://rb.gy/6dwrjc> (25 July 2022); Citizenship education at school in Europe, 2018, in: <https://rb.gy/wkzfur> (25 July 2022).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Robert JACKSON, European institutions and the contribution of studies of religious diversity to education for democratic citizenship, in: Robert JACKSON – Siebren MIEDEMA – Wolfram WEISSE – Jean-Paul WILLAIME (eds.), *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, Waxmann, Münster – New York – München – Berlin, 2007, 31.

values; while the final and main reason relates to the need to understand religion as a feature of social diversity.<sup>41</sup>

Accordingly, any education reform which emphasises citizenship education would have to include religious education as part of the educational curriculum, while trying to make the school system more compatible with democratic values.<sup>42</sup> However, this does not seem easy to achieve and largely depends on the understanding of the previously stated reasons. And although we are witnessing a renewed search for connections between religious education and civic education, the real departure from the religious dimension of citizenship actually reflects a more nuanced concept of human identity where religious identity is no longer assumed, and thus sometimes not taken into account with regard to its specific (confessional) foundation. It is difficult to expect that a consensus will be reached in education policies in this regard in the near future. Considering that, it seems possible that religious education in schools, and here we are primarily referring to the curricula for which religious communities are also responsible, be updated precisely in the light of education for responsible citizenship. In this sense, the curriculum of Catholic religious education has many possibilities for modernisation. As Groome pointed out:

Christian religious education is a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally attends with them to the activity of God in our present, to the Story of the Christian faith community, and to the Vision of God's Kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Kevin WILLIAMS – Helle HINGE – Bodil LILJEFORS PERSSON, *Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe*, 6-9.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Muhammad FAOUR, Religious education and pluralism in Egypt and Tunisia, 2012, in: <https://rb.gy/0w6s0e> (26 May 2022), 15-16.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1980, 25.

This definition indicates the optimism that religious education gives to the human potential with its humanistic approach to education. As pointed out by the social teaching of the Church:

If there is a specific area in religious education as an academic discipline that specifically discusses the human person in relation to others, society and the environment, it is the social doctrine of the Church. The social doctrine of the Church grounds its basis on humanism and calls it as ‘integral and solidary humanism’, an outlook that greatly values the integral development of the human person and the solidarity of men and women.<sup>44</sup>

The principle of “integral and solidary humanism”<sup>45</sup> opens up different approaches in rethinking education and especially religious education that finds resonance in citizenship education. In the following part of this paper, we will try to offer one of the possible ways to update the contribution of religious education in this form.

## **5. An Attempt to Update the Contribution of Religious Education to Citizenship Competence**

The outcomes of citizenship and religious education are not achieved only in the formal context of the school environment. Other factors play a big part, among which social networks stand out today. Despite that, the school context of education can greatly contribute to the formation of students, both with the realisation of curricular programmes and the effects of the hidden curriculum. When it comes to UNESCO and its vision of citizenship education, the focus should be on viewing it as a “trans-disciplinary rather than as a separate or overlapping

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Gil A. ELLEMA, Rethinking religious education in view of citizenship education as a paradigm: a proposal for De la Salle University-Dasmariñas, in: *Digital Journal of Lasallian Research*, 14 (2017), 130.

<sup>45</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004., in: <https://rb.gy/lozfgy> (20 May 2022), no. 7.

discipline.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, it should serve as a “framing paradigm” because it “enriches the concepts and content of all subjects and fields of education by widening their dimensions.”<sup>47</sup>

In the context of forming individuals, Christian religious education needs approaches that train individuals for Christian-inspired existence and activity in a democratic society.

This means that these approaches must introduce a significant shift toward a mode of learning that is experiential, engaging, critical, reflective, dialogical and integrative.<sup>48</sup> These approaches are founded on solidary humanism and directed towards the social teaching of the Church as one area of religious education. As a matter of priority, given its limitations, religious education as an approach to education for engaged citizenship has to take its language and orientation from the social teachings of the Church. In this sense, we believe that updating the contribution of religious education, as well as achieving the cross-curricular topics of citizenship education in the form of the acquisition of transversal competences, can be found on a common platform of educational action, in the “3G” perspective (get, give, guide). By linking the general goals of social and political education with the fundamental determinants that can contribute to the advancement of society, which derive from the social doctrine of the Church, it is possible to come up with one proposal to revise curricular contributions in the form of the acquisition of traversal competences and therefore the acquisition of the basics of global competence (cf. Table 1).

<sup>46</sup> UNESCO, *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?* Paris, 2015a, 15.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Table 1. Gil A. ELLEMA, *Rethinking religious education in view of citizenship education as a paradigm*, 130-131.

<b>CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS</b>	<b>SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>AREAS OF OBJECTIVES IN SOCIOPOLITICAL EDUCATION</b>
<p><b>COGNITIVE</b></p> <p>To acquire knowledge, understanding and critical thinking about social and global issues and the interconnectedness among people and countries.</p>	<p><b>REALITIES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN IDEAS (EG, 232)</b></p> <p>Ideas disconnected from realities give rise to infellectual forms of idealism and nominalism, capable at most of classifying and defining, but certainly not calling to action. What calls us to action are realities illuminated by reason.</p>	<p><b>TO GET</b></p> <p>To acquire the ability to identify, interpret and evaluate problems, it is necessary to acquire the knowledge that allows to penetrate the social reality through a serious scientific training which could immunise the students from the simplification, dogmatism and adventurism of many social activities.</p> <p><b>TO OFFER</b></p> <p>The sense of intellectual reason and verification of experience.</p>
<p><b>SOCIO-EMOTIONAL</b></p> <p>To have a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity.</p>	<p><b>UNITY PREVAILS OVER CONFLICT (EG, 227-228)</b></p> <p>The best way to deal with conflict is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process.</p> <p>In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity.</p>	<p><b>TO GIVE</b></p> <p>Activate a series of motivations for the socio-political commitment that is based on the formation of an ethical-social habitus that pushes the individual to give his own contribution to the affair up to paying in person.</p> <p><b>TO OFFER</b></p> <p>Education for serving the common good and the realisation of each person.</p>

<p><b>BEHAVIORAL</b></p> <p>To act effectively and responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.</p>	<p><b>TIME IS GREATER THAN SPACE (EG, 223)</b></p> <p>Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain. What we need is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events.</p>	<p><b>TO GUIDE</b></p> <p>Ability to identify neglected potential in the present and to develop a forward-looking project for the transformation of society.</p> <p><b>TO OFFER</b></p> <p>To train in a capacity for perspective imagination.</p>
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This proposal in the “3G” perspective encompasses the modernisation of learning outcomes in religious education in all domains (cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural). As can be seen in the table, the general instructions for this direction are taken from a UNESCO document.<sup>49</sup> In order to update the curriculum of religious education, it is suggested that, according to the conceptual domains, three principles are taken into account: reality, unity and time.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the fourth principle, “The whole is greater than a part”, is not excluded, moreover, it determines the fundamental process of this perspective, which is decentring.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Cf. UNESCO, *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*, Paris, 2015b, in: <https://rb.gy/dkswxu> (25 May 2022), 15.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. EG, no. 222-237.

<sup>51</sup> “Decentering refers to the capacity mentally to step outside our own universes and see things from the point of view of other people. Those who are firmly committed to particular beliefs may need to decenter to appreciate the beliefs of others.” Kevin WILLIAMS – Helle HINGE – Bodil LILJEFORS PERSSON, *Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe*, 9.

Thanks to this process, which should ultimately be set up as a methodical-didactic process of learning and teaching, the fourth principle of social coexistence comes to the fore. As Pope Francis pointed out:

We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. [...] We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting.<sup>52</sup>

Such an approach is aimed at three areas of socio-political education (get, give, guide), which are focused on what students should be provided with and what they should offer to society upon their completion of the educational process.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

Starting from the challenges of the modern world, among which one fundamental challenge is in focus, this article elaborates one of its potential answers in the school context. In a special way, the reasons behind this challenge and ways to deal with it are thematised in the citizenship education models. The significant role of religious education is also recognised, for which it is suggested to update the curriculum according to the “3G” perspective (get, give, guide). This perspective can actualise the results of religious education in the light of the social teachings of the Church and some directions of contemporary educational policies, in order to help students to be and act as responsible citizens of modern society in a global perspective. In accordance with the emphasis on the humanistic perspective

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<sup>52</sup> EG, no. 234.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Guglielmo MALIZIA, *Educazione sociopolitica*, in: José Manuel PRELLEZO – Guglielmo MALIZIA – Carlo NANNI (eds.), *Dizionario di scienze dell'educazione*, Roma, LAS, 22008, 399-401.



in this work, we consider the following words of Pope Francis as a good direction towards the first step in the realisation of the proposed: "Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> LS, no. 202.



# The Specific Contribution of Religious Education to Civic Education: An African Perspective

*Jean-Paul Niyigena*

## **Abstract**

*In Africa, school religious education has a history, and its organisation is depending on several parameters. For example, school religious education does not have the same place in the countries colonised by Belgium as in the countries colonised by France; religious education is not organised in the same form in Catholic schools and in public schools. During the period of Western missionaries, school religious education was considered catechesis. This trend is far from changing because there is not enough research on religious education in Africa. On the one hand, religious education is not one of the priorities of African states in their educational policies. They are still preoccupied with basic needs in terms of education, such as the construction of schools, teacher salaries, and so on. On the other hand, the Church continues to consider religious education in schools as a way of evangelising and doing catechesis.*

*However, the repeated conflicts in Africa and ecological problems call for changing religious education. Nowadays, religious education is forced to contribute to education for peacebuilding. Several challenges persist for an effective contribution of religious education to civic education. Among these challenges, we mention the lack of research, the lack of collaboration between bishops, researchers and the State, the timid valorisation of traditional African methods, and the like.*

**Keywords:** *Africa, colonisation, catholic schools, public schools, religious education, catechesis, traditional learning methods.*

## **Introduction**

In this paper, I would like to deal with the specific contribution of religious education to civic education according to an African perspective. It is rooted in three historical African periods: the period before colonisation, the period in which Western missionaries spread Christianity, and the contemporary period. My goal is to answer the following questions: What kind of religious education characterised those three historical periods? In terms of the present times, what can be the contribution of school religious education to civic education in Africa, if we consider the contemporary social and political context? Which kind of school religious education does Africa need?

In this paper, civic education must be understood as an education which has a goal of empowering learners with political capacities which are necessary for the existence of a democratic society in which liberty, equality and justice are the most important political values.

My presentation is divided in three main parts: 1) School religious education and other forms of religious education in Africa in relation to the civic education matter; 2) Problems of civic rights in Africa and conditions of the school religious education that could contribute to civic education; 3) Institutional obstacles to the emergence of school religious education linked to civic education.

## **1. School Religious Education and Other Forms of Religious Education in Africa in Relation to the Civic Education Matter**

African people did not wait for Western missionaries to provide religious education to their children and young people. This means that there were other forms of religious education beyond the school religious education. In this chapter, I would like to reflect on the difference which exists between different forms of religious education and school religious education. In this context, it is important to mention that the modern school, as a social and political phenomenon, is a product constructed by Western civilisation and brought to Africa by colonisers and missionaries. However, it is necessary to mention that the school is just one of the many domains in which education is performed. In African tradition, religious education is accomplished in the family and in societies. Now, what is the difference between African traditional religious education and school religious education? How to critically reflect on those two kinds of religious education towards civic education?

### ***1.1. Traditional African Religious Education and Civic Education Issues***

In Africa, there is no difference between life and religion because each religious affirmation corresponds to a moment in life, a life event. In this perspective, religious education is not done through private lessons. It takes place in the family life through rites, symbols, and everyday events. Placide Tempels, a Franciscan Belgian missionary in Congo and the pioneer of African philosophy and theology, says that, for African people, the being, which is the heart of everything, is a vital force.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Placide TEMPELS, *La philosophie bantoue*, Lovania, Elisabethville, 1945, according to: Alexis KAGAME, *La philosophie bantou-rwandaise de l'Être*, Académie Royale des

This one must be understood through the notion of what African tradition calls “vital force”.<sup>2</sup> Without this main category of vital force, we cannot understand what religion for Africans is. Léopold Sédar Senghor said “in the heart of the African system, there is an existence, which means the life. It is the good par excellence, and every activity of the human being tends towards the growth and expression of the vital power.”<sup>3</sup> African religion must serve the growth and expression of the vital force in daily life. In this sense, prayers and other rites have a specific goal which consists of obtaining favours from God through the spirits of the ancestors.

On one hand, when a child dies, when there is famine, when there is a pandemic, when a couple cannot produce new life, those are the signs of the reduction of the vital life. On the other hand, when life goes well for the family, for the community, it means that the vital life is strengthened by God through the intercession of the ancestral spirits.

In this context, the main objective of African religious education is to teach young people that their lives depend on the reactions of ancestors regarding the value of their actions. They learn that the vital life of their existence is linked to both their actions and the spirits of ancestors. In this context, there is no need for specific religious educators. Every adult has enough religious knowledge to educate young people in the religious domain. There is no need for the specific classes of religion. However, some specific rites are administered by people who have been initiated in a particular way. Those are chosen by the chief of a large family.

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Sciences d’Outre-Mer (ARSOM), Bruxelles, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Placide TEMPELS, *La philosophie bantoue*, 14-27, 50-51.

<sup>3</sup> Léopold Sédar SENGHOR, *L’esprit de la civilisation ou les lois de la culture négro-africaine*, in: *Le 1er congrès international des écrivains et artistes noirs*, Présence africaine, Paris, 1956, 53.

In this context, African religious education contributes to civic education through the sense of responsibility. One person's acts have consequences on a family's or a community's life. Viewed from the democratic perspective, we can say that the traditional African religious education did not promote either individual liberty or human power. "Society takes care of the individual from birth, marks him or her in various ways and does not let the go until death."<sup>4</sup> The source of the vital life is outside of the human being. This is the opposite of Nietzsche's point of view which considers the human being as a source of power.

By primarily promoting the success of a community, African religious education is able to sacrifice individuals without any problem. The vital life is only successful when it concerns the community. In this perspective, Paul Tillich identifies a sort of weakness in the African religious belief. There is "a force of destruction where, in the name of life, some lives are sacrificed."<sup>5</sup> This is a great point about the African religious education related to the sacrifice. Civic education must defend the dignity of all citizens as well their equality. There is no life which should be considered as more important than others.

In my point of view, I think that the traditional African religious education, in promoting dogmas that nobody can challenge, strengthens the alienation of human being which is based on the lack of creativity and the lack of the importance of individual happiness.<sup>6</sup> Critical thinking has no place in African religious education because the main method consists of respecting and reproducing tradition, obeying the authority of elder people etc.

<sup>4</sup> Issiaka Prosper LALÈYÈ, *La conception de la personne dans la pensée traditionnelle Yoruba. Approche phénoménologique*, H. Lang, Berne – Genève, 1970, 149.

<sup>5</sup> Paul TILLICH, Le démonique, in: Paul TILLICH, *La dimension religieuse de la culture*, Cerf, Paris, 1990, 126.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jean-Paul NIYIGENA, Rapport à la tradition en Afrique et christianisme, in: Raymond ASMAR – Christian DANZ – Martin LEINER – Matthew LON WEAVER (eds.), *Réformation et révolution dans la perception de Paul Tillich*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2019, 405.



Another contribution of African religious education to civic education concerns the role of the community and the place of nature in the process of obtaining the vital force. While Western societies are suffering from individualism, African religious education emphasises the sense of community. People are connected to each other. The ecological dimension of modern civic education implicitly exists in African religious education. Indeed, African religion educates to respect each element of nature as a part of a whole. "Africans live and move within a universe in which they conceive themselves as being of the same material, and in which they participate in an intense quest for meaning, so that, as both grains and lords of the cosmos, they can and must understand themselves only in the intimate and existential relationship with the global cosmological system."<sup>7</sup> This African anthropology, which is a religious one, promotes a particular respect for nature.

## ***1.2. School Religious Education Introduced by Western Missionaries and Civic Education Matter***

School education in its modern form has been introduced in Africa by Western colonisers and missionaries. In many African countries, Catholic or Protestant missionaries were responsible for school education. For example, "[T]he modern school has been introduced in Rwanda by the Missionaries for Africa, called White Fathers, when they arrived in Rwanda in 1900."<sup>8</sup> That is why public schools in Africa are still in the minority. In this perspective, it is normal that religious education had an important place in the Catholic or Protestant schools.

<sup>7</sup> Blaise BAYILI, *Perceptions négro-africaines et vision chrétienne de l'homme. Herméneutique d'une anthropologie théologique*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2011, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Philippe RUKAMBA, École catholique et transmission de la foi au Rwanda, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion?* Actes du colloque International du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda, Éditions jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 182.

I would like to mention two points concerning the place of religious education during the period of colonisation in British, French and Belgian colonies. According to Mons. Andrew Nkea, archbishop of Bamenda in Cameroon, school religious education had a great place in British colonies. "Because education was promoted by the missionaries; there was an added element in education which gave Catholic education a specific character, and that was the teaching of Religion and Moral instructions in the schools. Education therefore became one of the principal agents of evangelisation, a vehicle through which Christ and the Gospel were brought to the people, and an instrument of shaping and moulding the conduct of citizens."<sup>9</sup> Religious education was associated with moral education. It had both pastoral and civic targets. According to the British conception, religious education has its place in the school.

However, according to archbishop Andrew Nkea, a real change happened when France replaced Britain in Western Cameroon. French school policies are strongly secular and do not accept religious education. That is the reason why "the state abolished the teaching of religion in public school and removed it completely from public exams."<sup>10</sup> Even in the Catholic schools, religious education is not planned in the curricula. Mons. Andrew Nkea reports that in his country, religious education is an extra-curricular subject and its teachers are neither trained nor paid for it.

The school religious education in African countries colonised by Belgium had a great place in schools, as they were organised essentially by missionaries. That is why religious education was

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew NKEA, The catholic school in the Anglophone Ecclesiastical Province of Cameroon. Identity and challenges, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion?* Actes du colloque International du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda, Éditions jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 275-276.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 280.

one of the most important disciplines with four classes per week<sup>11</sup> in the beginning. Nowadays, for instance, school religious education is being reduced in Rwanda. In African countries colonised by Belgium, religious education had a pastoral mission. "Catholics considered schools primarily as a tool to achieve their religious goal of converting the population to Catholicism."<sup>12</sup> This pastoral goal of Catholic schools is also mentioned by bishop Philippe Rukamba.<sup>13</sup>

In the context of colonisation, the goal of religious education in schools is evangelisation. Concerning this scope of religious education, we can say that in terms of civic education, there were some difficulties. First of all, this school religious education was not open to the diversities of religions and worldviews. There was no dialogue between traditional African religions and Christianity. It should also be pointed out that this was done without the consent of the local population, because it was done in the context of colonisation. Hence, there was no place for freedom. That is why colonisation and evangelisation of Africa have been done in line with the hegemonial paternalist logic.

Alexis Kagame, priest and one of the first African philosophers, noticed that the approach used in religious education was inspired by the Western rationalism. This one consists of putting forward knowledge without connecting it in any way to the concrete lives of people. "The word of God presented in a question-and-answer format, and in a perfectly systematic order, is not capable of Christianising mentalities and influencing everyday life in a rationalist way."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, I realise that

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Philippe RUKAMBA, *École catholique et transmission de la foi au Rwanda*, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école*, 191.

<sup>12</sup> Roger HEREMANS, *L'éducation dans les missions des Pères Blancs en Afrique centrale (1879-1914). Objectifs et réalisations*, Nauwelaerts, Bruxelles, 1983, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Philippe RUKAMBA, *École catholique et transmission de la foi au Rwanda*, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école*, 181.

<sup>14</sup> Alexis KAGAME, *La philosophie bân-tu-rwandaise de l'Être*.

Kagame's preoccupation in 1963 is relevant in terms of his genius as an intellectual rooted in his African culture. According to him, it is necessary to leave the exclusivity of tradition on one hand, though on the other hand, by including the Holy Scriptures, it is necessary to present them in accordance with today's approaches to the Bible – not interpret it as a book written with the intention of conveying objective facts in a rational and objective way, but as a message for life, which is related to the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth.

The remedy to the approach, which he describes as rationalist, Kagame establishes a link between the Holy Scriptures and the African traditional methodology. For him, "a text of the Divine Message given in the form of history is more instructive within cultures intellectually placed at the antipodes of Cartesianism."<sup>15</sup> Clearly, by drawing on African storytelling culture, Kagame brings a significant critique to the method used by missionaries in teaching Christianity. Indeed, according to Kagame, "such Truth presented in the form of a History, retained as a global narrative, must put the listener in the atmosphere of Revelation [...] Then it is no longer a cerebral knowledge, belonging to the European method, but a living knowledge, belonging to the method of the soil."<sup>16</sup> Kagame's considerations are relevant. His methodology engages the learner through the perspective of confrontation, retrospection, discernment, and judgement of the reality of life.

While traditional African education is connected to the daily life, the school religious education seems to be separated from the real life. Those two kinds of religious education in Africa have certain weak points when it comes to their contribution to civic education. There is a lack of liberty, dialogue, critical thinking, promotion of human rights, democracy, etc.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

## **2. Problems of Human Rights in Africa: The School Religious Education's Contribution to Civic Education**

In Africa, education in general and school religious education in particular are questioned due to many problems which exist in different social, political, economic domains. Poverty, corruption, war, interreligious and ethnic conflicts are just some of them. Although these problems also exist elsewhere in the world, the extreme extent to which they appear in Africa certifies that there is something wrong in Africa. According to some African Catholic intellectuals, Church and school education have to assume their responsibility in the horrible situation in which Africa is. For a long time, Church and school education have taught African people to obey, arguing that every authority comes from God. At school, African people learned how to be docile and good executors. Those features show that the Church and schools, which relied on a static and authoritarian understanding of revelation and faith of the time, did not promote religious education which could contribute to civic education. Furthermore, in the context of domination, the Western schools could not promote liberty, equality, justice, democracy, and respect of common goods, as those civic values are opposite to the phenomenon of colonisation.

In this chapter, I would like to elaborate on two points: Civil rights problems in Africa and religious education's weakness in that regard, as well as the conditions that enable religious education to contribute to civic education.

### ***2.1. Human Rights Problems in Africa: Religious Education's Weakness***

I think it is important to explain certain problems related to human rights in Africa in relation to some simple and operational

words like peace, justice, equality, liberty, corruption, poverty etc. In this sense, Africans do not need a dissertation on peace to appreciate its importance. The peace that Africa needs has two main forms.

The first one is the peace that the people living in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan, etc. dream of. This form of peace can be characterised by the real risk of losing one's life, family members or one's property in an armed conflict. Due to the genocide committed against the Tutsi in Rwanda, I wondered what kind of religious education could contribute to civic education in order to educate for a democratic society. In my four-year research, I remarked that religious education in Rwanda has not really changed since the Western missionaries' period. It is still separated from real life, from the social and political contexts.<sup>17</sup>

The second form of peace seems to be complex. It concerns the peace in the sense of democracy. In Africa, democracy is still a problem. That is why the country's assets are in the hands of the ruling class and why not all children have the same rights in terms of education; corruption has become a *modus vivendi* in some countries. Tribalism is the only way to get a promotion. The land of the ancestors and the goods it abounds with belong to the foreigners who exploit them, while Africans suffer due to poverty and other evils. Those problems testify that there is a huge need for civic education.

Indeed, "since Plato, it has been clear that the theme of civic education resurfaces regularly whenever society is uncertain of its foundations, prey to unrest and dissension that threaten its existence and lead to questions about its legitimacy."<sup>18</sup> In this

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jean-Paul NIYIGENA, *Les professeurs du cours de religion dans les écoles catholique du Rwanda. Quelle formation et quelle organisation pour quels objectifs?*, Pallotti-Presse, Kigali, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> François GALICHET, *Éducation à la citoyenneté*, Economica, Paris, 1998, 1.

respect, African societies fulfil all conditions to ask themselves the necessary question of civic education with the aim of preparing a better society for generations-to-come.

According to Jean-Daniel Boyer and Charlotte Le Chapelain, it should be understood that any society could guarantee what is called natural rights. Indeed, for them, "natural rights consist of freedom, equality, security and property."<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that peace in the democratic sense guarantees peace in the sense of security.

According to some African scholars, the Church and its religious education are considered responsible for the African's problems because missionaries represented the right hand of the coloniser. In that perspective, they contributed to the development of a culture of domination. "It was therefore difficult to remove missionaries from their 'civilising mission'. The colonial situation had created a dualistic and dichotomous society: on the one hand, the colonial society, and on the other hand, the colonised society."<sup>20</sup> This dichotomy is obviously not a good premise for a society capable of building peace and democracy. This model has been perpetuated in many African countries where there is a group that has all the political power and another group that obeys it.

According to Bishop Patrick Augustine Kalilombe, the Western religious atmosphere has influenced the way missionaries position themselves in Africa. "In all aspects of the Church life and activity, obedience and conformity to regulations and authority from above were given more importance."<sup>21</sup> We cannot think about

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Daniel BOYER – Charlotte Le CHAPELAIN, Smith et Condorcet: « Deux libéraux de la liberté » confrontés à la question de l'instruction publique, in: *Cahiers d'économie politique*, 58 (2010) 1, 42.

<sup>20</sup> Dieudonné MUSHIPU MBOMO, *La théologie africaine face aux sectes. Défi lancé à la société et aux grandes Eglises africaines*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2017, 110-119.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Augustine KALILOMBE, Situation de l'Église catholique en Afrique, in: *Théologie du Tiers-Monde. Du conformisme à l'indépendance. Le colloque de Dar-es-Salaam et*



the Church and religious education in the African context without being aware of the history of the African Church and religious education.

Fabien Eboussi Boulaga speaks of the “colonial expansion of Christianity.”<sup>22</sup> According to him, Christianity was implanted in Africa by violence, enforced by the colonisers and the missionaries. This violence has led to “a disorientation, a disarray that leaves African people in an alienated belief, in global submission to those who have the power or the strength to coerce and for whom Christianity is the ethnic religion.”<sup>23</sup> The Church and religious education in Africa, for those critical African intellectuals, must purify themselves from the culture of domination and violence in order to really contribute to civic education.

## ***2.2. The Conditions that Enable Religious Education to Contribute to Civic Education***

School religious education in Africa is considered to be a simple theory. There is also some confusion between religious education and catechesis.<sup>24</sup> It needs to be contextualised. School religious education must offer a critically oriented dialogue with the social and political contexts of people. That is why I propose some points which, I am convinced, could enable religious education to contribute to civic education.

### ***2.2.1. Articulating the Hermeneutical Approaches in Theology***

School religious education should deal with its theological content in a hermeneutical way. Generally, in Africa, religious

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*ses prolongements*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1977, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Fabien EBOUSSI BOULAGA, *Christianisme sans fétiche. Révélation et domination*, Présence africaine, Paris, 1981, 48.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Jean-Paul NIYIGENA, *Les professeurs du cours de religion dans les écoles catholique du Rwanda*.

dogmas are explained and understood as scientific assertions. When school religious education is taught in the way of the Western rationalism, learners can think that Christianity is a matter of knowledge.

Paul Tillich debates the objectification approach. "To make a being an object means to strip it of its subjective elements, to reduce it to an object and nothing else."<sup>25</sup> This way of conducting religious education in school does not respect the hermeneutic method which emphasises the sense of religious content, and not their objectivity.<sup>26</sup> Studying a story from the Bible as a scientific historical text is an example of what I call "objective" in this context.

However, I must mention that some parts of the religious content require objective knowledge. Generally, the non-hermeneutical "objective" approach leads people to the fundamentalist and literary interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and religion. This way is very dangerous, and it represents one of the sources of interreligious conflicts in Africa.

### *2.2.2. Fostering the Experiential Methodology in School Religious Education*

Up to now, in many African countries, school religious education has relied on the theoretical methodology. It is a heritage of the European schools. Practically, this method is considered to be the source of many African problems. That is why I propose to develop the experiential methodology in school religious education. This is, somehow, very similar to the traditional African methodology of life, described by bishop Jean Mbarga. Andrew Peterson showed that for a democratic civic education, it is

<sup>25</sup> Paul TILlich, *Systematic theology* (1951), *Théologie systématique III. Troisième partie : Existence et le Christ*, Cerf – Labor et Fides – Presses de l'université Laval, Paris – Genève – Québec, 2006, 24.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Diane Du VAL D'ÉPRÉMESNIL, Construction et transmission de sens en contexte rwandais, in: Jean-Paul Niyigenga (ed.), *Éducation à la paix et à l'environnement. Interrogations et perspectives de l'école catholique*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2022, 145.

necessary to develop both theoretical and experiential methodologies. "The nature of civic education programmes which combine knowledge and experiential learning and which can develop both social capital and active citizenship remains a necessary research focus for civic educators."<sup>27</sup> These learning experiences are called upon for three main reasons: 1) to participate in the achievement of common good in the school; 2) to make citizens see the consequences of the absence of solidarity through cases of injustice; 3) to propose models that, in the contexts of domination, have defended values.

The experiential methodology places children and young people in the context of real life which can be related to religious knowledge. It could help them question their daily life, their society, even their faith. School religious education contributes to civic education whenever it proposes religious knowledge that is more critical and more connected to other areas of knowledge than what is taught in catechesis.<sup>28</sup> In this way, learners are educated to confront the manipulations of religious or political leaders aimed at involving them in interreligious conflict.

The difference between religion teaching in schools and catechesis in the parish and the family is in the fact that the approach in school is more dialogical, while in catechesis, it is more catechetical. School religious education which only uses the theoretical methodology cannot contribute enough to civic education. School religious education contributes to civic education whenever it strengthens the skills of learners in questioning practices that depart from God's will for humanity. Therefore, "it is urgent to plead for a reading of the Gospel in the truth of what

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<sup>27</sup> Andrew PETERSON, *Civic republicanism and civic education. The education of citizens*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2011, 127.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Richard FILAKOTA, Éducation chrétienne face aux conflits interreligieux, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion?* Actes du colloque International du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda, Éditions jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 5-84.

the Word of God (or Jesus Christ) tells us (about God), about ourselves (humans) and about creation. This reading must also be done with the responsibility that our humanity requires (rationality or critical judgement) in the face of our realities, following the example of Jesus Christ, the man who had the courage to question certain practices of his time and especially those of his compatriots that he judged contrary to the plan of God.”<sup>29</sup> Religious education must develop the children’s critical thinking through Christianity.

### *2.2.3. Developing the Dialogue Between Christianity and Traditional African Religions in School Religious Education*

The African culture does not have an appropriate and important place in school education in general, nor in school religious education. As it has already been stated, both school education and religious education in schools came from the Western civilisation in the context of colonisation. This means that everything coming from the African culture has been rejected by Christianity and education.<sup>30</sup> Many African learners do not study their native language at school. This school education coming from Europe brings about certain challenges. Richard Filakota,<sup>31</sup> reflecting on the interreligious conflict happening in his country, the Republic of Central Africa, says that it is strange to see how African people are killing one another because they believe in the religions that he calls “exogen”, i.e., Christianity and Islam.

It is also necessary to mention that, in many African countries, school religious education does not include traditional African religions. In my point of view, African children and young people

<sup>29</sup> Patrick NDONDE-SIKOSSI, L’humanité des récits de miracle dans les évangiles: Un enjeu majeur de la christologie d’Eloi Messi Metogo, in: Augustin Germain MESSOMO ATEBA (ed.), «Croire autrement» *Les enjeux de la théologie en Afrique. Mélanges en l’honneur du professeur Eloi Messi*, Presses de l’UCAC, Yaoundé, 2019, 77.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Les prêtres noirs s’interrogent*, Présence africaine, Paris, 1956.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Richard FILAKOTA, Éducation chrétienne face aux conflits interreligieux, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l’école*, 75.

need to know more about the African religions. It is a question of civic education and a matter of their own identity development. School religious education must represent a domain in which learners can develop and explain their knowledge through different traditions. Bishop Vincenzo Zani thinks that, in school religious education, “unexplored cultural perspectives are presented with a rich historical, artistic and spiritual heritage to be discovered without prejudice.”<sup>32</sup> This point of view is shared also by Pena-Ruiz Henri. On the one hand, there is the fact that “knowledge of other cultures allows us to aim for the universal by practicing critical decentring.”<sup>33</sup> This means that schools that are not open to other cultures have difficulties developing critical thinking. On the other hand, according to Pena-Ruiz, knowledge of “the works and great representations of the past helps us to understand the present from a genealogical point of view, providing the depth that the media treatment of current events too often tends to ignore.”<sup>34</sup> School religious education, in Africa, could better contribute to civic education if it they were more open to different traditions and especially to the African cultures.

Alexis Kagame identified the problem of separation between knowledge and life through a weak method of rationalism. Bishop Jean Mbarga<sup>35</sup> remarks that school education coming from Europe does not take care of the whole human being. Kagame proposes to include the African method of presenting Christianity through stories. According to Bishop Jean Mbarga, emphasis should be put on the global approach to life.

<sup>32</sup> Vincenzo ZANI, *Quelle école catholique pour notre temps?*, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion?* Actes du colloque International du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda, Éditions jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Henri PENA-RUIZ, *Qu'est-ce que la laïcité*, Gallimard, Paris, 2003, 122.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Jean MBARGA, *La nouvelle école africaine: structuration et pertinence pour une Afrique nouvelle*, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Éducation à la paix et à l'environnement. Interrogations et perspectives de l'école catholique*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2022, 59.

#### 2.2.4. *Developing Education for Civic Empathy and Solidarity*

School religious education must help learners in the development of skills that enable them to participate in public debate, to be aware of situations of injustice, of inequality. This point is relevant because it demands, on one hand, a real theological effort of translating religious contents into political language,<sup>36</sup> and on the other hand, the development of ethical attitudes. In this perspective, school religious education should prepare young people to deal with the problems of social injustice. This must be done through the development of the skills of civic empathy,<sup>37</sup> the values of solidarity<sup>38</sup> and those needed to take care of the nature.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, one can agree with Martha Nussbaum, who says: "If the trend continues, states around the world will soon produce generations of efficient machines, but not complete citizens capable of thinking for themselves, critiquing tradition, and understanding the meaning of the suffering and success of others. The future of global democracies is at stake."<sup>40</sup> It is therefore important that citizens are educated to care about others, to engage in actions and gestures structurally aimed at promoting civic empathy among citizens. It should be stressed that the school, as it often stands today, with its mechanisms of exclusion

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, Public theology and educational justice, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion?* Actes du colloque International du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda, Éditions jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 85-95.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Martha NUSSBAUM, *Les émotions démocratiques. Comment former le citoyen du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle?*, Climats, Paris, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Vincenzo ZANI, *Quelle école catholique pour notre temps?*, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA, *Religions et défis actuels de l'école*, 31.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Fulgence MUTEBA, *Environnement ou nouvelle question de la théologie pratique. Réflexion à partir du cas de la forêt des Miombo en République Démocratique du Congo*, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Éducation à la paix et à l'environnement. Interrogations et perspectives de l'école catholique*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2022, 275.

<sup>40</sup> Martha NUSSBAUM, *Les émotions démocratiques. Comment former le citoyen du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle?*, Climats, Paris, 2011, 10.

of students that come from familial and social backgrounds that disadvantage them and mechanisms of domination of those who are the majority or have other privileges, gives the image of what democracy is actually like in our societies.

A society ceases to be democratic as soon as the dominant group locks itself in its ivory tower, in a narcissistic and individualistic spirit, to enjoy the benefits of life at the expense of others. Educating for civic empathy means educating to put oneself in someone else's place, to understand the stakes of distress and the strengths of solidarity in changing lives. "By this I mean the ability to imagine what it is like to be in someone else's shoes, to interpret intelligently that person's story, to understand the emotions, wishes and desires they may have."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, education for civic empathy is to be understood as a civic responsibility towards others. It is, in this sense, not only an ethical, but above all, a political stance.

This is why, according to Martha Nussbaum, "it is still essential to help each other understand each other by formulating these reasons in terms of public interest, rather than exclusively in terms of particular interest."<sup>42</sup> In Africa, where natural resources are exploited by a few, while the rest of the population is in extreme poverty, religious education should contribute to education for the common good, education for empathy and collective responsibility towards the poorest.

### **3. Institutional Obstacles to the Development of the School Religious Education that is Able to Contribute to Civic Education**

It is not easy to organise school religious education because it concerns many institutions, including; African states, Church(es),

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem.*

and universities. I am convinced that, in Africa, every institution connected to religious education in schools must face some challenges.

### **3.1. *African States***

As is very well known, African countries are poor. When it comes to the field of education, priorities of African states should be to ensure that every child has access to school education, to ameliorate the salaries of teachers, to build sufficiently equipped classroom, etc. In the context of poverty, African states must invest more in the fields which are supposed to contribute to the economic development in order to overcome poverty. From this point of view, education in Africa is dominated by the materialistic vision in the sense that school religious education is considered to be a luxury. That is why it is organised exclusively by religious institutions in many African countries.

Besides that, religions are becoming a sort of “business” in African cities where there is a growing number of free evangelical churches. People trust charismatic preachers and believe that they can resolve all of their problems. They are ready to do whatever religious “gurus” demand. This can take the form of sexual abuse, financial deals, and so on. This kind of practicing religion is dangerous. Rwanda’s government has recently decided that in order to be recognised as a religious leader, one needs to have a diploma in theology. Other African countries do not care about the abuse of religion. In many African countries, there is no public faculty of theology, which is an important challenge. For African states, fostering specific school religious education implies the promotion of civic education. That way, people will be able to resist abuses of religion.



### **3.2. *The Church in Africa***

During the missionaries' period, school religious education had a very important role in the evangelisation process. Nowadays, in many African countries, many families are already Christian. In this context, school religious education is no longer considered as a tool of evangelisation.

I would like to point out three challenges for the Church in Africa: the importance of education and schools, the underfunding of the Catholic education department, and the role of private Catholic school in regard to social justice. Firstly, the core of the Church activities in Africa is related to the celebration of sacraments and parish life. Schools are a heavy heritage left by missionaries. When they are located in poorer areas, it is very difficult to fund them in order to ensure good education for all. In this case, the future of Catholic schools in poor villages represents an important challenge.

Secondly, African Catholic schools are weak due to the underfunding of their pedagogical office. The African Catholic Church does not have a strong team of experts in education and school religious education. Financial autonomy is still a dream. When dioceses find some money, the priority is in the pastoral field.

Thirdly, private Catholic schools are becoming an important business for the African Church. I would like to note that the number of private Catholic school in different African cities is increasing. Those schools educate children from economically advantaged families. So, this situation gives rise to the problems of social and educational justice. What about the children from poorer families and their place in African Catholic schools?

### **3.3. African Universities**

In Africa, churches are full of believers. The secularisation phenomenon is not yet very developed in African societies. However, Pope Benedict XVI had already said that the African Church has to pay attention to the quality of the faith that African people have. Fideism is a real danger to the African Church. That is the reason why Pope Benedict XVI encouraged the African Church to develop the use of reason as a necessary dimension of Christian faith.<sup>43</sup> Many African countries do not have a faculty of theology. Researches in theology are very few or do not exist at all. In this context, Christianity in Africa is becoming a sort of tradition reduced to the rituals. This has had a great impact on the religious education. Firstly, theological knowledge is very weak due to insufficient education of religious education teachers. According to the research I have conducted in Rwanda over a period of four years in Catholic schools, only 4% of religious education teachers had been trained for it.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, without experts in theology, religious education content and methodologies cannot be enculturated and adapted to the local challenges concerning interreligious dialogue, human rights, social justice, civic education etc.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I tried to reflect on the topic of the specific contribution of religious education to civic education from an African perspective. Firstly, I explored religious education in Africa before the rise of Christianity through the African religious concept of “the vital life force”. School religious education has

<sup>43</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Africae Munus. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace* (19 November 2011), no. 32, 165.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Jean-Paul NIYIGENA, *Les professeurs du cours de religion dans les écoles catholiques au Rwanda*.

been developed by missionaries in the context of colonisation. Those two kinds of religious education, based on obeying authorities, and not on critical thinking, could not contribute to civic education. Civic education must be understood through the democratic values of liberty, equality, and justice.

Secondly, I have identified certain African problems related to civil rights. Indeed, Africa is still suffering from social injustice, corruption, war, interreligious and ethnical conflicts, poverty, etc. Those problems also demand civic education. In the same chapter, I developed four conditions that school religious education has to achieve in order to be able to contribute to civic education: articulating the hermeneutical approaches to the contents of faith, fostering the experiential methodology, introducing the dialogue between Christianity and traditional African religions, and developing education for civic empathy and solidarity.

Thirdly, I have pointed out some institutional obstacles to the development of school religious education which could contribute to civic education. I mentioned many obstacles related to the African states, the Church in Africa and the universities.

In more precise terms, the specific contribution of school religious education to civic education should focus, on one hand, on critical thinking through the permanent and relevant dialogue between the Christian content and the real life of African people, and on the other hand, on civic values and attitudes such as tolerance, social justice, equality, liberty, etc.

I would like to end by saying that my point of view could be considered as voluntarist. Indeed, we cannot affirm that being a good citizen is necessarily a result of good civic education. However, it is our duty, as theologians, to do our scientific job, on one hand, and, on the other hand, to let God and his Holy Spirit also do their own job. That is the reason why my paper is written in an eschatological perspective.



# Decolonial Perspective on Religious Education and Citizenship: Considerations on Power

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## **Abstract**

Colonialism is linked to the matrix of power that produced social discrimination as well as to the matrix of modernity that is associated with the perceived universality of Western knowledge. Decolonial perspective critiques the perceived universality of Western knowledge and the superiority of Western culture. Colonialism did not disappear with decolonisation, thus Western imperialism and globalisation perpetuate those inequalities at work in power structures, that, due to the hidden interests of the West, support dictatorial regimes in African countries. Paradoxically, this is also achieved by development funds and facilitated by a sacral understanding of power in the African people. Decolonial thinking is raising awareness of the African people as well as the recognition and implementation of the knowledge of the oppressed and subordinate which needs to be reawakened. That is, at the same time, a contribution to civic education.

**Keywords:** *Ontology of Power, Ethic of Power, Decolonial thinking, Development aid, Border Thinking.*

## Introduction

Talking about the decolonial perspective in relation to Africa should be anachronistic nowadays. For beyond the periodisation of African decolonisation, which can be situated historically between the independence of Ghana in 1957 and that of Namibia in 1990,<sup>1</sup> independence in Africa had been the subject of a positive appreciation. Indeed, we often liked to cite the exemplary nature of the emancipation process that led the English and French colonies to freely negotiate independence at the end of a political evolution based on dialogue and the prospects of harmonious cooperation. However, without being totally refuted, such optimism quickly showed its limits. The many problems that have beset Sub-Saharan Africa for more than sixty years – political and security instability, underdevelopment, food insecurity, corruption and violence, internal and inter-state wars, foreign interventions, forced migration, epidemics, etc. – are proof of this. Is this the product of a colonial-post-colonial continuum: the neo-colonialist ideological matrix and the inevitable consequences of a power mechanism underlying the conditions and modalities of independence in Africa, or should we see it as a structural incapacity of Africans to be the protagonists of their own story? Far from any third-world fundamentalism, which makes some people feel guilty and others feel hagiographic, I would like to propose a few lines of thought based on considerations on the notion of power. In the first part, I will try to show how a certain (erroneous?) understanding of power, both on the part of the colonisers (instrumental power) and certain African heads of state (sacred power) who succeeded them, could be called into question in the current situation in Africa. In the second part, I will try to show how an ontological approach to power can help to bring about a change of paradigm. Finally,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bernard DROZ, *Regards sur la décolonisation de l'Afrique Noire*, in: *Labyrinthe*, 16 (2003), 9-18, 13.

in the third part, we will ask ourselves how Africa can “emerge from the great night.”

## **1. African Decolonisation and the Problem of Power**

### ***1.1. Colonisation-Decolonisation and the Instrumental Approach to Power***

As Jules Harmand, a specialist in colonisation, explains in his book evocatively entitled “*Domination et Colonisation*,”<sup>2</sup> colonisation rhymes with domination. To colonise is to dominate, to have “power over” the other. And the fact that the process of decolonisation, which should mean the end of imperial domination by colonising nations over colonised societies, was far from smooth (France, for example, withdrew from Algeria only after a long and bloody war in 1962) shows the will of the coloniser to continue to maintain a relationship of domination with the colonised. The form of the relationship between European countries and the so-called “Third World” countries around the issue of Official Development Assistance is a convincing illustration.

One of the key concepts governing the new approach to relations between the European powers and their former colonies is indeed, especially since the Cold War, “development”. Countries classified under the new label of “Third World” are considered by Western countries as “backward” and in need of development assistance. Thus, a new distinction between “developed” and “developing” countries emerged – a distinction that closely resembles that of the colonising and the colonised countries during the period of colonial empires. However, recent research has revealed many ambiguities and tensions in this new “development regime”. For example, in order to receive “development assistance” from one of the two superpowers,

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jules HARMAND, *Domination et colonisation*, Flammarion, Paris, 1910.

(the United States and its Western allies on one hand, and the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies on the other), the leaders of the “Third World” countries had to take a clear stand for or against communism. Governments suspected of being pro-communist by the United States and its allies were subject to sanctions or overthrown. The assassination on 17 January 1961 of the Prime Minister of the newly independent Democratic Republic of the Congo (30 June 1960), Patrice Lumumba, is very much in this context. Development aid is therefore rarely aimed at solving the problems of structural inequalities between rich “developed” and poor “developing” countries. Rather, development projects often serve to maintain asymmetrical power relations between Western countries and others. Consequently, decolonisation has no way meant the breaking of the links of domination-subordination. If on the “donor” side development aid maintains a superficial and instrumental approach that makes power a simple means of domination, this assistance also serves among certain African heads of state to consolidate a kind of sacred conception of power. This brings us to the second point of this first part.

## ***1.2. A Certain “Sacred” Approach to Power in Africa***

We cannot talk about political power in some African countries without referring to a “sacred conception of power”, as the Congolese philosopher and theologian Godefroid Mana Kangudie points out. This sacred conception of power is rooted in the collective imagination and is akin to the traditional royal conception of authority, according to which the King’s power comes from God or the ancestors and is therefore “sacred.”<sup>3</sup> Thus,

<sup>3</sup> KA MANA, *Christianismes africains. Construire l’espérance*, Pentecôte d’Afrique Éditions, Cotonou, 2004, 133. Godefroid Mana Kangudie publishes his writings under the pseudonym Kā Mana, derived from the abbreviation of his surname “Kā” and his first name “Mana”.



the King exercises an “authority in principle” or “hypostasised authority”,<sup>4</sup> as Tillich puts it. When many states, mainly in West, East and Central Africa, gained political independence, many of the first heads of state of these countries had no other idea of their power than that of a King (in the pathological sense of the word). They believed that their power and its legitimacy came from God. As such, they could not tolerate any criticism. It is not necessary to go into detail here about the problems that such a “hypostasised authority” concept has for economic structures and development in Africa. Let us simply point out that this pathological conception of power has led for many years to dictatorial and corrupt regimes. And the advent of democracy in the 1990s on the African continent did not fundamentally change the situation. On the contrary, democratic movements have led to so-called “hybrid regimes”,<sup>5</sup> where electoral systems are mostly non-competitive, as they do not lead to a change of government. Such governments, in turn, are characterised by a lack of freedom due to highly personified power, nepotism and clientelism.<sup>6</sup> This point cannot be overemphasised: the pathological understanding of sacralised power is one of the major causes of development problems in Africa. And here we must add the role that development aid plays in this scenario.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Paul TILLICH, *Liebe – Macht – Gerechtigkeit*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York, 1991, 201.

<sup>5</sup> This refers to a combination of democratic and autocratic governance practices. Cf. Friedbert W. RÜB, *Hybride Regime – Politikwissenschaftliches Chamäleon oder neuer Regimetypus? Begriffliche und konzeptionelle Überlegungen zum neuen Pessimismus in der Transitologie*, in: Petra BENDEL – Aurel CROISSANT – Friedbert W. RÜB (eds.), *Zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur. Zur Konzeption und Empirie demokratischer Grauzonen*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2002, 93118, 99ss.; Gero ERDMANN, *Neopatrimoniale Herrschaft oder: Warum es in Afrika so viele Hybridregime gibt*, in: Petra BENDEL – Aurel CROISSANT – Friedbert W. RÜB (eds.), *Zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur. Zur Konzeption und Empirie demokratischer Grauzonen*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2002, 93118, 323-341.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Richard ATCHADÉ, *Philosophie der Macht. Paul Tillichs Verständnis der Macht im Kontext philosophischer Machttheorien im 20. Jahrhundert*, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston, 2020, 309ss.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 313.

Not only do the funds allocated fuel corruption, but they are also used by some corrupt and despotic governments to consolidate their power. They buy weapons to harm their people. In a country where freedom does not exist, where the right of citizens to participate responsibly in the essential decisions about their future is denied, where the country's wealth belongs to a minority, sustainable development is not to be expected. To be able to promote its development, Africa needs credible political authorities ("geglaubte Autoritäten"<sup>8</sup>) "who show the way in the desert, like Moses",<sup>9</sup> as Jaspers puts it. An ontological approach to power could be of crucial importance here.

## 2. An Ontological Analysis of Power

### 2.1. *Ontology of Power, or Being as a Power to Overcome Nonbeing*

The instrumental approach to power discussed above refers to the common definitions of power, most often of sociological origin. The British philosopher Bertrand Russell's definition of power as the ability to produce "intended effects" is interesting in this context. He considers for example power as a "social energy" and argues that "the fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same way that energy is the fundamental concept in physics."<sup>10</sup> Even more interesting for our context is Max Weber's definition of power as "the probability that one actor in a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that "Power here is

<sup>8</sup> Karl JASPERS, *Von der Wahrheit. Philosophische Logik*, Bd. 1, Piper, München, 1991, 798.

<sup>9</sup> Karl JASPERS, *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen. Politisches Bewußtsein in unserer Zeit*, Piper, München, 1983, 333.

<sup>10</sup> Bertrand RUSSELL, *Macht. Eine sozialkritische Studie*, Europa Verlag, Zürich, 2001, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Max WEBER, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, Mohr

understood phenomenologically while the attempt is made to capture the complexity of its manifestations within the confine of a definition."<sup>12</sup>

With regard to what the American and German philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich calls the "Ontology of power",<sup>13</sup> these approaches, which start from the phenomenon of power in order to establish a definition, seem too limited. As, in order to better analyse the phenomenon of power, it is important to delve into its essence. This can help to avoid any confusion and deviations in this regard. As Tillich aptly explains: "The deeper we penetrate into the root of being of a phenomenon such as power, the more we seem to move away from the realistic world of the daily encounter with power. In reality, however, we become more realistic than those who live directly in these encounters with power; we become more realistic because we are able to overcome the innumerable confusions, ideologies and counter-ideologies that have arisen in our consciousness about the concept of power, in order to find the possibility for a new, positive solution."<sup>14</sup> This essence lies at a deeper level than its various phenomenological forms, whether in the political, social, psychic, cognitive or

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Siebeck, Tübingen, 1985, 822.

<sup>12</sup> Werner SCHÜSSLER, *Power and the Human Condition: Philosophico-Theological Reflections on the Nature of Power According to Tillich, Jaspers, and Rahner*, in: Christian DANZ – Werner SCHÜSSLER – Erdmann STURM (eds.), *Religion und Politik*, LIT Verlag, Münster – Berlin – Wien 2009, 111124, 112.

<sup>13</sup> According to Tillich „Ontology is the way in which the root meaning of all principles and also of the three concepts of our subject [sc. love, power, and justice] can be found“. Cf. Paul TILLICH, *Love, Power, and Justice. Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications*, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. III, De Gruyter – Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, Berlin – New York, 1998, 583-650, 586. Furthermore "ontology asks the simple and infinitely difficult question: What does it mean to *be*? What are the structures, common to everything that is, to everything that participates in being?" *Ibid.*, 593. Tillich described the Concept of „Ontology of power“ first in his contribution „Das Problem der Macht“ from 1931. Cf. Paul TILLICH, *Das Problem der Macht. Versuch einer philosophischen Grundlegung*, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. III, De Gruyter – Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, Berlin – New York, 1998, 249268.

<sup>14</sup> Paul TILLICH, *Die Philosophie der Macht*, in: Renate ALBRECHT (ed.), *Gesammelte Werke*, Band IX, Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, Stuttgart, 1967, 205-232, 217.

religious domain.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, the essence of power is ontologically based.

The concept of power is in fact founded in the structure of being. Tillich speaks in this sense of “being as the power of being”, or the power to be. “The concept I suggest for a fundamental description of being as being is [...] the concept of power,”<sup>16</sup> he writes. According to him, power is not something that is added to being at a later stage, because when we think about being as such, about being as pure being, we also think concomitantly about power, so that being and power (German: *Macht*) are interchangeable and convertible concepts. Norbert Ernst, following Werner Schüssler, writes precisely to this proposal: “Being and power are convertible and coextensive.”<sup>17</sup> And Tillich goes on to say: “When I am asked what ‘being’ is, I answer: being is the power of being. It is the power to be. [...] With the concept of power, we open up being, and being gives to the concept of power the depth dimension.”<sup>18</sup> In order to clarify the meaning of the term “power of being”, Tillich writes that it refers namely to the power to resist and dominate nonbeing. This explanation calls for two comments.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Werner SCHÜSSLER, *Macht und Gewalt*, in: Werner SCHÜSSLER – Erdmann STURM (eds.), *Macht und Gewalt. Annäherungen im Horizont des Denkens von Paul Tillich*, LIT Verlag, Münster, 2005, 11-37, 14; Richard ATCHADÉ, *Philosophie der Macht. Paul Tillichs Verständnis der Macht im Kontext philosophischer Machttheorien im 20. Jahrhundert*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Paul TILLICH, *Love, Power, and Justice. Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications*, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works-Hauptwerke*, Vol. III, 583-650, 602.

<sup>17</sup> Norbert ERNST, *Sein ist Macht. Paul Tillichs Antwort auf eine philosophische Urfrage*, in: Werner SCHÜSSLER – Erdmann STURM (eds.), *Macht und Gewalt. Annäherungen im Horizont des Denkens von Paul Tillich*, LIT Verlag, Münster, 2005, 39-52, 44; Werner SCHÜSSLER, *Ontologie der Macht. Zur philosophischen Bestimmung der Macht im Denken Paul Tillichs*, in: Werner SCHÜSSLER (ed.), *„Was uns unbedingt angeht“. Studien zur Theologie und Philosophie Paul Tillichs*, LIT Verlag, Münster, 2015, 201-230, 208.

<sup>18</sup> “Wenn ich gefragt werde, was ‚Sein‘ ist, so antworte ich: Sein ist Seinsmächtigkeit. Es ist die Macht, zu sein. [...] Mit dem Machtbegriff erschließen wir das Sein, und das Sein gibt dem Machtbegriff die Tiefendimension.” Paul TILLICH, *Die Philosophie der Macht*, in: Renate ALBRECHT (ed.), *Gesammelte Werke*, Band IX, Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, Stuttgart, 1967, 205-232, 207.

Firstly, that “power is not – negatively speaking – the ensured possibility of using violence, although the possibility to break resistance – which is an application of violence – is part of his concept of power.”<sup>19</sup> With regard to Nietzsche, Tillich notes that the “will to power” is not the will to dominate.<sup>20</sup> The power of being does not, therefore, refer to the quarrels and antagonisms between the various beings but to the tension between being and nonbeing. And this is the second point I want to make on Tillich’s statement about power as the power of being.

For Tillich, the power to be is namely the force that overcomes the resistance of nonbeing: “The power of being is its possibility to affirm itself against the nonbeing within it and against it.”<sup>21</sup> What does that mean? What is nonbeing and what is its relation to being?

Tillich is aware that nonbeing is one of the most controversial concepts. “Nonbeing is one of the most difficult and most discussed concepts.”<sup>22</sup> The reason for this is that our thinking is fundamentally intentional: it is always focused on an object. “There is [...] no object without a subject and no subject without an object.”<sup>23</sup> In this sense nonbeing cannot be thought “because, due the total absence of being, it cannot be an object of thought.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Werner SCHÜSSLER, Power and the Human Condition: Philosophico-Theological Reflections on the Nature of Power According to Tillich, Jaspers, and Rahner, in: Christian DANZ – Werner SCHÜSSLER – Erdmann STURM (eds.), *Religion und Politik*, 111124, 113.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Richard ATCHADÉ, *Philosophie der Macht. Paul Tillichs Verständnis der Macht im Kontext philosophischer Machttheorien im 20. Jahrhundert*, 266.

<sup>21</sup> Paul TILLICH, Love, Power, and Justice. Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. III., 583-650, 606.

<sup>22</sup> Paul TILLICH, The Courage to be, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. V, De Gruyter – Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, Berlin – New York, 1998, 141-230, 156.

<sup>23</sup> Karl JASPERS, *Einführung in die Philosophie. Zwölf Radiovorträge*, Piper, München-Zürich 2003, 25: „Es gibt [...] kein Objekt ohne Subjekt und kein Subjekt ohne Objekt.“

<sup>24</sup> Norbert ERNST, Sein ist Macht. Paul Tillichs Antwort auf eine philosophische Urfrage, in: Werner SCHÜSSLER – Erdmann STURM (eds.), *Macht und Gewalt. Annäherungen im Horizont des Denkens von Paul Tillich*, 39-52.

But in spite of this apparent impossibility of being able to think about nonbeing, in experience we encounter its very concrete reality. Because when we experience ourselves as finite, we always already experience our possible nonbeing. We once were not and once will be no more.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, according to Tillich, nonbeing is present in every finite being: "Being which includes non-being is finite being. 'Finite' means carrying within one's being the destiny not to be."<sup>26</sup> According to Tillich, the experience of possible nonbeing evokes what he calls the "ontological shock" or the "shock of possible nonbeing". This is expressed in the question: "Why is there something, why not nothing?"<sup>27</sup> What is decisive in this context is that the weight of being, i.e., the "power to be" can only be understood in its relation to a possible non-being. The threat of non-being in the experience of finitude is thus for Tillich the background against which a positive experience of being becomes possible in the first place. He explicitly emphasises: "The self-affirmation of being without nonbeing would not even be self-affirmation but an immovable self-identity. Nothing would be manifest, nothing expressed, nothing revealed. But nonbeing drives being out of its seclusion, it forces it to affirm itself dynamically."<sup>28</sup> For Tillich, this means: nonbeing is a structural element or an horizon of understanding of being. But this is only possible if nonbeing is more than a purely negative logical judgement. It must also have an ontological significance insofar as it forces being to exercise its "power to be" in the sense of its self-affirmation against its possible nonbeing. Tillich adds:

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ulrike MURMANN, *Freiheit und Entfremdung. Paul Tillichs Theorie der Sünde*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart – Berlin – Köln, 2000, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Paul TILLICH, Love, Power, and Justice. Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. III, 583-650, 601.

<sup>27</sup> Paul TILLICH, *The Nature and the Significance of Existentialist Thought*, in: Gunther WENZ (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Volume I, De Gruyter – Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, Berlin – New York, 1989, 403-410, 407.

<sup>28</sup> Paul TILLICH, The Courage to be, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. V, 141-230, 225.

"The power of being is its possibility to affirm itself against the non-being within it and against it. The power of a being is the greater, the more non-being is taken into its self-affirmation. The power of being is not dead identity but the dynamic process."<sup>29</sup> This has existential implications which I would now like to dwell on briefly.

## **2.2. *Being and Nonbeing: Politic-Existential Implications***

Tillich illustrates his thoughts in his 1956 article "The Philosophy of Power" by taking the example of the people of Berlin, when he writes: "From time to time, people boast in Berlin that they are more open and lively than, for example, West Germany, and they boast about it [...] with good reason. If you ask: why is this so? the answer can only be: because here people have to carry and overcome more nonbeing. One has more power to be because one has more nonbeing to overcome, as long as one can overcome it."<sup>30</sup> The difficult living conditions, which Tillich identifies here with nonbeing, to which people were exposed in Berlin at the time and which had to be overcome, need no further explanation here. It is perhaps sufficient to think of the living conditions of people in many African countries. If we consider the migration flow from Africa to Europe with all the risks involved in crossing the Mediterranean, we can imagine the reality in the countries of origin of the refugees. The "black continent" then appears as the continent of all miseries. And yet, many African countries are rich in raw materials, which we do not need to list here. Let us simply remember that "Africa has about 12% of the world's oil reserves, 42% of gold reserves, between 80 and 90% of the world's chromium and platinum group

<sup>29</sup> Paul TILLICH, Love, Power, and Justice. Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. III, 583-650, 606.

<sup>30</sup> Paul TILLICH, Die Philosophie der Macht, in: Renate ALBRECHT (ed.), *Gesammelte Werke*, Band IX, 205-232, 209.



metal reserves, 60% of arable land and vast timber resources.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, as we have seen, a lot of development aid has been provided to Africa over the past 60 years. And yet, Africa does not seem to be taking off. Given Tillich’s example above of Berlin and his assertion that “A life process is the more powerful, the more non-being it can include in its self-affirmation, without being destroyed by it”, could Africa’s situation be interpreted as an expression of a limited “power of being”, as found in some of the racial philosophical theories that feed into certain economic systems?

In the name of economic interests, some world powers are indeed making race a major issue in the establishment of a world-system – the global distribution of labour and trade and racism are integral parts of the capitalist system – where North and South assume socio-political and strategic meanings. But far from being an expression of a structural defect of the stereotypical “black man” surrendering to the cyclical rhythm of nature, the state of affairs in Africa, its “backward” condition, should not make us lose sight of the fact that political power should allow the realisation of the power of being of each man or each social group and that it is therefore important for economic development. In African countries however, political power, whether internal or external, very often proves to be an obstacle to development. Besides the pathological understanding of “sacred power” among some politicians and the resulting dictatorial political regimes, let me return once again to the influence of foreign policy on domestic policy decisions in African countries.

Speaking of neo-colonialism, Kwame Nkrumah said: “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is theoretically independent, has all the insignia of sovereignty on

<sup>31</sup> Timothée BAHELLABY, *Industrie des matières premières et responsabilité sociale d’entreprise en Afrique : réflexion sur le cadre juridique international*, in: *African Law Study Library*, 2 (2015), 177-210.



the international plane. But in reality, its economy, and therefore its politics, are manipulated from outside.”<sup>32</sup> The hope placed in the “Year of Africa” in 1960 and expressed in many independence celebrations was indeed quickly undermined, as we have said, by the assassination of the freely elected Prime Minister of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba.<sup>33</sup> In 1987, the revolutionary Thomas Sankara, dubbed by the media as the “African Che Guevara”, was overthrown and assassinated in Burkina Faso.<sup>34</sup> It is not uncommon to hear reports of the direct involvement or co-responsibility of major political powers in those assassinations and in wars and conflicts in Africa. In the early 2000s, the Belgian government appointed a commission of enquiry to determine responsibility for the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. Forty-one years after his assassination, Belgium, the former colonial power, has made an official apology to the victim’s family and to the people of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its part in the death of Patrice Lumumba.<sup>35</sup> One of his teeth, taken back to Belgium as a war trophy by one of his killers, a Belgian soldier, was recently returned to the Congolese government by the Belgian government. Considering that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is still today, as we know, a country in crisis, and that many other bearers of hope have been murdered in many other African countries with presumed “external” help, we realise how external political power can destroy the realisation

<sup>32</sup> Kwame NKURUMAH, *Neo-Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism*, International Publishers Co., Inc., London, 1966, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Albert WIRZ, *Krieg in Afrika. Die nachkolonialen Konflikte in Nigeria, Sudan, Tschad und Kongo*, Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, Wiesbaden, 1982, 509-560.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Peter MEYNS, *Der Sozialismus in Afrika in der Krise*, in: Rolf HOFMEIER (eds.), *Afrika Jahrbuch 1989: Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in Afrika südlich der Sahara*, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden, 1990, 31-41, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Gérard de VILLERS, *Histoire, justice et politique. A propos de la commission d’enquête sur l’assassinat de Patrice Lumumba, instituée par la Chambre belge des représentants*, in: *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, (2004) 173-174, 193-220; Gérard de VILLERS, *La Belgique face à la transition manquée au Congo-Zaïre (1990-1997)*, in : Olivier LANOTTE – Claude ROOSENS – Cathy CLÉMENT (eds.), *La Belgique et l’Afrique centrale de 1960 à nos jours*, GRIP, Bruxelles, 2000, 149-171.

of the power of being of a social group. It is here that Tillich's ontological understanding of justice as respect for the power of being of the other reveals itself as a call, not only to African politicians, but also to the great powers that support dictatorial regimes out of a tacit interest.

### **2.3. *Ethic of Power or Power in the Context of Justice***

"Africa needs development assistance", we hear very often. But which Africa are we talking about? And which assistance do we mean? If we are talking about Africa with such a rich subsoil that some are talking about a "geological scandal", and if we are talking about development assistance as we have known it until now, it seems to me that the diagnosis is wrong. For this Africa I have just spoken about does not need assistance in this form, but rather justice. We have until now spoken about being as the power of being. Here, justice is the form in which the power of being of each person is realised in the encounter with others. Thus "justice is the form in which the power of being actualises itself."<sup>36</sup>

Justice is the strict respect of the others' right to be. In an encounter, the "you" in front of me presents itself to me as a claim (*Forderung*), says Tillich, in the sense that the "you" is the limit of "I". The being of the "you" inwardly demands justice: the recognition of the other as a person or as a nation. We can of course try to dismiss this claim. We can try to turn a man into an object, a thing, an instrument. But injustice to others, the non-recognition of their dignity as Self, is always also injustice to oneself. And what is valid here in the encounter between individuals, is also valid in the relationship between a state and its citizens, as well as in the relationship between states. Thus, for

<sup>36</sup> Paul TILLICH, *Love, Power, and Justice. Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications*, in: Carl H. RATSCHOW (ed.), *Main Works – Hauptwerke*, Vol. III., 583-650, 609.

example, a state acts unjustly when it dehumanises people, when it deprives them of what their self-fulfillment demands, when it deprives them of their power to be as persons; such a state destroys itself.

### 3. “Emerging from the Great Night”, But How?

#### 3.1. *Border Thinking*

As we know, civic and religious education is a way of improving the well-being of our populations. But from a decolonial perspective, how can this be done effectively, when we know that our education system is dependent on the colonial system? How can we deconstruct a system that is set according to Western parameters? How can we emerge from the great night, as Achille Mbembe so aptly put it?<sup>37</sup>

Walter Dignolo's notion of “border thinking”<sup>38</sup> seems to me to be here quite suggestive: instead of rejecting Western models, border epistemologists want to reinvent the Eurocentric “emancipatory rhetoric of modernity” on the basis of indigenous cosmologies and the philosophy of the South. Border thinking takes up and re-semantises the notions of world-system and citizenship – how to live the world-system – which is not anti-modern but transmodern. As an approach, border thinking challenges the subject “Africa” and invokes paradigms of African philosophy in order to decompartmentalise an epistemology that, instead of rejecting the Western model, integrates it and opens itself to the varieties of the world. Such thinking also has political implications.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Achille MBEMBE, *Out of the Dark Night: Essays on Decolonization*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Valentina TARQUINI, Quelles perspectives pour l’Afrique-Monde? Une étude relationnelle, in: *TRANS – Revue de littérature générale et comparée*, (2020) 25. Source: <https://doi.org/10.4000/trans.3464>.

### **3.2. Political Implications**

In terms of political governance, we have already mentioned what was called the “wind of democracies”<sup>39</sup> in the 1990s. Democracy was supposed to be the magic cure for all our problems. But some 30 years later, have people’s living conditions changed?

In fact, here and there we see countries organising very expensive elections which almost always witness the same people being elected and re-elected; while these elections are costing fortunes, people are lacking hospitals, schools and a decent standard of living. One might ask what should come first: the flawed elections or the welfare of the people? Moreover, after the so-called democratic elections, some countries have experienced putsches, often welcomed by the population. This was the case in Mali, Burkina-Faso, and Guinea (Conakry) in 2022. Some nations have even fallen into civil war.

In the meantime, when you look at the figures and the development indices, the population is disillusioned. The economic and social situation has deteriorated almost everywhere. Faced with all these failures, Africans must ask themselves certain questions. Is this the kind of democracy the continent really needs? Is it not time for Africa to assume its political responsibility by adopting political governance at the frontiers that draws as much on inherited models as on traditional institutions of governance? Let us return to the king’s model of governance, mentioned earlier in this reflection.

Although in many African societies the King exercises authority in principle, he is not beyond criticism. For many West and East African peoples, such as the Yoruba peoples in Nigeria and Benin or the Akan peoples in Ghana, Togo and Côte d’Ivoire, power does not reside in the person of the King or ruler, but symbolically

<sup>39</sup> Babacar GUÈYE, La démocratie en Afrique: succès et résistances, in: *Pouvoirs* 129 (2009) 2, 5-26, 20.

in the “seat”. Thus, for these peoples, importance is attached to the “seat of power” as a “symbol of the unity of the people and of power and as the seat of the people’s soul.”<sup>40</sup> The King is certainly in power for life and cannot be removed. But in case of misconduct, he may be symbolically punished by being removed from the “seat” for a certain period of time. For as the “chief of the land” or “master of the land” or “owner of the land”, he is the one who “manages and allocates the land and the rights of use in the name of the ancestors.” And as such, he must be a role model. Let us just say this: service to the state should be the top priority of rulers, as it is traditionally for the King.

## Conclusion

From a decolonial perspective, there is an urgent need in Africa to adapt the education system, which still depends on the colonial heritage, for the development of the African continent. And to succeed in such an adaptation, it is first of all the political power in Africa that must be decolonised, given its decisive role in the choice and application of education systems. However, political choices in Africa are still strongly rooted in a colonial-post-colonial *continuum* maintained by the Official Development Assistance system, among others. Here, Tillich’s ontological conception of justice as respect for the claim of the being-powerfulness of the Other proves to be an appeal, and not only to African politicians, but also to the great powers that support dictatorial regimes on the basis of tacit interest.

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<sup>40</sup> Leonhard HARDING, *Geschichte Afrikas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Wissenschaftsverlag, Oldenbourg, 1999, 130.



PART TWO

## **TASKS AND DIMENSIONS**





# The Contribution of Religious Education to Citizenship Education: Theoretical, Empirical and Didactic Aspects

*Ana Thea Filipović*

## **Abstract**

*The article examines the contribution of religious education to citizenship education in several steps. First, it presents the reasons underlying the need for civic and citizenship education in schools, and the inclusion of religious education in its implementation. The paper then explains what citizenship education includes, describing various nationally and globally oriented concepts of citizenship encountered in the teaching practice and literature. After that, it questions the compatibility of religious education and citizenship education, indicating the specific contribution of confessional religious education to civic and citizenship education. That is followed by the presentation of the methods of education for responsible citizenship within the religious education framework. Finally, based on empirical insights, it shows how the goals of citizenship education are realised in Catholic religious education in Croatia.*

**Keywords:** *religious education, citizenship education, concepts of citizenship education, religion and citizenship, teaching/learning methods, empirical insights.*

## Introduction

Over the last few decades, in both social and religious sciences as well as in theology, the relationship between religion and the public in the face of social changes has been thematised over and over again. The thesis on the disappearance of religion (from public life) has been questioned, the vitality and adaptability of religion to different circumstances and needs of people and communities have been observed, and the phenomenon of the de-privatisation of religion, and the need to redefine its role in the public sphere have been discussed ever since the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> In the context of strengthening civil society as a factor of social participation, religion has been recognised as an important mediation structure in civil society, connecting the public and private spheres. The school is also a mediating institution that connects the private and the public, everyday living environment of the individual and the educational system of the country. The integration potential of religious education in religious as well as in public schools can be seen as a transformative resource that can also contribute to the goals of citizenship education, which are focused, among other things, on the acquisition of a culture of respect, understanding and acceptance of differences in increasingly plural societies and progressively complex relationships in the world.<sup>2</sup>

The school, as a social institution, mediates the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to develop as individuals, to get to know and understand the world they live in, and to live responsibly in society. These goals of education were summarised by the International Commission for the Development of Education in the 21st Century, headed by Jacques Delors, in its report

<sup>1</sup> Cf. José CASANOVA, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Siebren MIEDEMA – Gerdien BERTRAM-TROOST, Democratic citizenship and religious education: challenges and perspectives for schools in the Netherlands, in: *British Journal of Religious Education*, 30 (2008) 2, 123-132, here 128-129.

to UNESCO and depicted in the form of four pillars to which entire education should contribute: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be*.<sup>3</sup> All school subjects, including religious education, contribute to these widely quoted pillars or goals of education.

Further on, we will question, explain and show the following: the reasons underlying the need for citizenship education in schools and the inclusion of religious education in its implementation; what citizenship education includes; various nationally and globally oriented concepts of citizenship education, encountered in the teaching practice and literature; the compatibility of religious education and citizenship education; the specific contribution of confessional religious education to civic and citizenship education; the methods of education for responsible citizenship within the religious education framework; how the goals of citizenship education are realised within Catholic religious education in Croatia, based on empirical insights.

## **1. The Need for Civic and Citizenship Education and the Inclusion of Religion**

Networking and connectedness in a community represents a prerequisite for belonging, social inclusion, the possibility of exercising human rights and participation in the common good. Since the human community and the world as a whole are living organisms, the constellations that produce exclusion and disconnection of individual subjects and social groups have a negative impact on the overall functioning of the community and require a redefinition of its values, ways of thinking and behaviour patterns. In complex societies, different social institutions must

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. UNESCO, *Learning: the Treasure Within (The Delors Report): The Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*, UNESCO, Paris, 1996, 20-21.

participate in the task of education for community life and responsible citizenship, especially the schooling institutions. Learning to live with others, as one of the pillars of education, includes the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to constructively shape microsocial relationships as well as to learn to live together in a wider community of a democratic society.

In 2006, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union published and recommended a common *European reference framework of key competences for lifelong learning*<sup>4</sup> to the member countries as a guide and help in implementing educational reforms and creating their own national curricula. This document lists eight key competencies that are necessary for living in the conditions of the modern world, for the personal and social development of individuals, for inclusion in society, active citizenship, employment and navigating the labour market. The citizenship competence is also listed among the competences that were slightly revised in 2018.<sup>5</sup>

Community life encompasses all areas of human experience, including religion and human's religiosity. Religious education, as a school subject, deals with the field of religion in the most competent way. Religious education (if it is taught in a confessional form) introduces students to a particular religion, but also to the basics of other religions and worldviews or (if it is taught

<sup>4</sup> Cf. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC). Annex: Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework, in: *Official Journal of the European Union* L 394/10 EN (30 December 2006); also in: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32006H0962> (28 June 2022).

<sup>5</sup> The listed competencies are: Literacy competence, multilingual competence, mathematical competence and the competence in science, technology and engineering, digital competence, personal, social and learning to learn competence, citizenship competence, entrepreneurship competence, cultural awareness and expression competence. Cf. *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning*, in: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC) (28 June 2022).

in a non-confessional form) to different religious traditions and non-religious worldviews; it helps them to discover essential religious questions and the core messages of religions, but also to deal critically and constructively with religious topics, traditions, and norms, as well as with one's own religious ideas and beliefs, and also non-religious worldviews. Learning about (one's own) religion or about different religions and worldviews should help students to shape their own religious questions and attitudes more competently.<sup>6</sup>

Religious education in Catholic schools also mediates knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable students to think and act responsibly in terms of religion and belief, and to shape their own religious attitude or belief. Learning religion / learning through religion, learning about religion, and learning from religion<sup>7</sup> serve both the personal and social development of students; but the choice over which learning will be emphasised depends on the composition and starting point of students in individual schools and environments. Considering that Catholic schools around the world place special importance on the dialogue between the Church and society in relation to the commitment to the integral development of man and the human community,<sup>8</sup> religious education has an important role in achieving these goals.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, Religious Education, in: Birgit WEYEL – Wilhelm GRÄB – Emmanuel LARTEY – Cas WEPENER (eds.), *International Handbook of Practical Theology*, De Gruyter, Berlin / Boston, 2022, 717-730; here 725-728; also in: <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/59558>.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Michael GRIMMITT, *Religious Education and Human Development: The Relationship between studying religions and personal, social and moral education*, McCrimmon, Great Wakering, Essex, 1987; Michael GRIMMITT, Pedagogies of Religious Education for Today and Tomorrow: Identifying their Principles, Procedures and Strategies, in: Tony DODD (ed.), *Developments in Religious Education*, The University of Hull, Hull, 2001, 1-23. Differentiation of models of religious learning in schools is based on Grimmer's classification of learning religion, learning about religion and learning from religion, which has been further developed in the meantime.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION (FOR SEMINARIES AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS), *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (28 December 1997), in: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_27041998\\_school2000\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html) (12 May 2022).

When it comes to European education policies, the religious dimension has been highlighted in discussions about education, especially after the terrorist attacks on the United States of America on 11 September 2001. After that, the Council of Europe decisively turned away from the “negative” French concept of secularity (*laïcité*), which excludes religion from the public life and defines it as a private matter, towards a “positive” understanding of secularity and religious neutrality, which recognises and acknowledges the public dimension of religion and the importance of religious education in the public schooling domain. A positive understanding of secularity requires the cooperation of the state with all relevant social groups, especially religious communities, and parents of students.<sup>9</sup> The specific orientation of religious education (confessional, non-confessional, or mixed) depends on the religious situation and the needs of a particular society.<sup>10</sup>

The Council of Europe, which was founded in 1949 to protect and promote human rights, plural democracy and the rule of law, focuses its educational activity on human rights education in close connection with education for democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue. Among the educational priorities recommended by the Council of Europe is the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the promotion of a

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Robert JACKSON, *The Contribution of Religious Education to a Better Living Together in Europe*, in: Anna KÖRS – Wolfram WEISSE – Jean-Paul WILLAIME (eds.), *Religious Diversity and Interreligious Dialogue*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, Cham, 2020, 211-224; here 214; Robert JACKSON, *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2014; Robert JACKSON, *Inclusive Study of Religions and Worldviews in Schools: Signposts from the Council of Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, *Der Religionsunterricht in öffentlichen Schulen in Europa. Modelle und Entwicklungen als Indikatoren für die gesellschaftliche Bedeutung des Glaubens und die Anfrage an Theologie und Kirche*, in: *Nova prisutnost*, 9 (2011) 1, 137-152; Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, *Contextual Influences on Knowledge Mediation in Religious Education in Schools and Its Significance for Teacher Education*, in: Michael T. BUCHANAN – Adrian-Mario GELLEL (eds.), *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education, Volume II: Learning and Leading in a Pluralist World*, Springer, Singapore, 2019, 381-392.

positive view of diversity, getting to know, understanding and respecting others, and learning openness, dialogue and negotiation. The documents of the Council of Europe in the last twenty years emphasise that the teaching of religion at school should also contribute to this goal, both learning about one's own religion and about other religions and worldviews.<sup>11</sup> "This element of the curriculum should include, for example, strategies for *understanding* different religious positions, encouraging tolerance for (not agreement with) different religious and secular points of view, education in human rights, citizenship and conflict management, and strategies to counter racism and religious discrimination in a diverse world."<sup>12</sup> Religious education thus prepares for common life in a democratic society, and in order to achieve the stated goals, it must cooperate with other subject areas and disciplines.<sup>13</sup>

The stated social goals of education are not left to the good will of individual schools, school principals and teachers, but are also structurally shaped into the curriculum of civic and citizenship education, which was in the late 1980s, and especially in the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2004; COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *Recommendation CM/Rec (2008) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Dimension of Religions and Nonreligious Convictions within Intercultural Education*, in: [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Rec\(2008\)12&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColor-Internet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Rec(2008)12&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColor-Internet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864) (12 May 2022); COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe: United Around Our Principles Against Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism*, in: CM (2015) 74, 125th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Brussels, 19 May, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2015; COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *The Fight Against Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading To Terrorism: Action Plan*, in: CM (2015) 74, 125th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Brussels, 19 May, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2015; COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *Competencies for Democratic Culture: living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2016; COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Robert JACKSON, *The Contribution of Religious Education to a Better Living Together in Europe*, 216.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg ZIEBERTZ, *Religious Education in a Plural Western Society*, Lit Verlag, Münster, 2003.

early 1990s, introduced into the educational curricula of most European countries<sup>14</sup> under different subject titles: civic education, citizenship education, political education, community education etc. The importance of the contribution of education to the development of democratic behaviour, civic responsibility, civic engagement, and social cohesion was stimulated by the increasing complexity of the modern world, increased migrations, and the cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and ideological pluralisation of societies, first in Western Europe, and after the collapse of the communist regimes in 1989/1990, also in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>15</sup> Citizenship education is mostly implemented as a cross-curricular content, but in some countries also as a separate school subject.<sup>16</sup>

## **2. What does Civic and Citizenship Education Include?**

The modern concept of active citizenship builds on the ancient Greek virtue of *phronesis*, which denotes practical reasoning or critical discernment as a critical but cooperative responsibility for the social community (Greek: *polis*), in which an individual lives together with others.<sup>17</sup> The subject of civic and citizenship education traditionally represents the political domain of one's own country, i.e., introducing students to the functioning of democracy and preparing them for building a democratic society.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Audrey OSLER – Hugh STARKEY, Education for democratic citizenship: a review of research, policy and practice 1995-2005, in: *Research papers in Education*, 21 (2006) 4, 433-466.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Concepción NAVAL – Murray PRINT – Ruud VELDHUIS, Education for Democratic Citizenship in the New Europe: Context and Reform, in: *European Journal of Education*, 37 (2002) 2, 107-128.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Eurydice Brief: Citizenship Education at School in Europe 2017*, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Brussels, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bert ROEBBEN, Fellowship of *fate* and fellowships of *faith*: religious education and citizenship education in Europe, in: *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 29 (2008) 2, 207-211, here 207.



Today, however, the subject has been extended to include global citizenship, and in addition to political issues, it also includes social issues related to the development and functioning of civil society, as well as cultural issues related to civil coexistence.<sup>18</sup> In this paper, therefore, I use the terms civic and citizenship education or just citizenship education, which includes both the narrow and broad meaning of the mentioned concepts, minimum and maximum understanding of citizenship,<sup>19</sup> information, and formation.

The process of globalisation, which manifests itself in the increase and acceleration of the global connection and interdependence of people, is reshaping individual societies and the entire world order with its influence and meaning.<sup>20</sup> As a result of this process, today's societies face not only national, but also global problems and challenges. This can be easily recognised in the field of digital communications, economic dependence (and exploitation), environmental changes, wars, migrations, pandemics, etc. The encounters of cultures and the mixing of populations compel communities to deal with the task of redefining their own identities and cultures as well as learning to act as a global community. Environmental problems, war hotspots in the world, pandemic crises and natural catastrophes show how global connectivity can become a global threat to humanity.<sup>21</sup> Issues of social (in)equality, social exclusion/inclusion and (in) justice in the globalised world come to the fore.

<sup>18</sup> David KERR, Citizenship education in the curriculum: an international review, in: *The School Field*, 10 (1999) 3/4, 5-31; Will KYMLICKA, Education for Citizenship, in: Mark HALSTEAD – Terence McLAUGHLIN (eds.), *Education in Morality*, Routledge, London, 1999, 79-102; Barbara MALAK-MINKIEWICZ, Civic education in times of change: The post-communist countries, in: *Citizenship Teaching and Learning*, 3 (2007) 2, 58-70.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Terence H. McLAUGHLIN, Citizenship, Diversity and Education: A philosophical perspective, in: *Journal of Moral Education*, 21 (1992) 3, 235-250.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, *Učiti živjeti zajedno. Dimenzije socijalnog učenja u pedagoškoj i teološkoj perspektivi*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2017, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ralf GAUS, Global (Citizenship) Education as inclusive and diversity learning in Religious Education, in: *Journal of Religious Education*, 69 (2021) 2, 179-192, here 180.

The Global Development Programme for the year 2030 (Agenda 2030), which was adopted at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development, held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York, USA, at the centre of which are the Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>22</sup> as well as the UNESCO guidelines, all emphasise the importance of education for global citizenship, which should contribute to building a peaceful, just, inclusive and sustainable society.<sup>23</sup> Through the signing of the Agenda by the member countries, these goals entered many school curricula.<sup>24</sup> The global dimension of citizenship depends on the state of multiculturalism and plurality in an individual society, but still most societies today extend the concept of citizenship to the global dimension. However, in listing the goals of sustainable development, the United Nations does not address or discuss the tensions arising from the relationship between economy, ecology, and social issues.<sup>25</sup> Individual countries and their education systems also shape and define the goals of education for global citizenship differently. The very “concepts such as citizenship and human rights are interpreted differently according to the political, economic and cultural background.”<sup>26</sup>

Civic and citizenship education is conceived in different ways, depending on the understanding of citizenship, and those

<sup>22</sup> Cf. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1), United Nations, New York, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*, UNESCO, New York, 2015; UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, *Education for Sustainable Development. A roadmap*. UNESCO, New York, 2020; also in: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802.locale=en>.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ralf GAUS, *Global (Citizenship) Education...*, 180.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. John HUCKLE, Arjen E. J. WALS, The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development: Business as usual in the end, in: *Environmental Education Research*, 21 (2015) 3, 491-505.

<sup>26</sup> Abdeljalil AKKARI – Katherine MALEQ, *Global Citizenship Education: Recognising Diversity in a Global World*, in: Abdeljalil AKKARI – Katherine MALEQ (eds.), *Global Citizenship Education. Critical and International Perspectives*, Springer, Cham, 2020, 3-13, here 5.

differences are related to both educational policies and educational practices. Subject curricula mostly conceive the civic competence as an interdisciplinary competence. For this reason, many countries enforce a cross-curricular approach to civic and citizenship education, realised through almost all subjects and school activities in which religious education obviously also participates. Civic and citizenship education is studied by various disciplines which have contributed to noticing its components and aspects, especially those of moral or values character, among which the issue of social justice stands out.<sup>27</sup> Interdisciplinary studies have made the concept of civic education dynamic and transformative in relation to democratic and social learning and its various implications, such as human rights, the relationship between culture and political power, recognition of diversity, postcolonial/decolonial perspectives, volunteering and service learning, and the like. Society, science and educational policies have realised that it is necessary to expand and deepen civic education, as it cannot be left to the interests of the market.<sup>28</sup> Today, the expansion of the goals of citizenship education includes three areas in particular: ecological sustainability, social interaction in the school as a contribution to democracy, and the use of new media for civic engagement.<sup>29</sup>

Dutch researcher Wiel Veugelers has offered a comprehensive definition that allows for different emphases that can be made while implementing civic and citizenship education in individual countries. "Education for citizenship is about acquiring the abilities and attitudes necessary to participate in the political and civic life (on local, national, and global levels); about relating to

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Wiel VEUDELERS, A Moral Perspective on Citizenship Education and on IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Studies, in: Barbara MALAK-MINKIEWICZ – Judith TORNEY-PURTA (eds.), *Influences of the IEA Civic and Citizenship Education Studies: Practice, Policy, and Research Across Countries and Regions*, IEA, Amsterdam and Springer, Cham, 2021, 291-301, here 293.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 298.

others, in particular people with different social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds; and about the concern for the sustainability of humanity, of the planet, and of democracy.”<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Different Nationally and Globally Oriented Concepts of Citizenship

Citizenship education is a normative concept because it is related to the moral values that characterise individual societies, and above all to democracy as a value or set of values on which a certain society is organised. The learning in citizenship education is related to the moral development of students.<sup>31</sup> Based on the empirical research conducted among teachers, students, and parents on the topic of moral values to which they attach special importance in the context of citizenship education, Wiel Veugelers has identified three groups to which the three preferred types of *nationally oriented citizenship* correspond.

The first type is *adapted* citizenship, taught and learned by focusing on the development of character and moral behaviour of students, and constructed through discipline and norms. Some form of social involvement in school, family and community also serves this purpose. The second type is *individualised* citizenship, taught and learned through the process of empowering students to shape their own critical thinking, grow up in freedom, and develop autonomy in choices and ways of giving meaning to life, which, according to L. Kohlberg, also represents a key stage of moral development.<sup>32</sup> Teachers who are in this group believe that moral values are a matter of personal choice of the individual,

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ibid., 291, 297.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Cheryl E. SANDERS, Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development, in: <https://www.britannica.com/science/Lawrence-Kohlbergs-stages-of-moral-development> (3 July 2022).

and not the task of the school. That is why they find the social engagement of students as less important. The third type is *critical-democratic* citizenship. It strives to connect moral values and autonomy. It focuses on the recognition of differences and harmonious coexistence, so when it comes to teaching and learning, students are encouraged to dialogue with different opinions and cultural backgrounds of argumentation. The emphasis is on the critical analysis of certain topics and advocacy for the common good. Social engagement is important to teachers in this group, and that is why they promote a wide range of social goals, from empathy to solidarity, based on social justice and dedication to combating injustice in society.<sup>33</sup>

However, empirical research conducted in the Netherlands has shown that many teachers like the critical-democratic type of citizenship education, but in practice, they still apply it less frequently than the adaptive type. It also revealed that teachers do not prefer the individualised type, even though it is quite anchored in the school system itself, which is focused on the tracking, comparison, assessment, and selection of students.<sup>34</sup> In addition to the above, in school practice there are, of course, also many mixed or combined models.

Veugelers' research based on the expert literature on citizenship education also points to three types of understanding of *global citizenship* and the corresponding education. The first type is education for an *open* global citizenship, which focuses on knowledge about other cultures and openness to them. The second type is *moral* global citizenship education, which is focused on achieving three goals: the creation of conditions for the personal development of each person, the care for the planet and

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Wiel VEUGELERS, A Moral Perspective on Citizenship Education and on IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Studies, in: Barbara MALAK-MINKIEWICZ – Judith TORNEY-PURTA (eds.), *Influences of the IEA Civic and Citizenship Education Studies...*, 293.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 294.

its inhabitants, and an open communication in which everyone can participate. This approach is linked to human rights and the idea of cosmopolitanism. The third type is education for *socio-political* global citizenship, which is dedicated to social justice, uncovering unequal power relations and political changes. In this type, the influence of globalisation on the articulation of the goals of citizenship education is more than obvious. The proponents of this type accuse the previous, morally oriented type of not considering the political dimension of the power relations.

Among the mentioned types, a hierarchy of goals is clearly visible: while the moral type of global citizenship education cares for every human being, humanity and the planet, the socio-political concept is focused on empowerment, equality, political change, and social justice in order to realise a morally better world. It seems to Veugelers that teachers are more focused on education for moral global citizenship and that they avoid political criticism; they find it risky, thinking that the school should not deal with it and remain “neutral.”<sup>35</sup> Theorists emphasise that citizenship education should find a balance between the promotion of human rights and democracy, on the one hand, and the promotion of economic equality, social justice, equal power relations and respect for different cultures, on the other; they point out that social, cultural, moral, and political aspects of citizenship should be connected.<sup>36</sup>

Empirical research show that new generations of young people are more open to contact with other cultures, religions, social groups, and lifestyles than previous generations.<sup>37</sup> The PISA

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ibid., 295.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ibid., 296; Robert JACKSON – Karen STEELE, *Problems and Possibilities for Relating Citizenship Education and Religious Education in Europe*: Paper presented at the Teaching for Tolerance, Respect and Recognition in Relation with Religion or Belief in Oslo, 2-5 September 2004, The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Oslo, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. SHELL DEUTSCHLAND HOLDING (ed.), *Jugend 2019. Eine Generation meldet sich zu Wort*. 18. Shell Jugendstudie, Konzeption und Koordination: Mathias ALBERT, Klaus HURRELMANN, Gudrun QUENZEL & KANTAR, Beltz, Weinheim, 2019, 18.

research in Germany revealed, for example, that students have a fair amount of knowledge about other cultures as well as global and intercultural problems, but that it is not accompanied by adequate motivation to act for a fairer world; according to this research, it is relatively low when compared internationally.<sup>38</sup>

In order to overcome prejudices, it is necessary to create meeting places with the otherness of other people, and to enable young people to have contacts based on positive and equal relations,<sup>39</sup> where differences will be perceived and valued as opportunities and possibilities. The school can become such a meeting place based on the recognition of diversity and reflection on its own mechanisms of exclusion, sensitive to the issues of power.<sup>40</sup>

It is also necessary to realise that differences arise from social conditions and social attributions. Awareness of the political framework of dealing with differences protects religious education from ideologising differences and from assuming a dominant role in the egalitarian dealing with differences, because many problems must be solved structurally and politically.<sup>41</sup> That is why it is necessary to take into account the real possibilities of what global citizenship education could really achieve,<sup>42</sup> although this does not mean giving up citizenship education and working for the common good motivated by the Christian faith.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Mirjam WEIS – Kristina REISS – Julia MANG – Anja SCHIEPE-TISKA – Jennifer DIEDRICH – Nina ROCZEN – Nina JUDE, *Global competence in PISA 2018. Einstellungen von Fünfzehnjährigen in Deutschland zu globalen und interkulturellen Themen*, Waxmann, Münster, 2020, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Alexander YENDELL, *Young People and Religious Diversity: A European Perspective, with Particular Reference to Germany*, in: Elisabeth ARWECK (ed.), *Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity*, Routledge, London, 2018, 275-288, here 275.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ralf GAUS, *Global (Citizenship) Education...*, 183-185.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Religionspädagogische Denkformen. Eine kritische Revision im Kontext von Heterogenität*, Herder, Freiburg-Basel-Weien, 2019, 137.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ralf GAUS, *Global (Citizenship) Education...*, 181.

#### **4. The Compatibility of Religious Education and Citizenship Education, and the Specific Contribution of Confessional Religious Education to Citizenship Education**

The work of the European Wergeland Center (EWC), based in Oslo and founded in 2008 by the Council of Europe together with Norway as a resource centre for education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship, was rather important for the linking of religious education and citizenship education in Europe.<sup>43</sup> The centre organised discussions among experts in religious and civic education, initiated research and developed ideas and solutions for policies and practices in the field of connecting religious education and education for democratic citizenship.<sup>44</sup> Experts have noticed that the non-confessional model of religious education, i.e., learning about religions and learning from religions (which values the experiences and contributions of students), can be well connected with the goals of citizenship education through an interpretive and dialogic approach. However, they point out that the goals of confessional religious education can also be well connected with these goals, as long as it is not narrowly confessional and exclusive.<sup>45</sup> In most European countries where confessional religious education is carried out in public schools today, it mostly meets the criteria of an open religious education in which the goals of citizenship education can be easily integrated.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. The European Wergeland Centre, in: <https://theewc.org/> (12 June 2022).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Robert JACKSON, Religious Diversity and Education for Democratic Citizenship: The Contribution of the Council of Europe, in: Kath ENGBRETSON – Marian DE SOUZA – Gloria DURKA – Liam GEARON (eds.), *International Handbook of Inter-religious Education. Part One*, Springer, Dordrecht – Heidelberg – London – New York, 2010, 1121-1151, here 1139.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Robert JACKSON – Karen STEELE, *Problems and Possibilities for Relating Citizenship Education and Religious Education in Europe*, 10-11.



Religious education and education for responsible citizenship are not only compatible; they also question and enrich each other. While citizenship education, for example, provides the facts about the state of a certain society and the world, religious education introduces its own specific perspective, based on an inclusive Christian anthropology, on the intrinsic social dimension of faith<sup>46</sup> and the Christian vision of a peaceful, just, and inclusive world. This perspective is based on the relational understanding of God in Christian theology and the relational understanding of human in Christian anthropology. It is visible in the overall concept of faith and the deep connection of love for God and neighbours in the biblical faith and Christian tradition.<sup>47</sup>

The essence of Jesus' message is living brotherhood and sisterhood and a new morality centred around the culture of mercy. From its very beginnings, Christianity has shown an egalitarian universalism that no longer distinguishes between Jews and Greeks, free people and slaves, men and women (cf. *Gal* 3:28), and that does not discriminate against people on any basis. Christianity has also demonstrated the ability of inculturation, i.e., of proclaiming the gospel in all cultures, languages, and different ways of thinking.

Today, the need to integrate citizenship education is discussed even in the context of pastoral work with youth and adults outside of school.<sup>48</sup> Today's demands of citizenship education offer

<sup>46</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium. Apostolic exhortation of the Holy Father Francis to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world* (24 November 2013), in: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html) (12 May 2022), chapter IV.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, *Učiti živjeti zajedno*, 79-87.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Friedrich SCHWEITZER, Education for Civil Society and Democracy in Non-formal Programs of Religious Education: The Example of Confirmation Work, in: Alexander UNSER (ed.), *Religion, Citizenship and Democracy*, Cham, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021, 39-54; Kerstin MENZEL, Contributing to Local and Civil Society: Explorations for a Context-Sensitive and Public Character of Pastoral Ministry, in: Alexander UNSER (ed.), *Religion, Citizenship and Democracy*, 55-74.

Christian contents new incentives to bring forth the strength and richness of faith in the context of new social issues and cultural challenges. On the other hand, the Christian faith provides a new dimension to the goals and contents of citizenship education, because in religious education, students encounter issues of civic education from the perspective of the Christian faith.

This can be demonstrated on an example. It is about the recognition of equal rights of persons and communities, which is certainly one of the important topics that citizenship education deals with. Differences that mark the identities are important for social inclusion. Egalitarian recognition of identity and otherness is illuminated in various school subjects from the psychological, pedagogical, philosophical, ethical, sociological, political, cultural, and other perspectives, simultaneously questioning institutional injustices, power relations and mechanisms of exclusion,<sup>49</sup> even the ones occurring in the school and the learning process.<sup>50</sup> The various dimensions of recognition that have been identified in socio-philosophical discussions, reflected in a person's positive attitude towards him/herself in the form of self-respect, self-confidence, and self-esteem,<sup>51</sup> can be extended to another important theological dimension, and that is self-acceptance that results from recognition.<sup>52</sup> It is about a person's self-acceptance in the midst of his or her own human sinfulness,

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, Theory and Practice of Recognition and its Meaning for and in Religious Education, in: *ET-Studies. Journal of the European Society for Catholic Theology*, 12 (2021) 2, 259-277; Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, Pedagogy of Recognition and Religious Education in Schools, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion? Actes du colloque international du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda*, Editions Jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 285-304.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Krassimir STOJANOV, *Bildung und Anerkennung. Soziale Voraussetzungen von Selbst-Entwicklung und Welt-Erschließung*, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Axel HONNETH, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M., 1992, 8; 148; Nancy FRASER – Axel HONNETH, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, Verso, London, 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Markus KNAPP, *Verantwortetes Christsein heute. Theologie zwischen Metaphysik und Postmoderne*, Herder, Freiburg, 2006.

shortcomings and wounds, and in spite of them, and this self-acceptance is a consequence of God's gift of unconditional love and forgiveness. Using the example of the evangelical parable of the prodigal son (*Lk 15:11-32*) as a paradigm of the Christian understanding of recognition as a God's gift, one can see that it includes an emotional dimension, substantial recognition as a son and social recognition, which is manifested in the preparation of a feast.<sup>53</sup>

## 5. Methods of Education for Responsible Citizenship in Religious Education

In achieving its goals, religious education uses an already developed, rich repertoire of methods that are mostly common to the socio-humanistic group of subjects.<sup>54</sup> Catholic religious education mediates knowledge about the human being and life in a community, drawing from the great treasure of Jesus' teachings and actions, his person and mystery, from the Holy Scriptures, and from the living tradition built upon them and the contemporary life of the Church. Religious education touches on many topics important for citizenship education, such as the values and principles of common life, the common good, equality, justice, solidarity, peace, the protection of human and civil rights of all, especially the rights of the weak, responsibility towards the created world etc. Knowledge is imparted by important texts and supporting information, but also by documents, testimonies

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Veronika HOFFMANN, *Skizzen zu einer Theologie der Gabe. Rechtfertigung - Opfer - Eucharistie - Gottes- und Nächstenliebe*, Herder, Freiburg, 2013, 315-346; Stefan ALTMEYER, A theory of recognition as framework for religious education : reading Axel Honneth from a pedagogical and theological perspective. In: *Journal of beliefs & values* 39 (2018) 4, 416-428; cited according URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2018.1442979> (1-23).

<sup>54</sup> All the ideas and suggestions presented here derive from my own practice and knowledge, which I have been mediating for many years within the framework of courses in the field of religious pedagogy and didactics.

and examples of acts of individual Christians and Christian communities for people, human rights, life, justice and peace, dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation, both on an individual and community level.

The texts that are used as sources are: biblical texts, various texts from the Christian tradition of certain epochs and cultural-geographical areas, texts of church teaching, i.e., the teaching of councils and synods, documents issued by popes, bishops and corresponding bodies, especially documents related to the Christian anthropology, the social dimension of faith and the social doctrine of the Church, but also on the theology of creation, ecumenism, dialogue with other religions, the history and the present of the Church, including a critical attitude towards its wounds and dark moments in history and the present. The method of working on the text requires careful reading, analysis, discovery, critical observation, comparison, discussion, connection etc.

In addition to the texts, there are other supporting informative materials, stories, testimonials, films, photos, digital sources and more. Movies and other video material on various topics related to citizenship education are an important source of information and an occasion for discussion and confrontation. Questions and tasks for working with those texts or talking and discussing those movies should help to discover faith as a resource for a successful life in the community, and, from a Christian perspective, to notice the structures of sin as barriers that prevent participation and equality, to reveal power relations and the rule of egoism. Photos found in religious textbooks or used in classes visually convey information, arouse emotions, evoke experiences and relationships, and convey values. Students should also be taught a critical attitude towards the choice of photos for certain topics, in relation to the emotions they arouse, and to what extent they promote or do not promote a dignified attitude towards the

depicted persons, phenomena and social groups, especially the vulnerable. This is especially visible when people from different social classes, members of other religions and worldviews, members of other races, nations, genders, etc. are shown. Students can be encouraged to find and choose appropriate photos themselves and justify their choices.

Since *knowledge* can lead to different forms of action, and students often do not see the gap between knowledge and their own *behaviour*,<sup>55</sup> it is necessary to work on motivation. Emotions and subjective norms play an important role in motivation, and they should be revealed, confronted and questioned in order to break down prejudices, build positive attitudes and learn to accept personal responsibility for the well-being of the community and the building of a better and more just world. Active learning and teaching methods serve to raise awareness about problems in society and the world, but also about one's own behaviour.

Teachers should encourage learning through independent research, analysis and evaluation of information, which gives students the experience that values are not imposed on them, but are discovered based on different sources, communication, insight and practical wisdom. It is important that students question their experiences in dialogue with others and confront their attitudes and opinions; according to the socio-constructivist understanding of learning, dialogue plays a very important role in learning. Students can present the results of their own, individual or collective research in different ways, with the help of posters with text and photos, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, a "media report", a stage performance, a video presentation etc. At the same time, such presentation helps students not only to master information and technical means, but also to develop the skill of communication and public speaking.

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ralf GAUS, *Global (Citizenship) Education...*, 184.

Methods of drama pedagogy,<sup>56</sup> such as role-playing, which revives and actualises biblical pericopes, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan, the widow asking for help, the report on Jesus' meeting with Zacchaeus, the pericope of the prophet Nathan and King David and others also serve as forms of experiential learning. Before the stage improvisation of a biblical text, students analyse the event, occasion, place and time, characters and their motivations, as well as the mutual relationships, causes and consequences of their actions. Students should try to empathise with someone else's situation, and role-playing can also take place in the form of pantomime, a frozen scene or a stopped scene that clearly shows, for example, the attitude of the Pharisee and the attitude of the tax collector in the temple as an attitude before God that has social consequences.

Students should learn from everyday examples and be encouraged to discover where and to what extent they recognise that certain values and processes have been or have not been accomplished in their families, parish communities, (Catholic) schools or other Christian communities. Teachers can also develop rules of classroom behaviour together with students, providing them with an opportunity to discuss the consequences of violating the rules, with special regard to insults based on gender, physical appearance, origin, disability and other characteristics, as well as the consequences of damaging other people's property, irresponsible behaviour to environment etc. Students should be encouraged to find their own solutions for certain problems and situations. The brainstorming method is an exercise that can be used to quickly get many ideas on a given topic, proposals or suggestions for solving a problem, actions, titles, etc., which can serve as an incentive for individual and joint action. Older

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Snježana ČUBRILO – Vladimir KRUŠIĆ – Maša RIMAC JURINOVIĆ (eds.), *Odgoj za građanstvo, odgoj za život. Priručnik aktivnih metoda za građanski odgoj i obrazovanje s primjerima dobre prakse*, Hrvatski centar za dramski odgoj and Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2017.

students can also organise workshops on specific topics, such as gender equality or minority rights from a biblical perspective etc.

Study visits to individual religious, social, or cultural institutions can also be organised as part of religious education, after which students can write a report on the visit. In Catholic schools, projects such as social practice/service learning (which is a form of prepared, monitored and evaluated stay of students in social institutions) can also be organised and connected to the classes, including religious education. Another option is the organisation of peer learning assistance provided to students who have learning difficulties or come from other, sometimes disadvantaged, backgrounds.

The skills that should be developed within citizenship education are focused on critical thinking that is based on ethical principles and the development of the communication skills needed for social and political participation. These are, above all, mediation skills, the art of peacemaking and peaceful conflict resolution, and the art of solving social problems through democratic principles. "Communication processes and negotiation skills prepare for successful action, to identify problems in the community, research, propose solutions and engage in various activities."<sup>57</sup> These skills are encouraged through the forms of group, cooperative, and experiential learning in the school and outside the school, through which students will be able to learn about community participation and be encouraged to react to social exclusion. Students are brought into situations where they need to describe, analyse, interpret, judge and resolve moral and other doubts, relying on ethical and democratic principles. This is how they learn critical thinking and shape their own *attitudes*.

<sup>57</sup> MINISTARSTVO ZNANOSTI I OBRAZOVANJA, *Kurikulum međupredmetne teme Građanski odgoj i obrazovanje za osnovne i srednje škole u Republici Hrvatskoj* (29. 1. 2019), in: <https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Publikacije/Medupredmetne/Kurikulum%20medupredmetne%20teme%20Gradanski%20odgoj%20i%20obrazovanje%20za%20osnovne%20i%20srednje%20skole.pdf> l (1 July 2022), 10.



## 6. Achievement of Citizenship Education Goals in Catholic Religious Education in Croatia

In Croatia, as in most European countries that have confessional religious education in schools, Catholic religious education is not narrowly confessional, but following the Church renewal that began with the Second Vatican Council, it is conceived dialogically so that students are introduced to the Christian faith in dialogue with the contemporary world and thinking, and in dialogue with other Christian confessions, religions and worldviews.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it is compatible with schools in a democratic and plural society that respects diversity, capable of establishing correlations with many subjects, including citizenship education, and able to contribute to its goals, in case that the subject is organised cross-curricularly.

In Croatia, the Programme of cross-curricular and interdisciplinary content of citizenship education was adopted as a framework for its experimental cross-curricular implementation in primary and secondary schools in the school year 2014-15. The adoption of the new Curriculum of the cross-curricular topic of citizenship education for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia made it a mandatory school subject on 29 January 2019.<sup>59</sup> The analysis of the experimental programme of citizenship education and the curricula for Catholic religious education from 2016 have shown that religious education and civic education have outcomes and contents that are highly

<sup>58</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO ZNANOSTI I OBRAZOVANJA, *Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Katolički vjeronauk za osnovne škole i gimnazije* (29. 1. 2019.), in: <https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Publikacije/Predmetni/Kurikulum%20nastavnog%20predmeta%20Katolicki%20vjeronauk%20za%20osnovne%20skole%20i%20gimnazije.pdf> (1 July 2022).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO ZNANOSTI I OBRAZOVANJA, *Odluka o donošenju Kurikuluma za međupredmetnu temu Građanski odgoj i obrazovanje za osnovne i srednje škole u Republici Hrvatskoj* (25. 1. 2019), in: [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2019\\_01\\_10\\_217.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2019_01_10_217.html) (1 July 2022).



compatible, from 42% to 64%, depending on the individual primary and secondary school classes.<sup>60</sup>

Research in elementary schools conducted by Batarelo et al. in 2010 showed that religious education in elementary schools in Croatia is one of the subjects that most promotes the democratic features of classes, which are manifested in dealing with the topics of responsibility, peace and coexistence in diversity, in connecting teaching topics with the everyday life of students and encouraging students to freely express their own opinions.<sup>61</sup>

In the research carried out by Jeniđe Maroević-Kulaga as part of her doctoral thesis from 2016, the study of high school seniors attending general grammar schools (gymnasiums) in the city of Zagreb regarding the contribution of religious education to active citizenship, showed that students notice how religious education mediates all important values of active citizenship, but more in principle, on a theoretical level, and less at the level of practical application and implementation of those principles and values.<sup>62</sup> My research among religious education teachers in Croatia, which was conducted in 2015, showed the same in relation to the egalitarian appreciation of differences in religious education, which points to the need to update theological knowledge and strengthen the didactic competences of teachers.<sup>63</sup> Research conducted on students shows, according to Maroević-Kulaga, “a high level of openness of students on a general level when, for example, the attitude towards other religions is

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Jeniđe MAROEVIĆ-KULAGA, *Povezanost obrazovanja za demokratsko ili aktivno građanstvo s nastavom katoličkog vjeronauka*. Doktorski rad, Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2016, 212, in: <http://darhiv.ffzg.unizg.hr/id/eprint/7416/1/DOK.%20RAD%20%28%20J.%20Maroevic-Kulaga%29%20-%20FINAL.pdf> (3 July 2022).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Ivana BATARELO – Benjamin ČULIG – Jagoda NOVAK – Tomislav REŠKOVAC – Vedrana SPAJIĆ-VRKAŠ, *Demokracija i ljudska prava u osnovnim školama: teorija i praksa*, Centar za ljudska prava, Zagreb, 2010, 88.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Jeniđe MAROEVIĆ-KULAGA, *Povezanost obrazovanja za demokratsko ili aktivno građanstvo s nastavom katoličkog vjeronauka*, 214.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, *Odnos vjeroučiteljica i vjeroučitelja u Hrvatskoj prema razlikama u razredu i nastavi*, in: *Crkva u svijetu*, 51 (2016) 1, 7-34, here 26, 33.

questioned. At the same time, students are less open on a more concrete level, when it comes to the question of the salvation of an individual who is not a believer and salvation according to the criterion of mercy towards one's neighbour."<sup>64</sup> Moreover, this research shows that students who are more religiously exclusive and for whom religion is the life force are less accepting towards people of other religions and beliefs.<sup>65</sup> It is obvious that the families and social environments of students as well as the subjective theories of religious education teachers also influence the way and direction of achieving its goals.

The area in which students see the greatest contribution of religious education to the realisation of the values of a democratic society is the promotion of social values that are also Christian, namely solidarity, justice, common good, equality, non-violence, protection of the weak, though again, there is a visible gap, for example, between the promotion of acceptance and respect of discriminated groups in principle and active suppression of their discrimination.<sup>66</sup> Deficits on a practical level are compensated to some extent by the atmosphere in the classes of religious education, which is mostly friendly, cooperative and democratic, and by the characteristics of religious education teachers, such as objectivity in assessment, respect for students' opinions and openness to different opinions, which educate students for democratic values and the acquisition of democratic skills.<sup>67</sup>

The author concludes: "There is especially possibility for changes in the teaching of religious education that would directly or indirectly contribute to a greater openness of students to democratic values. For example, in religious education, diverse

<sup>64</sup> Jenide MAROEVIĆ-KULAGA, *Povezanost obrazovanja za demokratsko ili aktivno građanstvo s nastavom katoličkog vjeronauka*, 311.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 313.

learning and teaching methods should be used more, subject content should be more connected with the values of a democratic society, students should be made more aware of the interdependence of Christian and democratic values, they should be more encouraged to accept certain sensitive social groups, especially homosexuals, and critical thinking and judgement should be developed more, as well as the encouragement to assume responsibility for taking an active role to the benefit of everyone in their community and country. In this way, religious education would contribute, not only to building open, socially sensitive and solidary citizens - which was shown in this research, but also to building critical, emancipated and active citizens."<sup>68</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Civic and citizenship education, which has been carried out in schools in Europe and elsewhere in the world in the last decades, seeks to respond to the need to train children and young people active citizenship, inclusion in civil society and responsible co-shaping of communities as well as the world as a whole. Globalisation processes, supported by the rapid development of digital technologies, have contributed to the interconnectedness of the world, which requires citizenship education that must include a global dimension. Different concepts of citizenship and the implementation of civic and citizenship education are encountered today in teaching practice as well as in literature. There are certain limitations for education for responsible citizenship in schools if the private, family and broader social lives of students do not support democratic and social values and practices that should be promoted by citizenship education. Nevertheless, the efforts of educational policies to promote

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

active citizenship through education systems, in which religious education also participates, should be positively evaluated.

From a Christian and specifically Catholic perspective, responsible action in society is a component of the mission of every Christian in the world. Catholic religious education is compatible with the goals of citizenship education and its various components, from promoting human rights and respecting other cultures, building constructive relationships in the community, opposing discrimination, promoting social justice and peace to the protection of the environment. All the basic contents and messages of the Christian faith have an intrinsic social dimension, and the Christian faith, for its part, provides a new dimension to the goals of citizenship education that results from God's grace and unconditional love, reflected in the Christian's total existence and all relationships.

Religious education can promote civic competences through various methods of active and experiential teaching and learning that encourage critical thinking, personal growth and maturation, practicing social skills and taking responsibility in the community and for it. The fact that the concrete religious education practice shows certain deficits in terms of citizenship education is an additional incentive for its inclusion in daily religious educational and didactic decisions. Although many problems must be solved structurally and politically, religious education and the school as a whole, with their overall value system or school culture, should make their contribution to education for responsible citizenship.

# Religious Education and the Challenges of the African Political Reality

*Gaston Ogui Cossi*

## Abstract

*As part of humanity's common heritage, Christianity plays a special role in religious education within families, schools and in society. And yet, the contribution of endogenous religions in the construction of the African personality is such that no serious educational project should be embarked upon without taking into account the achievements of these religious traditions. In the complexity of the contemporary world, how does one reconcile, with regards to religious education, the requirement of the Catholic faith and the concerns around the relevance to the African context? Agreeing with Joseph Ratzinger that religion is the soul of cultures, we propose a harmonious synthesis of these two educational systems as possible solutions towards a real encounter with the other and a possible path to tackling the challenges of the African political reality.*

**Keywords:** *Education, Initiation, Interculturality, Politics, Religious.*

## Introduction

The African socio-political landscape reveals enormous gaps between the legitimate expectations of the people and the sad spectacle offered by African political actors. While with the advent of democracy in Africa, around the 1990s, we thought

we were entirely free of the collapse of repeated coups d'état, the 21st century seems to be returning, to the surprise of all, to the politics of constitutional revisions and its share of coups d'état in all their forms: Burkina Faso, the Republic of Guinea, the Republic of Mali....

In an article evocatively entitled: "The return of coups d'état in Africa", Niagalé Bagayoko and Marc-André Boisvert express this sad reality well: "From August 2020 to January 2022, four coups d'état have taken place in French-speaking Africa in Mali, Chad, Guinea and Burkina Faso. Against a backdrop of democratic disillusionment, they are explained in particular by the difficulty of governments to curb the advance of armed jihadist groups."<sup>1</sup>

One is tempted to ask: "Whose turn is it?" The countries that have been spared so far do not seem to be immune to armed conflicts if the same causes produce the same effects.

The legitimate question that many are asking themselves focuses on the quality of the education received by the actors of the African political scene of yesterday and today. Related to this question is the place of religion in this education. In other words, can religious education help to meet the challenges posed by the African political reality of today?

Our heuristic hypothesis is that religious education should be utterly reimagined so that it can provide the African society and political scene with new types of citizens that the African continent and all of humanity need for resilient development.

Our method will be phenomenological, inductive and deductive.

<sup>1</sup> Niagalé BAGAYOKO – Marc-André BOISVERT, Le retour des coups d'État en Afrique, in <https://esprit.presse.fr/ressources/portraits/marc-andre-boisvert-8962> (accessed on 15 July 2022). "According to data collected by Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne, 45 of 54 African countries have suffered at least one attempted coup since 1950. If we focus only on successful coups, those in which the perpetrators stayed in power for at least a week, that number drops to 36, or two-thirds of the countries in Africa." in <https://projects.voanews.com/african-coups/french.html> (accessed on 16 July 2022).

## 1. Radioscopy of the Political Reality in Africa

From the observation of the African political scene, we can deduce that everything happens as if there were an epistemological short-circuit in the actions of political actors. Indeed, the African political scene is characterised by ambivalent or even ambiguous behaviour on one hand, and occult behaviour on the other.

In order to better understand what is happening in Africa in terms of education and of political reality, a conceptual clarification may be necessary first.

### 1.1. A Clarification of Concepts

Etymologically, to educate comes from *educare* and means “to lead someone from point A to point B”. It is a noble mission that falls not only on parents but also on any person invested with a mandate to transform an individual into human capital.<sup>2</sup> Education is a delicate task and must be adapted to the socio-cultural and religious context of the person who is both the object and the subject. This is why we speak of traditional education, modern education, religious education and political education.

Traditional education is rooted in the values specific to each group of individuals and is transmitted from generation to generation through rites, myths and initiation. The latter are agents of socialisation characterised by tests of endurance and self-control.

In Africa, with colonisation, traditional education often gave way to modern education. Schools replace the initiation, and the socialisation of the individual uses methods and values foreign

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Barthélémy C. Dena ZINZINDOHOUE, *De l'esprit de l'éducation fôn à une éthique de la responsabilité dans l'esprit de Jésus-Christ* (Dissertation doctorale), Alfonsiana, Rome, 1990.

to the African culture. The consequences of this acculturation are enormous on the social and political life of the individual.

By religious education, we mean both the education offered by endogenous religions and exogenous religions. The education provided by endogenous religions is in line with traditional education. That provided by exogenous religions (Christianity and Islam), are closer to modern education.

## ***1.2. Ambivalence and Ambiguity in the Behaviour of African Political Leaders***

The construction of a performant and efficient human capital for our societies has always been the preoccupation of various institutions, both secular and religious. It involves what can be called the “construction of a subjectivity” likely to respond to the challenges of a society confronted with changes requiring new positions. In this sense, religious education is one of the privileged means of producing informed men and women who engage in politics with full knowledge of the facts and who are able to bring added value to the running of State affairs and organisational structures of any kind. If done well, this education can lead to qualitative change.<sup>3</sup>

Freed, in principle, from superstitious behaviours, by their classical education, African political leaders do not hesitate to resort to Marabouts and Gurus in political games. The “Banamè phenomenon” in Benin is far from being an isolated case. In Côte d’Ivoire, some people have attributed, rightly or wrongly, the stubbornness of Laurent Gbagbo to give up power, when everything pointed to his apparent failure in the war between him and Alassane Ouattara, to a Guru who would have promised

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Afise ADAMON, *Le Renouveau démocratique au Bénin: La Conférence Nationale des Forces Vives et la période de Transition*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 1995. Read also: François CONSTANTIN – Christian COULON, *Religion et transition démocratique en Afrique*, Karthala, Paris, 1997.



him victory without condition. Hence the slogan of the Gbagbo camp: "We win or we win!" Examples can be seen everywhere.

The truth is that the interference of the religious in African politics is nothing less than the result of a cerebral education without taking into account the socio-cultural reality in which the actors of African political life are immersed. It is therefore understandable that many of them who declare themselves Christians or Muslims are now easy prey to esoteric and sectarian groups.

A new phenomenon in the existential choice of African political leaders is the "initiation into the Fa"<sup>4</sup> as a means of protection and political ascension. In our opinion, the amalgam or even incoherence of an individual's behaviour in adulthood is, without any doubt, the failure of a poorly devised education.

One of the logical consequences of this disembodied education is the recourse to satanic practices in the run-up to presidential or legislative elections. The example of ritual sacrifices for power is very illustrative of the ambivalence and ambiguity of the behaviour of African political leaders.

The culmination of the ambivalent and/or ambiguous behaviour of men and women involved in African politics is what is called witchcraft behaviour.

### **1.3. Witchcraft Behaviours**

It is common to see recourse to the forces of the invisible and to witchcraft practices in most Sub-Saharan countries capitals. It is also true that witchcraft is part of what some people call the "little secrets of the palace". The King was supposed to be the greatest sorcerer not only of the court but also of the Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The "Fa" is a polysemous reality. For some, it is a science, the science of predicting the future, while for others it is a deity. The Yoruba considers the Fa to be the "mouth of the deities".

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Maurice AHANHANZO GLELE, *Le Danxome: du pouvoir Aja à la nation Fon*, Nubia,

That is why, before gaining political power, it is imperative to be initiated into the science and practice of witchcraft.<sup>6</sup>

Witchcraft is however only tangible in a symbolic way and in a symbolic universe. This is indeed the conviction of Vincent Mulago who maintains that in witchcraft, “the symbolised being is so present and united to the symbol, in the operative order at least, that it becomes possible for him to exert his action and his influence, as if space and time did not exist. In this way, its action can reach anyone who makes contact with the symbol. The words spoken, the object worn or simply touched, the acts imitated are in no way the cause of the effect produced, but only points of contact with the power represented, vital references, through which the being symbolised immediately and directly exerts its beneficial or harmful influence on the one who uses the symbol.”<sup>7</sup>

In this sense, what is the advantage of being initiated into witchcraft? In the opinion of several political actors, witchcraft would be a source of power which would put the witch above others. In our opinion, embarking on the path of witchcraft or developing a witch-like behaviour in oneself, is entering a dead-end street. Hence the necessity of an enlightened education as a construction of human capital.

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Paris, 1974. See also: Thomas BIERSCHEK – Jean-Pierre OLIVIER DE SARDAN, *Les pouvoirs au village: Le Bénin rural entre démocratisation et décentralisation*, Karthala, Paris, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> There are now many who engage in practices that are not subject to much criticism in order to establish their political power. One is tempted to ask with Moussa Konaté: *Is Black Africa cursed?* Cf. Moussa KONATÉ, *L’Afrique noire est-elle maudite?*, Fayard, Paris, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent MULAGO, *Dialectique existentielle des Bantu et sacramentalisme*, in: CENTRE CATHOLIQUE DES INTELLECTUELS FRANÇAIS, *Aspects de la culture noire*, Arthème Fayard, Paris, 1958, 157-158.

## **2. Three Registers of Religious Education that are not Integrated**

From the foregoing, it is clear that African political leaders are experiencing a kind of schizophrenia in terms of religious education. They are partly dipped in tradition, without mastering it, but claim to be totally free of tradition in favour of modernity,<sup>8</sup> in which they continue to seek themselves.

Hence the urgency to deconstruct the religious education in which African political actors are immersed, in order to reconstruct it in a way that respects both their particular identity and their openness to others.

### ***2.1. An Acculturated Religious Education***

One of the characteristics of African religious education is its collective and especially communal character. The individual is a child of the village, educated by the whole village, the clan and the community.

Acculturated, i.e., deprived of the nourishing mother, which is the community culture, the individual appears like a fish drawn from the water and thrown on dry land. The consequence is clear: it is sudden death.

The acculturated individual is also threatened by death, not so much physical as social. Acculturated religious education is lame, inconsistent and irrelevant. This is precisely what Benoît Kouakou Oi Kouakou recognises when he writes:

“The relevance, quality and value of traditional African education can also be appreciated in its specific characteristics. Education has a collective and social character which makes it the responsibility not only of the family, but also of the

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jean-François BAYART (ed.), *Religion et Modernité politique en Afrique Noire: Dieu pour tous et chacun pour soi*, Karthala, Paris, 1993.

clan, the village, the ethnic group and the community. As the child is considered a common good, he or she is subject to the educational action of all: he or she can be sent on an errand, advised, corrected or punished by all the adults in the community. It seeks to make the individual an integrated and accepted member of the group. An individual who integrates the values of the community and conforms to them.”<sup>9</sup>

An addition to this is the malaise of an education based solely on the search for meaning.

## ***2.2. Education Based on the Search for Meaning***

Africa’s encounter with the West has given rise to forms of socialisation among Africans that often exclude the prerequisites of education as they appear in the traditional religion. Indeed, although they have diplomas, most non-initiated African elite are nevertheless perceived by initiates as minors or, at most, “adolescents”.

We would therefore like to focus a little on this concept of initiation, not so much in its ritual form as in its existential form. In fact, the adult man or woman, likely to hold a political position in traditional African society, is the initiate. The initiate is precisely the one who has received a religious education encompassing trials, bravery and courage. Hence the intimate link of education with social life and its collective and social character.

If it is thus true that education, especially the religious one, is a space of socialisation of the individual, what is to be said about those who exclude themselves from the systems of socialisation predefined by their group? By evoking initiation here, we plead for the integration of the history of the African people, the African culture and customs, which simultaneously combine respect of

<sup>9</sup> Benoît Kouakou Oi KOUAKOU, *Le métier d’Homme. Pour la formation, l’éducation, le développement intégral des jeunes et acteurs sociaux*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2021, 97-98.

the common good, politeness, audacity and courage, probity and respect of a given word and several other virtues which are missing from today's life and existence of our African contemporaries.

The insertion of these virtues in the academic programmes and their transmission through teaching, seems to be another form of initiation. This one is not necessarily a ritual, but can produce the same effects and even more than the primary and traditional initiation of our ancestors.

The examination of initiation in the traditional educational system allows us to grasp its relevance to a complex and trans-cultural world.

### **2.3. Education for the Management of Pathos**

In spite of its relevance, initiation also remains marked by a particularism that is difficult to universalise. Consequently, in the present world's complexity, the educational challenge will not consist of substituting traditional initiation with the Western educational system that religious education (Christian or Muslim) conveys. It runs the risk of Africa closing in on itself.

What seems possible is a complementary (not hybrid) approach that combines Western education with traditional African education. In this sense, the intervention of *La Grande Royale* in *L'Aventure ambiguë* seems to reveal this complementarity when she says: "Samba Diallo must go to the school of the Whites to learn how to bind wood to wood." It is not a question of denying one's culture. It is about being firmly rooted in it while opening up to other cultures. It is the educational approach that will be able to impact socially and politically the lives of Africans, enabling a real development based on ethics of virtues.

Moreover, in order for it to be up to the challenges that await men and women involved in politics, these new forms of

socialisation inherited from the West and Christianity will have to prove their capacity to face the pathos of existence.

Indeed, the new communities that are growing in our capitals like mushrooms, not only invite themselves to the debate, but above all claim to give an adequate answer to different problems left aside by the first evangelisation.

Basically, *Edouard Adè* recognises that what is reinvested here is what the first mission left aside by privileging the path of the search for meaning: “the path of the search for power. It is in this perspective that we find today a revival of the traditional practice on the axis of *Fa-Lègba*. But in reality, the search for meaning and power is transversal to the axis of religion and the axis of mantic. If the search for meaning in Vodun is expressed in the horizon of the ancestral memorial, the search for power is crystallised in the magico-sorcerer. On the mantic axis, however, the search for meaning is given in the wisdom of the *Fa* and the search for power in the *kennensi* and the *gbaadu*.”<sup>10</sup>

As clear from the above, many challenges of the reality of African political life with regard to religious education already arise.

### **3. Reconstructing Religious Education for a New Political Order in Africa**

Being religiously educated would mean being able to bring something more to the political order and to the challenge of all nations. More than a challenge, we are dealing here with an interpellation that religious education throws at us. Two essential challenges address the contemporary African political reality: the challenge of identity and the challenge of otherness.

<sup>10</sup> Édouard ADÉ, De qui Mawu est-il le nom ? Du Dieu du christianisme ou du Dieu du Vodun?, in: Gaston OGUI COSSI – Christiane BAKA – Pierre DIARRA – Paulin POUCOUTA (eds.), *De qui Dieu est-il le nom? Penser le divin*, Karthala, Paris, 2021, 358.

### 3.1. Challenges of Cultural Identity

The question here relates to being fully oneself in order to be efficient on the political scene. This presupposes that religious education integrates all the values proper to the individual who is likely to become a political actor of tomorrow.

To be oneself, it is important to establish a good individual representation. In such a representation, "the elements of experience are kept in perspective with one another and their whole is oriented in accordance with the mind's eye. Past, present and future no longer compete for the flow of consciousness. On the contrary, it is one and the same flow of consciousness that passes through all three but maintaining each of them in the place assigned to it by the will. In this way, the present finds its link and place in relation to the past and the future without losing its own mark as the present."<sup>11</sup>

Education aims therefore substantially at valuing the ends rather than the means, at promoting citizens who give precedence to substance over form, who rely on work and courage rather than on appearance and reputation, who prefer merit to popularity, who opt for courage and the ideal rather than for advantageous pragmatism, who choose to stand firm by their virtues rather than opportunistically following opinions, who cherish critical thought rather than the appearance and its consequences, the courage of work over begging.<sup>12</sup>

To transmit, through education, the values of the alliance, is it not to work for the emergence of a new type of citizen? An individual who accepts to integrate these values in their daily life becomes capable of bringing something more to the society

<sup>11</sup> Issiaka-Prosper L. LALÈYÊ, *Dynamique des moments de la construction de la subjectivité dans le vécu du négro-africain*, in: *Crise d'identité et éducation. Actes du colloque philosophique, 12-14 février, 2004*, ECB, Cotonou, 2007, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Roland GORI, *La fabrique des imposteurs*, Les Liens qui libèrent, Paris, 2013.

in which that individual lives, and consequently capable of being an opportunity for his society and for the world.

One of the tragedies of our sub-Saharan African countries lies in the fact that many men and women, and especially the youth, give up too hastily on efforts in favour of the easy way out. One of the most urgent tasks for the new society to be built is undoubtedly that of promoting individuals who are able to positively influence their environment and the people around them.

To awaken individuals to the representation that valourises them, is thus to give them the taste to be themselves both in their thoughts and in their actions, however, without removing them from the symbolic community that builds them and that they are called to build. In this sense, "the universal is going to be situated from the outset in the representations of the ordinary life, in the individual and collective actions which construct the reality not in a fixed, linear way but transversal, in a constant interactivity."<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the symbols (especially mottos and anthems) of our countries, whose importance for the emergence of a new order must be constantly recalled, the evocation of the deeds of true African national heroes can contribute by exciting and encouraging children and the youth to pursue the same ideals of bravery as they did. Griots, as the memory of the bravery of the heroes of our African histories, can play an eminent role in the transmission of these values and virtues. This means that it is no longer sufficient for our African countries to be satisfied with the models of men and women of dubious morality offered by soap operas. It is rather a question of inspiring children and young people with images that value honour, bravery, honesty and national pride, and not filling them with images of violence, sex and drugs.

<sup>13</sup> Francis GATTERRE, De l'idéalisation de l'interculturel à l'éducation aux valeurs de l'universel, in: Michel KOUAM – Christian MOFOR (ed.), *Philosophies et cultures africaines à l'heure de l'interculturalité, Anthologie, tome 2*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2011, 229.



However, how can we move from individual representation to collective or, more precisely, state representation?

### **3.2. Challenges of Otherness**

Is the question of religious education and political reality in Africa not, in truth, the question of the relationship with the other? Issiaka-Prosper Lalèyê is right when he writes: "From the individual representation centred around the individual to the collective representation, there is not a simple passage from the singular to the plural. A collective representation is not an individual representation multiplied by 'n' (...) a collective representation is the putting into perspective, by a collective of subjects, a set of images equally and unequally distributed between the past, the present and the more or less immediate future."<sup>14</sup>

The collective representation is distinguished from the individual one by a trans-individual initiative which subjects all the individuals characterised by scattered wills to the same ideal which becomes the engine of their being, their living and their common action. In other words, the individual representation is characterised by an interiority in which the individual will is constrained only by the values chosen by oneself, whereas the collective representation is characterised by an exteriority in which the constraint can even require the renunciation of the individual's will for a higher good.

As already defined, the goal of education is fundamentally to awaken the individual to a representation that is a source of values and exemplary behaviour. In other words, it is essential to "chase the imposture" out of our society and our practices, in Roland Gori's terms, so that authentic men and women are born.

<sup>14</sup> Issiaka-Prosper LALÈYÊ, Dynamique des moments de la construction de la subjectivité dans le vécu du négro-africain, in: *Crise d'identité et éducation...*, 62.

This means that my culture contains, in a certain way, all the cultural values of humanity; this imposes on me the task to discover the condensation of all the cultural values of humanity in the culture of the other. Moreover, it is to say that the positive of a particular culture becomes the point of anchoring of the positive of any culture.

Also, the *res culturalis* is, therefore, this element, which is common to any culture and which, in this sense, transcends the closed particularism of any culture. A culture is only truly cultural in its intercultural openness or in its capacity to welcome other cultures with respect. The good news of interculturality is the proclamation of cultural complementarity as a celebration.<sup>15</sup>

In order that this celebration to take place, it is necessary to purify the memory that has been wounded by the weight of history and the vicissitude of life.

### **3.3. *The Purification of the Wounded Memory***

The reconciliation of African political leaders and personalities with their personal and collective history, thanks to an assumed religious education, must pass through the process of remembrance, memory and anamnesis. Memory of their distance from the original matrix of education. Memory of those whose successful religious education has shaped the spirit of their continent. Above all, anamnesis of the founding event of all religious education in Africa. As Paul Ricoeur elaborates so well: "The search for remembrance testifies indeed to a major purpose of the act of memory, namely to fight against oblivion, to snatch some snippets of memories from the 'rapacity' of time, from 'burial' in oblivion. It is not only the painfulness of the effort of memory which gives to the report its worried colouring, but the

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Anne-Sophie LAMINE, *La cohabitation des dieux : pluralité religieuse et laïcité*, PUF, Paris, 2004.

fear to have forgotten, to forget again, to forget tomorrow to fill such or such task; because tomorrow it would not be necessary to forget... to remember."

Not to forget to remember is the responsible attitude in the face of the imperatives of the contemporary world, which requires all nations to provide their cultural and religious contribution in the building of a new world.

It is fortunate that the Catholic Church in most of our countries, aware of this imperative, strives to be at the side of Christian citizens engaged in politics<sup>16</sup> through an attentive and dynamic chaplaincy.

## Conclusion

In all our educational efforts, especially religious ones, it is important to integrate the pathos of existence into all our discourses. A collective effort to purify the memory that has been wounded and sullied by historical tares would not go amiss in this project.

In order to achieve the new social order built on the new brotherhood, everyone is invited to work so that every culture is respected in its difference and specificity as the proper place of human blossoming. The reciprocal opening of cultures to each other is undoubtedly the guarantee and the condition of possibility of the true fruitfulness of an intercultural society in Africa and in the world. In other words, it is very important to:

- provide an efficient andragogy for adults by promoting the existing training centres such as the IAJP in Cotonou and the CERAP in Abidjan;

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jean-Claude DJEREKE, *L'engagement politique du clergé catholique en Afrique noire*, Karthala, Paris, 2001. See also: Denis MAUGENEST, *Vivre ensemble malgré tout... Initiation à la société politique*, CERAP, Abidjan, 2012.

- provide an appropriate pedagogy for the youth and even children. In this sense, awaken them to the significant symbols of their nation and Africa;
- introduce, in addition to the symbols of our countries, whose importance for the emergence – of a new order must constantly be recalled, the evocation of the deeds of true African national heroes which can contribute by exciting and encouraging children and the youth to pursue the same ideals of bravery.

# “The Right to have Rights” (Arendt): Human Rights and Religious Education

*Bernhard Grümm*

## **Abstract**

*The present contribution wants to make plausible the thesis that religious education can make a contribution to human rights education if it contributes critically-productively to the current discourse on human rights with the hope for God expressed in it, with the theology of the image of God and with the option for others articulated in it. From this theological and pedagogical approach to religious education, there is an inseparable, intrinsic connection between religious education and human rights education. It is about getting to know human rights, recognising human rights and developing the will to stand up for them on a universal scale, and finally to make human rights the maxim of one's own actions. In this way, it can become clear that human rights education must also be oriented towards the presupposed standard of freedom and justice in its form as a “language school of freedom”. For this reason, it must critically try to clarify the exclusions and disadvantages it has itself carried out in practice, which in principle contradict this concern.*

**Keywords:** *Religious education, human rights, justice, public, image of God.*

## Introduction

Currently there is a vibrant discourse about human rights. In philosophy, in social sciences or in the humanities their foundations, and the relationship between universality and particularity are discussed vividly.<sup>1</sup> But certain fundamental challenges also exist in the field of theology and of education. Theological justifications and interpretations of human rights have a difficult position in the current academic discourse. But how then can religious education actually provide a place for human rights education when religious perspectives on human rights are contested? Is this symptomatic of the failure of religious education to keep up with current developments? Or could human rights education provide a place for religious education to legitimise itself in the midst of pluralism and secularisation? However – on the other hand – aren't there some hidden problems which contradict the goal of human rights education? How can one deal with them? The thesis of this paper is:

Religious education can make a contribution to human rights education if it critically-productively contributes to the current discourse on human rights with the hope for God expressed in it, with the theology of the image of God and with the option for others articulated in it. From those theological and pedagogical approaches to religious education there is an inseparable, intrinsic connection between religious education and human rights education. These questions will be approached from five different angles:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Michelle BECKA, Menschenrechte, in: Marianne HEIMBACH-STEINS – Michelle BECKA – Johannes J. FRÜHBAUER – Gerhard KRUIP (eds.), *Christliche Sozialethik. Grundlagen – Kontexte – Themen. Ein Lehr- und Studienbuch*, Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg, 2022, 187-202; cf. Arnd POLLMANN, *Menschenrechte und Menschenwürde. Zur philosophischen Bedeutung eines revolutionären Projekts*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2022.

Firstly, the current debate regarding human rights will be outlined. Secondly, the human rights issue will be looked at exclusively and thoroughly in the context of education.

Thirdly, the idea of justice as a background to human rights will be discussed. Fourthly, human rights education will be substantiated with the help of the concept "Learning to be just". And finally, future prospects which also deal with the dialectic of human rights education will also be discussed.

## **1. Aporetics of the Human Rights Discourse**

The discourse about human rights is very much contested. In the perspective of Hannah Arendt, this discourse is aporetic in itself. On one hand, human rights need the institutional frame of a national state in order to be secured; on the other hand, these institutional frames exclude the stateless and minorities. It is therefore even more important to accept the "right to have rights."<sup>2</sup> This is the basis of the struggle for a transnational world community and its legally codified power to enforce human rights in the refugee law and the minority law on different institutional levels beyond the narrow borders of the nation states.

And this is also the basis for an universalistic perspective.<sup>3</sup> It is true that universal morality needs to be rooted in contextuality, and through it and its symbolic everyday practices, it acquires a motivational and experience-saturated basis. And of course, the human rights discourse has to take into consideration its roots in the Western rationality and has to be sensitive towards identities and particularities. A distinction will also have to be made

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah ARENDT, Es gibt nur ein einziges Menschenrecht, in: *Die Wandlung*, 4 (1949), 754-770; cf. Seyla BENHABIB, *Exile, Statelessness and Migration. Playing chess with History from Hannah Arendt to Isaiah Berlin*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2018, 25-32.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Janne MENDE, *Der Universalismus der Menschenrechte*, Utb Verlag, München, 2021, 181-198.

between an empirically unrealised universal validity of human rights and a “complex normative claim to validity” that creates a “human rights pressure to universalise” in the sense of the empirical realisation of human rights.<sup>4</sup> But purely immanent, without external horizons, i.e., horizons that go beyond the concrete contexts and the visions of a good life, criticism and moral justification would remain pale. “Anyone who opposes oppression”, who wants to defend themselves against degradation, humiliation, exploitation and racism, “needs such a foundation.”<sup>5</sup>

Could religion play such a role? The influential position of the political scientist and doctor of law Gret Haller is symptomatic of the rejection of religious reasons for human rights. She argues that putting human rights into a religious context cannot fulfil the demands of a pluralised society in the global age. Whenever human rights are based on a specific religion, such as Christianity, they lose their universality. According to her, human rights have to be legitimised in a different way: they have to be compiled and legitimised in the democratic process over and over again.<sup>6</sup> If human rights need to be based on an absolute, this absolute can only be found within man as an individual.<sup>7</sup> According to Haller, Christianity evidently only has the function to provide the theological roots of human rights, but not to contribute valid or stimulating interpretations to the current human rights discourse. Human rights are to be defined as “rights which are granted to all people because of their personhood,”<sup>8</sup> regardless of the colour of their skin, nationality, religious and political convictions,

<sup>4</sup> Arnd POLLMANN, *Menschenrechte und Menschenwürde*, 154.155.

<sup>5</sup> Rainer FORST, *Die noumenale Republik. Kritischer Konstruktivismus nach Kant*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2021, 87.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gret HALLER, *Menschenrechte ohne Demokratie? Der Weg der Versöhnung von Freiheit und Gleichheit*, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn, 2013, 206.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>8</sup> Josef SENFT, *Menschenrechte*, in: Norbert METTE – Folkert RICKERS (eds.), *LexRP I*, Neukirchener, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2001, 1326-1331, 1327.



economic and social position, age and gender.<sup>9</sup> The codifications in human rights charters are to a substantial extent translations of theological impulses into the form of secular law. But what would happen if faith lost its power and the acceptance of a theology based on the belief that man was created in the image of God could no longer be taken for granted? The sociologist Durkheim analysed this issue, which he considered to be of central importance. The only thing left is what he calls the sacralisation of the person. Only by elevating man, by giving him this sacred or holy status, can the idea of humanity be saved, and a society, that is very differentiated and increasingly disintegrated in the processes of the Modern Age, still be integrated. According to Durkheim, a convinced atheist himself, the commitment to human dignity and human rights is the "Religion of the Modern Age,"<sup>10</sup> which has replaced Christianity. Nevertheless, in view of the catastrophes of the 20th century, one has to come to the conclusion that idealism, which has been advocated here, could not be realised.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, man has not been able to find within himself the sources from which to draw unconditional respect for his fellow men. Durkheim's intended "small transcendence" of an inner worldly religion could not generate the necessary powers of motivation and inspiration.

It is certainly too easy to attribute the genesis of human rights and the idea of human dignity to the merging of Greek-humanistic-enlightening and Jewish-Christian roots. However, in his groundbreaking book "Die Sakralität der Person", Hans Joas was able to show that human rights were not simply derived

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Marianne HEIMBACH-STEINS, *Menschenrechte in Gesellschaft und Kirche. Lernprozesse – Konfliktfelder – Zukunftschancen*, Matthias Grünewald, Mainz, 2001, 12-36.

<sup>10</sup> Karl GABRIEL, Säkularisierung, religiöse Vitalisierung und Fundamentalisierung. Globale Trends als Herausforderung für ein friedliches Zusammenleben der Religionen und Weltanschauungen, in: Stephan GOERTZ – Rudolf B. HEIN – Katharina KLÖCKER (eds.), *Fluchtpunkt Fundamentalismus? Gegenwartsdiagnosen katholischer Moral*, Herder, Freiburg i. Br., 2013, 217-237, 229.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hans JOAS, *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz*, Herder, Freiburg i. Br., 2004.

from these roots. He himself refers to Durkheim but leaves the assumed frame of the secularisation theory. In his opinion, human rights have been created in a “sacralisation process”, in which man has become intangible because he is sacred.<sup>12</sup> Joas believes that the decisive elements in this process are the completely different religious and ideological traditions from which these values have originated.<sup>13</sup> Unlike Gret Haller and Emile Durkheim, Joas believes that religious sources are also important, if not essential. If and insofar as the Churches do not oppose the growing demands for autonomous freedom, the inspirational power of the gospel can play its part in the still undecided fight for human rights and universal human dignity.<sup>14</sup> Since they are based on different traditions, human rights are “central path markers”<sup>15</sup> for a successful co-habitation in a pluralised global society. On the other hand, one has to take the warning against the civil religious meaning into account in the same extent to which human rights are taken as the starting point of a public theology:

God’s love to every human being as an *imago dei* is translated into human dignity embodied in human rights. God’s love for every person on this planet is mirrored in an individualistic and universal interpretation of human rights. Part and parcel of this shift is that one needs to respect the other person’s faith tradition, hence no conversion. Most leaders of liberal western Churches assume that human rights are the common ground on which Church and Politics can meet. (...) The respect for human rights becomes the most powerful civil religion.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cf. anthropological reasons behind such intangibility: Reinhold BOSCHKI, *Menschenbild, Menschenwürde, Menschenrechte aus religiöser und pädagogischer Perspektive*, in: Oskar DANGL – Thomas SCHREI (eds.), „...gefeiert – verachtet – umstritten“. *Menschenrechte und Menschenrechtsbildung*, LIT, Wien, 2010, 269-293 and Bernhard GRÜMME, *Menschen bilden? Eine religionspädagogische Anthropologie*, Herder, Freiburg i. Br., 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hans JOAS, *Die Sakralität der Person. Eine neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2011, 204.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Hans JOAS, *Braucht der Mensch Religion?*, 168.

<sup>15</sup> Karl GABRIEL, *Säkularisierung, religiöse Vitalisierung und Fundamentalisierung*, 230.

<sup>16</sup> Günter THOMAS, *Enmity as Cast Shadow of Love. Conjectures on Moral-Political Self-*

## 2. Human Rights. The Importance of Education ("Bildung")

The relevance of education, especially of religious education, can be seen precisely here.<sup>17</sup> To the extent to which human rights have become fragile, their institutionalisation and realisation depend heavily on the adequate and active commitment of the respective new generations.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore something which is absolutely essential for human rights should be generated and handed down in the education processes. But what, from a viewpoint of religious education, should that be?

With its teaching that man was created in the image of God, religious education introduces a specific tradition for the human rights education which intensifies and radicalises the struggle for those rights with its option for the Others – the poor, the sick and the excluded. This is no unimportant matter for the Christian religious education. In fact, it is the ranking of religious education in the social discourse, that is up for debate here. This does not mean that functional or even political elements are advocated – quite the contrary! In the context of secularisation and pluralism, religious education can only legitimise itself through its contribution to the autonomy and education of man. In principle, it therefore has to be laid out as a public religious education, in which political and aesthetic, practical and cognitive

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Radicalisations in the Protestant Theo-Political Imaginary, in: Dominik FINKELDE – Rebekka KLEIN (eds.), *In Need of a Master. Politics, Theology, and Radical Democracy*, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston, 2021, 93-110, 98.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jasmine SUHNER, *Menschenrechte – Bildung – Religion. Bezugsfelder, Potentiale, Perspektiven*, Brill – Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 2021; cf. Manfred L. PIRNER – Michaela GLÄSER-ZIKUDA – Michael KRENNERICH (eds.), *Menschenrechte von Kindern und Jugendlichen im Kontext Schule*, Wochenschau, Frankfurt a.M., 2022; cf. Manfred L. PIRNER – Johannes LÄHNEMANN – Heiner BIELEFELDT (eds.), *Human Rights and Religion in Educational Contexts*, Springer, Cham, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hans JOAS, *Braucht der Mensch Religion?*, 168.

dimensions refer to each other<sup>19</sup> and which thus plays an active role in the effort for education.<sup>20</sup> Religious education therefore contributes to civic education.<sup>21</sup> This implies the struggle for an adequate image of man and also an adequate concept of human rights.<sup>22</sup> One can definitely derive not only the right to education<sup>23</sup> but also the right to human rights education<sup>24</sup> from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>25</sup> In view of this emphatic-normative requirement, the references in the education plans, guidelines and also in the standardised higher education requirements for religious education come across as rather non-binding and general.<sup>26</sup>

Besides, empirical research about the connection between religion and human rights show that, as far as Muslim and Christian youths are concerned, a certain link exists, which can vary depending on individual human rights issues and the extent of the respective religiousness, even though it has not yet been possible to verify a single cause for this conclusion.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Religionsunterricht und Politik*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> As a basis for these considerations see Bernhard GRÜMME, Human rights Education and Religious Education, in: Manfred L. PIRNER – Johannes LÄHNEMANN – Heiner BIELEFELDT, *Human Rights and Religion in Educational Contexts*, 199-208.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Religionsunterricht und Politik*, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Menschen bilden?*; cf. Jasmine SUHNER, *Menschenrechte – Bildung – Religion*, 429-522.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Volker LENHART, *Pädagogik der Menschenrechte*, Leske & Budrich, Opladen, 2003, 70-88.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Axel B. KUNZE, *Menschenrechtsbildung – mehr als eine Modeerscheinung? Didaktische Anfragen und Perspektiven zu ihrem Ort in der Schule*, in: Marianne HEIMBACH-STEINS – Gerhard KRUIP – Axel B. KUNZE (eds.), *Bildung, Politik und Menschenrecht. Ein ethischer Diskurs*, Bertelsmann, Bielefeld, 2009, 147-155, 147.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jasmine SUHNER, *Menschenrechte – Bildung – Religion*, 277-429.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Manfred L. PIRNER, *Menschenrechte/Menschenwürde*; in: Henrik SIMOJOKI – Martin ROTHGANGEL – Ulrich H. J. KÖRTNER (eds.), *Ethische Kernthemen. Lebensweltlich – theologisch-ethisch – didaktisch*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2022, 311-321.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Tobias BENZING – Hans-Georg ZIEBERTZ, *Menschenrechte in der Wahrnehmung christlicher und muslimischer Jugendlicher*, in: Hans-Georg ZIEBERTZ (ed.), *Menschenrechte, Christentum und Islam*, LIT, Berlin, 2010, 167-200, 199.

Human rights education should not be something that is added to religious education as an afterthought. In fact, there is an inseparable, intrinsic connection between religious and human rights education because of the theological as well as educational foundations. Seen in this light, human rights are a matter close to the heart of religious education, even if they are naturally not completely absorbed by it.

Human dignity, as a subject of Christian educational processes, is based on the fact that it does not only represent an essential pre-condition for all educational processes but also the normative basis of man's position in a state and society. Human rights are therefore an essential issue in general education, not only because man is given recognition but also learns that he has a right to human dignity in the educational process.

Man should learn philosophical and religious traditions from which the concept of human rights has originated and that fighting for universal human rights is a worthwhile cause.<sup>28</sup>

Cognitive, affective and action-orientated objectives fuse in such a human rights education, because in it, the learning of human rights (cognitive), by human rights (affective) and for human rights (action-orientated) strictly relate to each other.<sup>29</sup> So this is about becoming familiar with human rights, developing the will to defend them on a universal scale and, finally, developing the capability "to acknowledge human rights as one's own moral values and act accordingly."<sup>30</sup> In the context of school and school subjects, religious education is particularly qualified for

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Friedrich SCHWEITZER, *Menschenwürde und Bildung. Religiöse Voraussetzungen der Pädagogik in evangelischer Perspektive*, TVZ, Zürich, 2011, 91.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Thomas SCHLAG, Menschenrechtsbildung im Religionsunterricht. Religionspädagogische Reflexionen zeitgemäßer Werte-Bildung, in: *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik*, 55 (2011a), 96-110, 98-99.

<sup>30</sup> Wilhelm SCHWENDEMANN, Menschenrechte und Menschenrechtsbildung, in: Wilhelm Schwendemann (ed.), *Menschenrechte im Religionsunterricht*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2010, 7-15, 9.

it because it introduces the hope in God. Through its recourse to the Christian hope, this form of human rights education has to be understood as an intensification which “exceeds what has already been achieved by a secular legal order.”<sup>31</sup> A theological perspective could introduce the critical self-limiting objection against power that declares itself absolute, as well as the down-to-earth realisation that even the greatest commitment to human rights cannot implement them completely, as history has shown.<sup>32</sup>

This will be outlined in the following section, relying on the topic of justice, which is of fundamental importance for human rights education, as freedom, equality and participation are closely interlinked with justice.

### **3. Option for the Excluded. Biased Justice**

In Jürgen Habermas’ opinion, Christian freedom has contributed considerably to the genealogy of the modern concepts of freedom and justice. But he has marked, just as precisely, the difference between the communicative freedom, as inspired by Kant, and the Christian ethic, that mainly has to do with the supererogatory nature of this kind of freedom, which sees itself as a liberated and engaged freedom and therefore surpasses what can be expected from everybody on the basis of mutuality.<sup>33</sup> In the Jewish-Christian tradition, justice is firstly and above all the justice of God, who declares the unjust to be wrong and who gives rights to those who have no rights. God’s justice (*zedaka*) is a justice of love that goes hand in hand with mercy.

<sup>31</sup> Wolfgang HUBER, *Menschenrechte/Menschenwürde*, in: Gebhard MÜLLER (ed.), *TRE*, Bd. 22, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1992, 577-602, 593.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Konrad HILPERT, *Menschenrechte oder Gottes Gebote? Zwischen christlicher Genese und säkularer Geltung*, in: Hans-Georg ZIEBERTZ (ed.), *Menschenrechte, Christentum und Islam*, 49-61, 60.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Eduardo MENDIETA, *Über Gott und die Welt*. Eduardo Mendieta im Gespräch mit Jürgen Habermas, in: *JBPT*, 3 (1999), 190-209, 206.

It serves the weak, the poor, and the excluded, and is therefore a biased justice. Man corresponds to God's covenant by doing what is just. Faith and justice are so closely inter-linked that the violation of the others' dignity and freedom is not just a social offence. According to the oneness of the love of God and neighbourly love, it violates the relationship to God itself. Jesus and his message of God's Kingdom are at the centre of this hope in justice. He claims to make something of this *zedeka* present in his message and life.

Since God has treated man justly, it is not possible to believe in him without fighting for justice, far and near.<sup>34</sup> This concept has implications for the process of learning to be just and for human rights education in the spirit of religious education.<sup>35</sup>

#### **4. Didactic Challenges**

In the context of religious human rights education, learning to be just can be found within the wider scope of learning ethics, which itself also falls under the scope of religious education. There are four different approaches to teaching ethics: the transference of values, the elucidation of values, the development of values and the communication of values.

The transference of values communicates given values for direction purposes. In contrast, the elucidation of values makes students reflect on the known and accepted values. Whereas the first model works along deductive lines and promotes adjustments to the already existing, the second model and its inductive structure lead to a reduction to individual important values.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Martina AUFENANGER – Norbert METTE, Art. Gerechtigkeit, in: Norbert METTE – Folkert RICKERS (eds.), *LexRP I*, 691-698, 696.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Matthias BAHR – Bettina REICHMANN – Christine SCHOWALTER (eds.), *Menschenrechtsbildung. Handreichung für Schule und Unterricht*, Matthias Grünewald Verlag, Ostfildern, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Konstantin LINDNER, Wertebildung im religionspädagogischen Horizont. Ein

In contrast, the model of developing values convinces by stages improvements in the capacity for moral judgement. In Lawrence Kohlberg's approach, the discussion of moral conflicts described in dilemma stories leads to a principle-guided, ethical judgement. Kohlberg's structural theory of moral development can be seen throughout the inner teleology, from the selfish via the universal to the increasingly internalised reasons for moral judgement. Within the context of political didactics, Bernhard Sutor warned against such concepts, because they advocated a one-dimensional perception of politics and promoted "non-political moralising."<sup>37</sup> Within the field of religious education one increasingly has similar reservations.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore it does not come as a surprise that the more interactive model of the communication of values is used. Based on the concept of communicative reason, here, the focus is on the participation in argumentative discussions, which enables the participants to communicate and argue through the changed perspective created by the Others' situations. In accordance with the educational paradox, the participants' maturity is increasingly assumed in this approach, which deals with the examination of validity claims and the clarification of the values and value orientations that can claim validity.<sup>39</sup>

These models can actually overlap in religious lessons. However, the last model, which strengthens the youths' autonomy in the sense of an identity in universal solidarity, has to be considered as particularly relevant.

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Systematisierungsversuch, in: *RpB*, 68 (2012), 5-18.

<sup>37</sup> Bernhard SUTOR, Das Konzept der moralischen Entwicklung in der politischen Bildung. Fragen aus der Sicht der Fachdidaktik, in: Gisela SCHMITT (ed.), *Individuum und Gesellschaft in der politischen Sozialisation* (Materialien und Berichte der Akademie für politische Bildung Tutzing, Bd. 56), Akademie für politische Bildung, Tutzing, 1980, 242-257, 248.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Religionsunterricht und Politik*, 63-101.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg ZIEBERTZ, Ethisches Lernen, in: Georg HILGER – Stephan LEIMGRUBER – Hans-Georg ZIEBERTZ (eds.), *Religionsdidaktik. Ein Leitfaden für Studium, Ausbildung und Beruf*, Kösel, München, 2010, 434-452, 439.



Nonetheless, there are also additional forms of practical as well as emotion-based learning, which are used to go beyond the focus on cognition.

For that reason Georg Hilger favours for psychological reasons a "raising of social awareness as a holistic moral education."<sup>40</sup>

"Learning to be just" therefore requires feeling empathy for others with the capability to see things through their eyes, social cognition as learning by understanding and acting for the common good. So cognitive methods have to be complemented by model-based learning, instruction-based learning and by social acknowledgement. The opportunity to experience justice has to be given.<sup>41</sup> A constructive, strictly subject-orientated approach is particularly relevant in this context.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, in religious lessons, "to be just" is mainly conveyed by the concept of recognising the rights of Others. This concept is based on the experience that acts of justice have a pre-ordained justification, which provides strength, impulses and inner strength in the face of adversity. The three following examples will illustrate the design of this human rights education with its emphasis on justice.

- a) The concept of learning for One World or also the conciliar learning process "Justice, peace and the protection of creation", play an important role. This religious education concept is action-orientated, focusing on teaching peace from a Christian perspective on an individual, interpersonal and societal level. Additionally, this concept not only teaches protecting and

<sup>40</sup> Georg HILGER, *Ethisches Lernen – Moralische Entwicklung bei Kindern*, in: Georg HILGER – Werner H. RITTER (eds.), *Religionsdidaktik Grundschule. Handbuch für die Praxis des evangelischen und katholischen Religionsunterrichts*, Kösel, München, 2006, 227-242, 239.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Norbert METTE, *Religionspädagogik*, Patmos, Düsseldorf, 1994, 115.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Thomas SCHLAG, *Konstruktivistische Ansätze und Herausforderungen in der Religionspädagogik am Beispiel einer zeitgemäßen religiösen Menschenrechtsbildung*, in: Andreas KLEIN – Ulrich H.J. KÖRTNER (eds.), *Die Wirklichkeit als Interpretationskonstrukt? Herausforderungen konstruktivistischer Ansätze für die Theologie*, Neukirchener, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2011b, 201-214.

caring for nature as God's creation but also puts human rights education in the light of "Learning to be just" into practice. A learning process that deals with social key problems in the light of the biblical vision of an all-embracing justice takes place. This connects the cognitive understanding of the economic and political background to justice and injustice on a global scale with practical forms of learning. It tries to treat justice as a central issue during lessons, either inside or outside the school, and to practice justice in order to put human rights education into practice.

The Just Community Project that was carried out in the USA by Kohlberg and subsequently in Germany by Oser and which sees school as a just community and practises forms of just behaviour in lessons and the school environment, continues to constitute an important element.<sup>43</sup>

- b) An important social learning concept is the "Learning to be compassionate". The Compassion Project was first implemented at the Catholic private schools in the state of Baden-Württemberg. Meanwhile, it has become an essential concept of social learning from a Christian perspective in various states of the Federal Republic of Germany. This "Learning to be compassionate" uses a combination of real life education, reflexive and pragmatic elements to develop social attitudes, such as willingness to communicate, cooperate and show solidarity with people who need help from others.<sup>44</sup> During a social work experience, which usually lasts two weeks, students work at social facilities such as nursing homes, facilities for the handicapped or hospitals. They are prepared for this work experience at their school and are chaperoned by religion teachers. This charitable and social work experience

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Religionsunterricht und Politik*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Lothar KULD, „Menschsein für andere“ – Das Projekt Compassion, in: Referat Schulpastoral – Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart (eds.), *Soziales Engagement an Schulen. Eine Handreichung*, Rottenburg-Stuttgart, 2008, 13-18, 13.

is characterised by the link between the experience in the facilities and the subsequent reviews at school.

- c) Role Model Learning is not primarily about famous role models like Mother Theresa, Ghandi or Martin Luther King. Its main focus, above all, is on learning from the examples of Local Heroes, the everyday heroes, such as the coach, the neighbour, the students' representative or the teacher. This kind of learning proves that, even in our society, different forms of altruistic behaviour, such as caring for the weak, the excluded or refugees, are possible. These role models who you know personally because of their local proximity, are in their ordinariness "a bridge between the students' dominating expectations from life and the higher value of Christian social behaviour."<sup>45</sup> This practical learning helps children and the youth to find out what it means to live as a Christian and to integrate it into their daily lives.

It has to be pointed out, though, that ethics learning and social learning, which both aim to contribute to "Learning to be just", can only be protected from depoliticising tendencies by being integrated into the political-structural categories of religious education. Only this political level allows religious education to provide a critical-productive contribution to the general education at school. The radicalness of human rights education, which also includes the social structures of human co-habitation, would only then be achieved.

## **5. Demands and Perspectives**

As it should have become clear, the human rights discourse depends on the power and dynamics of specific traditions

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<sup>45</sup> Hans MENDL, *Lernen an (außer-)gewöhnlichen Biografien. Religionspädagogische Anregungen für die Unterrichtspraxis*, Auer, Donauwörth, 2005, 100.

because in a functionally differentiated and socially segregated society, an all-connecting, all-encompassing meaningful worldview no longer exists. Would not this be the place in which religious education with its hope in God and its articulated biased option for others could become involved productively and interrupt the logic of our barter society? Human rights education in Catholic religious lessons can only be understood correctly if it overcomes the concentration on the inner perspective, if in the interest of others, it becomes involved in the struggle with other human rights concepts, which are based on their own traditions, and if it also puts this into practice in society.

The form and contents have to correspond in this human rights education. It can only speak of freedom if it recognises others as free, and realises the freedom it speaks of – the freedom given by God. Those are the requirements it has to meet!

But once we look more closely, we can see a dialectic in the human rights education. It could turn out as self-contradicting. That means: although it tries to foster autonomy and freedom, it contributes to hegemony and the weakening of freedom. In order not to become self-contradictory, however, the goal of critical self-reflection should be added to freedom and autonomy, which critically clarify the aporias and dark sides of human rights education in religious education classes. A praxeological perspective is needed to oppose this dialectic hidden in praxis of religious education in the classroom.<sup>46</sup>

What is this dialectic? Education has to do with power. Michel Foucault has pointed out that even in those practices of education that aim at freedom and autonomy, power mechanisms are still reproduced, which he calls pastoral power. Teachers, professors, whether they like it or not, bear their share of it.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Praxeologie. Eine religionspädagogische Selbstaufklärung*, Herder, Freiburg i.Br., 2021.

Two examples: First, contrary to the intention of teachers, the choice of methodology shows a disadvantage towards weaker learners. Up to now, open, individualised or constructivist didactics have been discussed primarily in terms of educational theory and didactics – also in religious education. Yet such forms of discovering, self-responsible, self-organising learning are also highly relevant from the point of view of support and disadvantage. From the point of view of school pedagogy, "an individualisation of learning can by no means be expected to produce equal educational opportunities for all without preconditions."<sup>47</sup> Weaker pupils need a tighter methodological framework. Primarily learners with correspondingly high cultural and economic capital can benefit from open teaching. In contrast, learners coming from homes of low economic status "tend to perform better in traditional classroom instruction than in open instruction and also develop better attentive and goal-oriented work behaviour."<sup>48</sup> Self-directed learning based on constructivism overlooks the fact that it privileges those "who are performance-motivated, internally guided and individualistic, in short, those who have a high-profile self-concept. All forms of self-directed learning thus prove to be socially selective, even if the constructivist pathos of self-organisation hushes this up."<sup>49</sup> Instead of changing social power relations and injustices in education, the focus is on changing the subjects. These effects, so far overlooked, urgently need to be discussed in the didactics of religion. In the view of new educational research, the open learning situations favoured by constructivist didactics disadvantage those who

<sup>47</sup> Kerstin RABENSTEIN – Sabine REH, Von ‚Kreativen‘, ‚Langsamen‘ und ‚Hilfsbedürftigen‘. Zur Untersuchung von Subjektpositionen im geöffneten Grundschulunterricht, in: Fabian DIETRICH – Martin HEINRICH – Nina THIEME (eds.), *Bildungsgerechtigkeit jenseits von Chancengleichheit. Theoretische und empirische Ergänzungen und Alternativen zu, PISA‘*, Springer, Wiesbaden, 2013, 239-258, 240.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>49</sup> Ludwig PONGRATZ, *Untiefen im Mainstream. Zur Kritik konstruktivistisch-systemtheoretischer Pädagogik*, Schöningh, Paderborn, 2009, 153.

need a rather narrow learning setting because they do not find the necessary discursivity and readiness to learn in school already initiated at home.<sup>50</sup>

Secondly, in interreligious learning, a highly relevant field for human rights education, this becomes apparent through stereotyping, reification and essentialisation. Therefore, religious education should focus on how – in everyday life, in the media, but also through offers for interreligious learning – categories of the “interreligiously appropriate” and above all of the religiously different are constructed and attribution practices are carried out, which are even contrary to the intention of the actors, contributing to stereotypes.<sup>51</sup> In this context, the question should also be asked as to how others are simultaneously made in different dimensions (gender, ethnicity, social class, etc.). What is therefore missing from human rights education in religious pedagogy is a self-reflexive examination of religious educational processes for their immanent mechanisms of identification, misrecognition, exclusion, power. This does not eliminate them. Every lesson is shaped by them, but it helps to uncover them analytically and to work on them critically.<sup>52</sup>

To the extent to which religious education attempts to realise this connection between targeted autonomy and critical self-reflexivity, human rights education will also be able to play its role within the framework of the school’s educational mission.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Bernhard GRÜMME, *Praxeologie*, 147-167.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 410-420.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 361-428.

# Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue as a Challenge for Catholic Religious Education

*Tomislav Kovač*

## **Abstract**

*Starting from the religious and cultural pluralism that characterises today's globalised world and contemporary Europe, this paper wants to highlight and evaluate the increasing importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in religious education, especially in Catholic religious education. For this purpose, the author first presents the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards interreligious dialogue in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the post-Council teaching. It then points to the main determinants of the Catholic approach to intercultural dialogue, especially in education. The paper emphasises how interreligious and intercultural dialogue, together with related teaching content, enables students to get to know other religious and cultural traditions more comprehensively; it expands their intellectual and spiritual horizons, opens them up and teaches them respect for diversity, develops in them a sense of the culture of encounter and dialogue, and prepares them to become responsible believers and citizens. The author concludes that the teaching of the Catholic Church and the research of Catholic theology in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue are very rich and inspiring, not only for religious upbringing and education, but for education and society as a whole.*

**Keywords:** *interreligious dialogue, intercultural dialogue, Catholic religious education, identity, coexistence.*

## Introduction

Today's globalised world is imbued with the pluralism of civilisations, cultures and religions, which are increasingly encountered, pervading and living together. In this planetary era of humanity, the interreligious dialogue has therefore become a *sign of the times*, which places many theological and pastoral challenges before the Church and seeks a new paradigm of testimony and transmission of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> Due to the multicultural feature taken on by many countries and societies around the world, intercultural dialogue is more and more associated with interreligious dialogue. This is especially the case in Europe, which has been facing the progressively expressive religious, cultural and worldview pluralism in recent decades, and in which the coexistence between the local population and the increasingly numerous settlers of other cultural and civilisational origin raises a lot of socio-political and economic issues, but also indispensable identity and human challenges.<sup>2</sup> While the Christian identity of Europe is slowly disappearing, other religious influences, above all Islam and alternative forms of religiosity are being spread, together with atheism, agnosticism and religious indifferentism.<sup>3</sup>

These religious, cultural and worldview changes in multicultural Europe are also a great challenge for education in general, including religious education, which is continuously invited to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Claude GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte. Essais de théologie interreligieuse*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2006, 15-25; Evelina ORTEZA Y MIRANDA, Religious pluralism and the paradigm, in: Kath Engebretson – Marian de Souza – Gloria Durka – Liam Gearon (eds.), *International Handbook of Inter-religious education*, Springer, London, 2010, 5-24.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Nenad MALOVIĆ – Kristina VUJICA, Multicultural society as a challenge for a coexistence in Europe, in: *Religions*, (2021) 12, 615. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080615> (Accessed 25 June 2022); Jean-François PETIT, Unitas multiplex. Dialogue interculturel, interreligieux, interconvictionnel en Europe, in: *Topologic. Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Filosofiche, Pedagogiche e Sociali*, (2016) 19, 122-127.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Grace DAVIE, *Religion in Modern Europe. A Memory Mutates*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, 5-23.



include interreligious and intercultural contents and to implant the spirit of openness and dialogue in students. The Croatian society, although nationally homogeneous and predominantly Catholic, has its own multicultural and multiconfessional features, which are primarily manifested through the presence of national minorities, some of which have been present in the area for centuries. However, given that in recent years, more and more foreign workers relocate to Croatia, originally from Asian or African countries, and that some of them are likely to stay there and start a family, interreligious and intercultural dialogue will become a current topic for the Croatian society, in the field of education as well as in the pastoral activity of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, we would like to highlight and evaluate the growing importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue precisely in religious education, with special emphasis on the confessional religious education. For this purpose, the work is divided into two parts. First, we will provide one general overview of the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards interreligious dialogue in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the post-Council teaching. In the second part, we will highlight the main features of the Catholic approach to intercultural dialogue, especially in the field of Catholic and wider education. The starting point of our reflection is twofold: first, it is obvious that interreligious and intercultural dialogue is made up of a very important component of contemporary education, here specifically Catholic religious education; second, we are convinced that the teaching of the Catholic Church on this topic may be very stimulating, both in terms of expanding intellectual horizons and growing faith in the students themselves, as well as in terms of their formation for a dialogic living of faith in a religious, cultural and worldview plural society. This work

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Tomislav KOVAČ, Interreligious dialogue in Croatia, in: *Bogoslovska smotra*, 91 (2021) 5, 981-1004 (Online edition).

would also like to provide basic theological, doctrinal, and thought background, which could be useful to religious teachers in their teaching activities related to this topic.

## **1. The Commitment of the Catholic Church to Interreligious Dialogue**

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), interreligious dialogue, along with ecumenical dialogue, albeit on a different level, has been an integral part of the official teaching of the Catholic Church.<sup>5</sup> To be more exact, after long centuries of Roman Catholic ecclesiocentrism and religious exclusivism, the Catholic Church made an epochal dialogic turn at the Second Vatican Council by which, among other things, it recognised the legitimacy of other church traditions, but also the positive moral and spiritual values present in other religions. This upheaval will stimulate the development of a new ecumenical theology as well as a new theological branch called theology of religions. The latter will seriously appreciate the reality of religious pluralism and explore the role of other religions in human history and the history of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Among the abundant literature on this topic, we single out several titles in English and French: Michael FITZGERALD – John BORELLI, *Interfaith dialogue: A Catholic View*, Orbis books, Maryknoll (NY), 2006; James L. HEFT (ed.), *Catholicism and Interreligious Dialogue*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012; François BOUSQUET – Henri de LA HOUGUE, *Le dialogue interreligieux. Le christianisme face aux autres religions*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2009; Michel FÉDOU, *L'Église catholique et les autres croyants*, Mediaspaul, Paris, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> On the fundamental principles and development of the catholic theology of religions, see: Jacques DUPUIS, *Toward a christian theology of religious pluralism*, Orbis books, Maryknoll (NY), 1997; Jacques DUPUIS, *La rencontre du christianisme et des religions*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2002; Monique AEBISHER-CRETTOL, *Vers un œcumenisme interreligieux. Jalons pour une théologie chrétienne du pluralisme religieux*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2001; Claude GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte. Essais de théologie interreligieuse*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2006; Michel YOUNÈS, *Pour une théologie chrétienne des religions*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2012.

### 1.1. *The Council's Dialogical Turn Towards other Religions*

The dialogical turn of the Second Vatican Council was accompanied and, in some ways, anticipated by the inaugural encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* of Pope Saint Paul VI (1963-1978), which is mostly devoted to dialogue as an integral part of the Church's evangelistic mission in the modern world.<sup>7</sup> For Paul VI, dialogue is not just some arbitrary decision or method of action among others, but much more than that: *dialogue is evangelisation* (cf. *ES*, 64), and an indispensable means by which the Church expresses its essence: "The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make" (*ES*, 65). Apart from the fact that it is the first time that the Catholic Church dedicates a document to dialogue, the originality of this encyclical also lies in the fact that Paul VI attributes a *theological foundation* to dialogue: dialogue finds its origin in the communicative nature of the Triune God and God's revelation itself, and with its dialogue with the world, the Church continues the "salvation dialogue" (*colloquium salutis*) that God first started, revealing himself in human history (cf. *ES*, 70-77). It is from this theological source that the Church wants to talk to everyone and does not exclude any interlocutors (cf. *ES*, 92-93). In that encyclical, Paul VI points out three concentric circles of dialogue, with different addressees and goals. The first (or external) circle of dialogue is the *dialogue with all Mankind*, including atheists, and its goal is to consolidate peace and unity among people and nations (cf. *ES*, 97-106). The second (middle) circle refers to the *dialogue with Worshippers of the One God*, i.e., with members of other religious traditions, primarily with Jews and Muslims, who are closest to the Church due to the monotheistic nature of their faith; then with the followers of the traditional religions of Africa and other continents as well as the great Asian

<sup>7</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, *Ecclesiam suam*. Encyclical on the Church (6 August 1964), in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: *ES*).

religions: the Church “desires to join with them in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood (*fraternitatis humanae*), education, culture, social welfare, and civic order” (cf. *ES*, 107-108). The third (central and the narrowest) circle of dialogue is the *dialogue among Christians*, which implies ecumenical dialogue, and especially dialogue among believers within the Catholic Church itself, for the sake of strengthening church unity, Christian faith, and love (cf. *ES* 109-116). These three circles are closely connected and complement each other, but they also provide a very useful categorisation of the dialogue addressees of the Church, which will become authoritative in later Church documents, and for the Catholic approach to dialogue in general.

Dialogue (Latin: *colloquium*, *dialogus*) and communion (Latin: *communio*) are two guiding words that probably best describe the spirit and intention of the Second Vatican Council: dialogue and communion above all within the Roman Catholic Church (as a prerequisite for any dialogue and communion with others), dialogue and communion with other Christians and followers of other religions, first with monotheists, then with others, and finally, dialogue and fellowship with all people of good will.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, at the Council, the Catholic Church defined itself as a kind of sacrament of communion between God and people as well as people among themselves. Thus, in the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, we read that “the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”<sup>9</sup> We find a similar thought in the paradigmatic declaration *Nostra*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Joachim SCHMIEDL, Dialog – Schlüsselwort des nachkonziliaren Aufbruchs, in: George AUGUSTIN – Sonja SAILER-PFISTER – Klaus VELLGUTH (eds.), *Christentum im Dialog. Perspektiven christlicher Identität in einer pluralen Gesellschaft*, Verlag Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2014, 47-56. See also: Gerald O’COLLINS, *The Second Vatican Council on other religions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Lumen gentium. Dogmatic constitution on the Church* (21 November 1964), No, 1, in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: LG).

*aetate*, which states that the task of the Church is to promote “unity and love among men, indeed among nations” and that for this purpose “she considers above all [...] what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.”<sup>10</sup> This means that in addition to the announcement of the universal salvation of Christ, an important dimension of the Church’s mission is also to be found in the promotion of “unity and love”, that is, communion between people, which is precisely the purpose of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Wishing to address all people, the Church at the Council does not approach other religions on a strongly doctrinal level, but on an anthropological and existential one: religion has always played an important role in every culture, and each religion in its own way tries to answer fundamental questions related to the meaning of human life and point the way to salvation (cf. NA 1-2). In this perspective, the Council, in various documents, makes a very positive statement about non-Christian religions by recognising and acknowledging the effective presence of the “seeds of the Word” (*semina Verbi*),<sup>11</sup> elements of “truth and grace” (AG, 9), “ascetic and contemplative traditions” (AG, 18), “good or true” things (LG, 16), “truth and goodness [that these religions], in God’s providence, possess”,<sup>12</sup> “precious elements of religion and humanity”<sup>13</sup> etc. Despite this, the recognition of spiritual and moral values in other religions does not deprive the Church and Christians of further witnessing and proclaiming the Christian faith. Dialogue and preaching remain closely related, although

<sup>10</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Nostra aetate. Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-christian religions* (28 October 1965), No. 1, in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: NA).

<sup>11</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Ad gentes. Decree on the mission activity of the Church* (7 December 1965), No. 11, in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: AG).

<sup>12</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Optatam totius. Decree on priestly training* (28 October 1965.), No. 16, in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: OT).

<sup>13</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et spes. Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world* (7 December 1965), No. 92, in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: GS).

they are not a condition for each other. This is unequivocally emphasised by this key passage of the declaration *Nostra aetate*: “The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself” (NA, 2).

An essential prerequisite for interreligious dialogue is also respect for the right to religious freedom (including the freedom of belief and practice of religion), which is based on the very dignity of the human person, as brought about by God’s revelation itself and recognised by human reason.<sup>14</sup> The Conciliar Church calls all humanity to love and realise universal brotherhood, with which every form of racial, religious and social discrimination will be banished (cf. NA, 5); at the same time, it calls for an open and honest conversation between all people and all nations for the sake of peace and unity (cf. GS, 92). For this purpose, the Catholic Church in many Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents – in the upbringing and education of future priests, men and women religious, missionaries, catechists, lay people and young people engaged in the Church – in addition to learning about other church traditions (for ecumenical purposes), also encourages acquaintance with other religious traditions and cultures (cf. OT 16; AG, 11 and 16).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Dignitatis humanae. Declaration on religious freedom* (7 December 1965), No. 2, in: <https://www.vatican.va>.

<sup>15</sup> See also: SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gravissimum educationis. Declaration on Christian Education* (28 October 1965), No. 11, in: <https://www.vatican.va>. More on this topic: Jure ZEČEVIĆ BOŽIĆ – Tomislav KOVAČ, *Odgoj, obrazovanje i formacija za ekumenski i međureligijski dijalog prema dokumentima Katoličke crkve*, in: *Bogoslovska smotra*, 91 (2021) 4, 847-876.

The basic principles presented here clearly indicate that the identity of the contemporary Catholic believer should essentially be a *dialogic identity*, based on the gospel and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, open to the challenges of today's world in dialogue and cooperation with the followers of other religions and all people of good will. Dialogic identity also presupposes a *dialogic mentality*, which should be nurtured and developed in all areas of religious life, starting with relationships within one's own family and religious community, as well as in the school, the workplace and the entire social life, especially in plural societies.

## **1.2. The Importance of Interreligious Dialogue in the Post-Conciliar Magisterium**

To promote acquaintance and formation for dialogue with other religious traditions, Pope Paul VI founded the Secretariat for Non-Christians (*Secretariatus pro non Christianis*) on 19 May 1964, on the Feast of Pentecost. Noticing the increasing importance of dialogue and cooperation between religions in our modern, secularised, and conflicted world, Pope John Paul II in 1988 renamed the Secretariat into the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (*Pontificium Consilium pro Dialogo Inter Religiones*) and included it among the bodies of the Roman Curia. The basic tasks of this Council are to establish a dialogue with the followers of other religions, to develop mutual acquaintance and respect, to cooperate in improving human dignity and spiritual and moral values, to "see to the formation of those who engage in this kind of dialogue."<sup>16</sup> Since the Council, all the most important official documents of the Catholic Church, especially those of a missionary or evangelistic nature, have devoted one or more points to interreligious dialogue, while the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, which was renamed the Dicastery for

<sup>16</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Pastor bonus*. *Apostolic constitution* (28 June 1988), No. 159-162, here No. 160, in: <https://www.vatican.va>.



Interreligious Dialogue in 2022, has published special documents and announced numerous appropriate messages on this topic.<sup>17</sup>

A decisive contribution to interreligious dialogue was made by Pope Saint John Paul II (1978-2005).<sup>18</sup> His numerous apostolic journeys in non-Christian countries, cordial relations with the heads of other religious communities and especially the interfaith World Day of Prayer for peace, which, on his initiative, took place in Assisi (27 October 1986), brought a new dimension to interreligious relations at the global level.<sup>19</sup> In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio*, he confirmed that “Interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church’s evangelising mission”, describing it “as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment.”<sup>20</sup> He also emphasised that interreligious dialogue should not be understood for proselytising purposes, but as an expression of the faithful’s respect for the action of the Spirit of God in each person: “Dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest, but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirements and dignity. It is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills” (RM, 56). For John Paul II, “other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her to discover and acknowledge both the signs of Christ’s presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of Revelation

<sup>17</sup> Cf. PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER IL DIALOGO INTERRELIGIOSO – Francesco Gioia (dir.), *Il dialogo interreligioso nell’insegnamento ufficiale della Chiesa cattolica (1963-2013)*, Libreria editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2013. Many documents, speeches and messages are available on the official website of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue: <https://www.dicasteryinterreligious.va>.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Byron L. SHERWIN – Harold KASIMOW (eds.), *John Paul II and Interreligious dialogue*, Wipf and Stock publishers, Eugene (OR), 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Pastoral visit to Perugia and Assisi, *Address of John Paul II to the Representatives of Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities Gathered in Assisi for the World Day of Prayer*, Basilica of St Mary of the Angels, 27 October 1986, in: <https://www.vatican.va>.

<sup>20</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris missio. On the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandates* (7 December 1990), No. 55 in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: RM).



which she has received for the good of all" (RM, 56). That is why "each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue", especially lay believers who live among members of various religions (cf. RM, 57). Finally, John Paul II observes interreligious dialogue from an eschatological perspective: "Dialogue is a path towards the kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father (cf. Acts 1:7)" (RM, 57).

In the context of religious pluralism at the global and increasingly local levels, the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* defines dialogue as "reciprocal communication, leading to a common goal or, at a deeper level, to interpersonal communion", as well as "an attitude of respect and friendship, which permeates or should permeate all those activities constituting the evangelising mission of the Church."<sup>21</sup> More specifically, interreligious dialogue is defined as "'all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment' [*Dialogue and Mission*, 6], in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions" (DP, 9). This theologically and evangelistically stimulating document observes that dialogue and proclamation are closely interrelated yet not interchangeable (cf. DP, 77-78). In fact, for a Christian, the communication of the Gospel's message of salvation in Jesus Christ and the invitation to conversion and baptism remain a sacred duty, though the proclamation itself should take place in dialogue, respecting the freedom of conscience and the dignity of the other person (cf. DP, 10-11).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, *Dialogue and Proclamation. Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (19 May 1991), No. 9, in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: DP).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Henri DE LA HOUGUE, *Dialogue et Annonce, deux missions ecclésiales liées mais non interchangeables*, in: Thierry-Marie COURAU – Anne Sophie VIVIER-MURESAN (dir.), *Dialogue et conversion, mission impossible?*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 2012, 45-63.

Due to the irreconcilable doctrinal differences that religions inevitably have among themselves, Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013) was quite suspicious towards the real possibilities of inter-religious dialogue, at least on a deeper theological level. For this reason, he preferred to emphasise the dialogue between cultures and civilisations based on rational and universal values, and at the centre of which would be the dignity, freedom and fundamental rights of the human person.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Benedict XVI made his own contribution to interreligious dialogue, introducing greater intellectual rigour into it, especially highlighting the necessary harmony between faith and reason, both for the prevention of fundamentalism and violence, and for the avoidance of any ideological manipulation of religion.<sup>24</sup> However, faced with the increasing presence of Islam in the world, especially in Europe, the words he delivered during the 20th World Youth Day in Cologne (18-21 August 2005) remain rather relevant: "Interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is in fact a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends."<sup>25</sup>

A recent document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, titled *Dialogue in Truth and Charity*, provides very useful pastoral guidelines for interreligious dialogue, intended primarily for Bishops' Conferences around the world to adapt to their own social and pastoral needs.<sup>26</sup> Special attention is paid

<sup>23</sup> See the letter of Benedict XVI to the Italian philosopher and senator Marcello Pera published as a foreword of the book: Marcello PERA, *Pourquoi nous devons nous dire chrétiens. Le libéralisme, l'Europe et l'éthique*, Parole et silence, Paris, 2011 [original edition: *Perché dobbiamo dirci cristiani. Il liberalismo, l'Europa, l'etica*, Mandadori, Roma, 2008]; Vincent GUIBERT, *Le dialogue interreligieux chez Joseph Ratzinger*, Parole et silence, Paris, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate. Encyclical letter on integral human development in charity and truth* (29 June 2009), No. 56, in: <https://www.vatican.va>.

<sup>25</sup> XJe JMJ à Cologne. Cultiver l'espérance entre chrétiens et musulmans (20 août 2005), in: *La Documentation catholique*, (2005.) No. 2343, 901-902.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, *Dialogue in Truth and Charity. Pastoral Orientations for Interreligious Dialogue* (19 May 2014), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2014 (further: DTC).

to the education of young people for interreligious cooperation (DTC, 72-76). Thus, it is emphasised that educational institutions, both private or public, should “offer opportunities of nurturing interreligious understanding and peaceful coexistence” (FTC, 72). In accordance with the “saving mission of the Church” and considering the local situation, Catholic schools are called to “attain basic knowledge about the beliefs and practices of other religions, thereby facilitating a positive attitude towards people of other religious traditions even outside the classroom” (DTC, 72). Religious leaders must take special care of how other religions are presented in school textbooks: according to different levels of education, it is necessary to encourage “an objective comparative study of history and religious texts”, in order to avoid “negative stereotypes and unsound interpretations of a religion’s beliefs and practices” (DTC, 74). Catholic and other universities also play an important role, as they can “provide the intellectual capital to broaden and deepen the knowledge of other religions and examine the issues surrounding interreligious conflict, past and present, as well as the ways to promote peace together” (DTC, 75).

Interreligious dialogue also occupies a very important place in the pontificate of Pope Francis (2013-), especially as a “necessary condition for peace in the world” and a contribution to achieving social justice.<sup>27</sup> The social dimension of interreligious dialogue is particularly emphasised in the last chapter of the encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*, where Pope Francis calls the faithful of all religions to contribute to the building of a universal fraternity among people and the promotion of social justice, which includes commitment to the poor, the rejected and the marginalised, rejection of discrimination, violence and hatred in the name of religion and politics, protection of human dignity and freedom, especially

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<sup>27</sup> FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*. Apostolic exhortation on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world (24 November 2013), No. 250, in: <https://www.vatican.va>.

religious freedom in countries where it is threatened, etc.<sup>28</sup> Echoing the words of the famous declaration on *Human fraternity for world peace and living together*, which he signed in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019, together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb, Pope Francis in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* fervently calls for “the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard” (FT, 285).

## 2. Catholic Approach to Intercultural Dialogue

Due to the constant growth of multiculturalism in Western European societies, the last thirty years witnessed a lot of discussions on coexistence between members of different cultures and, therefore, on the need for intercultural dialogue. Given that religion still has an important identity and value meaning for many non-European immigrants, especially for the immigrants from the Muslim world, intercultural dialogue is increasingly being linked to interreligious dialogue, for the purpose of getting to know and respecting each other. European institutions and individual countries have issued a generous number of documents on the subject.<sup>29</sup> Since school and other educational institutions are extremely important for the integration of immigrants and the preparation of young people for their future life together, intercultural education, through the correlation of different school subjects and university courses, is becoming an increasingly important part of contemporary pedagogy, as well

<sup>28</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*. Encyclical letter on fraternity and social friendship (3 October 2020), No. 271-285, in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: FT).

<sup>29</sup> Probably one of the best known document is: *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. “Living Together as Equals in Dignity”*. Launched by the Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs at their 118th Ministerial Session (Strasbourg, 7 May 2008), Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008.

as religious pedagogy and religious education.<sup>30</sup> Intercultural and interreligious learning often intertwine and complement each other, posing new challenges to educational programmes and demanding intercultural and interreligious competencies from teachers.<sup>31</sup> Neither Catholic education in general nor Catholic school religious education are exempt from these challenges. On the contrary, Catholic education can make a great contribution to intercultural dialogue, especially through the teachings of the Church.

## **2.1. *Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Fostering Identity and Openness***

Considering that Catholic educational institutions, both in the world and in Western Europe, are increasingly attended by pupils, students or people of different ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations, the Congregation for Catholic Education published in 2013 an interesting and pedagogically very stimulating document titled *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools*,<sup>32</sup> which we will primarily rely on in this part of our paper.

This document highlights three approaches to religious and cultural pluralism, which prevail in Western societies. The first is

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Robert JACKSON, *Signposts – Policy and Practice for Teaching About Religions and Non-Religious World Views in Intercultural Education*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2014; Ružica RAZUM – Marija JURIŠIĆ, Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education in European and Croatian Documents, in: Ružica RAZUM – Nena MALOVIĆ – Marija JURIŠIĆ (eds), *Religijsko obrazovanje u interkulturalnoj Europi. Zbornik radova – Religious education in intercultural Europe. Proceedings*, Katolički bogoslovni fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2022, 463-481.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, *U službi zrelosti vjere i rasta osoba. Katehetska i religijskopedagoška promišljanja u suvremenom kontekstu*, Glas Koncila, Zagreb, 2011, 63-71; Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, Interkultuirizam u obrazovanju. Značenje za religijskopedagošku praksu i stjecanje kompetencija nastavnika vjeronauka [Interculturalism in Education. Significance for Religious-Pedagogical Practice and Acquiring Competencies of Religious Education Teachers], in: *Diacovensia*, 29 (2021) 4, 541-561.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION (AND INSTITUTES OF STUDY), *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools. Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (28 October 2013), in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: EIDCS).

the *relativistic approach* which, in the name of abstract neutrality and a rather superficial understanding of tolerance, equates all cultures and religions, thus trivialising them and depriving them of their legitimate properties (cf. *EIDCS*, 22-23). The second approach is the *assimilation approach*, which, due to its demand for adaptation, forces foreigners to renounce their identity and cultural roots, fully accepting the culture of the host country (cf. *EIDCS*, 24-25). Although these two dominant approaches are mostly presented in a positive light, both are incomplete from the Catholic perspective, mainly because they do not respect the dignity, freedom and integrity of the other person enough (cf. *EIDCS*, 21). Instead, the Catholic Church supports the third approach, which is the *intercultural approach*. This approach aims, especially in upbringing and education, to enable the constructive interaction of members of different cultures and religions, in order to simultaneously respect and creatively integrate the identity of the other, but also to preserve one's own cultural, that is, Catholic identity (cf. *EIDCS*, 26-28). The intercultural approach promoted by the Catholic Church "is based on a dynamic idea of culture, which neither is closed in on itself nor celebrates diversity with stereotypes or folkloristic representations. Intercultural strategies function when they avoid separating individuals into autonomous and impermeable cultural spheres; they rather should promote encounter, dialogue and mutual transformation, so as to allow people to co-exist and deal with possible conflict. In summary, the goal is to construct a new intercultural approach, which aims at realising an integration of cultures in mutual recognition" (*EIDCS*, 28).

In this sense, Catholic upbringing and education should at the same time be characterised by *fidelity* towards one's own Christian identity and value system, as well as *openness* and *inclusiveness* towards members of other cultures and religions. The document *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools* summarises its educational programme in seven principal areas of attention:

1. *Remaining faithful to the Catholic identity* and a Christian vision of school education inspired by evangelical principles; 2. *Building up a common vision*, which will at the same time confirm belonging to one's own culture and belonging to humanity; 3. *Cultivating a reasoned openness to globalisation* in order to understand today's world and the interdependencies of the planetary mankind; 4. *Seeking to form strong personal identities*, that will be aware of their own tradition and culture, and at the same time be able to recognise the dignity of others and to lead a dialogue; 5. *Developing self-awareness* "by habitually rethinking one's own experiences; reflecting on one's own behaviour; and becoming more self-aware, including by means of cognitive strategies and formation away from self-centredness"; 6. *Respecting and understanding the values of other cultures and religions*: "Schools must become places of pluralism, where one learns to dialogue about the meanings that people of different religions attribute to their respective signs. This allows one to share universal values, such as solidarity, tolerance and freedom"; 7. *Educating to sharing and responsibility* in the school, in society and in the religious community (cf. *EIDCS*, 63).

## **2.2. School as "Laboratories of Culture and Humanity"**

In intercultural contexts, *integration*, *interaction* and *recognition of the other person* constitute the three fundamental orientations of the Catholic school and of all those who participate in it (cf. *EIDCS*, 78). This presents great challenges both for students and teachers of the school, as well as for the society that everyone is called to build. By placing *individuality* and *relationality* at the centre of upbringing and education (cf. *EIDCS*, 37, 39, 42, 80, etc.), Catholic education wants to contribute to the promotion of "integral humanism", which includes fundamental values such as respect for human life, freedom, critical opinion, faith, dialogue, promotion of good and truth (cf. *EIDCS*, 72). However, education



is not only based on theoretical or passive knowledge, but also on life experience, starting from the lived cultural and worldview diversity that already exists in classrooms and schools. Thus the school itself, as an *educational community* where “differences live together in harmony”, and as a place of encounter, participation and dialogue “can be considered a true experience of intercultural relationships, lived out rather than just spoken about” (*EIDCS*, 58). The document *Educate for intercultural dialogue in a Catholic school* expresses this in a beautiful way: “An indispensable condition for co-operation is openness to plurality and differences. Experience shows that the Catholic religion knows how to encounter, respect and esteem different cultures. The love for all men and women is necessarily also a love for their culture. Catholic schools are, by their very vocation, intercultural” (*EIDCS*, 61).

Among the different matters taught in Catholic schools, “pride of place must be given to the knowledge of different cultures, with attention given to helping the students encounter and compare the various cultures’ many different viewpoints” (*EIDCS*, 66). At the same time, interdisciplinarity in education and cooperation between different school subjects must be included in the curriculum (cf. *EIDCS*, 67-69). This is especially important for teaching the Catholic religion in schools, whose main task is to “give the students knowledge about Christianity’s identity and the Christian life”, in contrast to catechesis, which is primarily aimed to “promote personal adherence to Christ and maturing of the Christian life” (cf. *EIDCS*, 74). By opening students to larger questions of the truth and the good, and linking theology, philosophy and science respecting their reciprocal autonomy, the teaching of the Catholic religion in school aims “to enlarge the area of our rationality”; at the same time, it (re)connects the religious dimension of man with cultural reality, as well as “to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom of life” (cf. *EIDCS*, 74). Quoting the speech of Benedict XVI to Catholic religion teachers (25 April



2009), the document courageously underlines: "Therefore, with the teaching of the Catholic religion, 'school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to understand the present better and to be able to plan wisely for the future'" (EIDCS, 74).

Finally, aware of intercultural tensions that may exist in different school and social contexts, the document *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools* strongly emphasises the dialogic potential of Christianity and the role of Christians in overcoming antagonisms and creating preconditions for constructive coexistence in a multicultural society, which represents one of the main challenges today: "Today's cultural shift shows clear signs of oscillation between dialogue and conflict. Especially when faced with this crisis of direction, then, the contribution of Christians is seen to be indispensable. Therefore, it is fundamental that the Catholic religion, for its part, be an inspiring sign of dialogue. In fact, it can be stated absolutely that the Christian message has never been so universal and fundamental as today" (EIDCS, 71).<sup>33</sup>

The more recently published Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education titled *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* follows a similar path.<sup>34</sup> Emphasising the importance of *bearing witness* to the Christian faith, the document calls on educators to open pupils and students to a wide range of knowledge, including familiarisation with other cultural and

<sup>33</sup> For an innovative example of the dialogic contribution of a Catholic school in a multicultural context, see: Lieven BOEVE, *L'identité par le dialogue dans la différence. Comment le „projet de l'école catholique du dialogue" mène à la redécouverte de la voix chrétienne*, in: *Chemins de dialogue*, (2021) 57, 137-159.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION (FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS), *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (25 January 2022), in: <https://www.vatican.va> (further: ICSCD).

religious expressions: “to *know* and to *dialogue* with diversity” (cf. ICSCD, 27-29). The document particularly reminds us of the three fundamental guidelines proposed by Pope Francis to help dialogue: “the duty to respect one’s own identity and that of others, the courage to accept differences, and sincerity of intentions” (ICSCD, 30). In the same manner, the document also refers to the *Global Compact on Education* promoted by Pope Francis, whose objective is – through the co-participation of institutions, families and individuals involved in education – to tend “to favour interpersonal, real, lived and fraternal relationships” and, in the face of the many contemporary anthropological and social challenges, to be “capable of imparting not only technical knowledge, but also and above all human and spiritual wisdom, based on justice and virtuous behaviour that can be put into practice” (cf. ICSCD, 33-34). This project of joint cooperation in the field of education is all the more important in a world increasingly marked by divisions and conflicts at local and international levels.<sup>35</sup>

The general statements presented here about the dialogic and intercultural dimension of the Catholic school, based on the encounter and constructive relationship with the other and the different, express the official stance of the Catholic Church on these issues. Such stance and orientations of the Church Magisterium are significant and authoritative for Catholic education in general, especially for Catholic religious education.

## Conclusion

Interreligious and, more recently, intercultural dialogue have been an integral part of the teaching and evangelising mission of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. In this way, the Church has shown that she is aware that the challenges

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Martha SEIDE, Pour une culture du dialogue dans un monde en conflit. Le rôle de l’école catholique, in: *Educatio catholica*, 8 (2022.) 2-3, 187-199.

of the contemporary world, whether at the global or local level, can only be met through dialogue and cooperation between members of different religions, cultures and convictions, as well as a joint commitment to the construction of a more peaceful, just and humane world, in other words, to the elaboration of the “civilisation of love.” In today’s planetary era of humanity, religion, culture and civilisation are not separate islands; they are connected, oriented and dependent on each other in different ways. In this sense, every religious issue today becomes an inter-religious issue, and every culture should be understood in interaction with other cultures and civilisations. This kind of perspective does not imply relativising or renouncing one’s own religious and cultural identity; it is an invitation to value each identity by also considering the spiritual and cultural horizons and values of others. This entails a certain *interreligious* and *intercultural conversion* at the level of individual and collective consciousness, as well as in the way of meeting and behaving towards people belonging to other religions or cultures.

The religious and cultural pluralisation of today’s world is also a challenge for Christian theology. While atheism (which denies God), in the second half of the 20th century, represented the main challenge for theological thought, at the beginning of the 21st century, religious pluralism (which affirms God in different ways) has become a new paradigm outside of which it is no longer possible to theologise responsibly. Such a paradigm requires a hermeneutical turn in our usual understanding of Christianity and directs theology to develop itself as an *interreligious* and *dialogical theology*, which will strive to make explicit the mysteries of God’s action in human history and of the universal salvation in Jesus Christ by taking into account other experiences and notions of God, and by entering into dialogue with other religious and cultural traditions of the world.<sup>36</sup> Without renouncing the

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Claude GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte*, 41-57. See also: Lindbergh MONDÉSIR, Les

Christian truth, theology thus testifies to its intellectual openness, as well as its willingness to promote “unity and love” among men and nations (cf. NA, 1) and serve “the unity of the whole human race” (LG, 1). For these reasons, the modern study of theology requires a greater integration of interreligious and intercultural content, which will provide students – tomorrow’s priests, men and women religious, catechists, religious teachers, committed lay faithful in the Church and society – with an adequate formation for dialogue and coexistence in plural societies, which is a particularly important challenge in an increasingly multi-cultural Europe.<sup>37</sup> The study of theology through an inter-religious and intercultural perspective would also greatly contribute to the development of religious pedagogy in view of the progressively widespread need for interreligious and intercultural learning and related teacher competencies and outcomes. In return, the practice of religious education at school can serve as a good incentive for theological and other religious sciences, so that they themselves learn to dialogue more with society, other religious confessions, cultural belongings, and scientific methods.<sup>38</sup>

Knowledge and personal enthusiasm, creativity and pedagogical competence, along with their personal example of Christian life, are probably the most important qualities of religious education teachers, especially those teaching Catholic religious education. However, in order to convey interreligious or intercultural content as well as to sensitise pupils and students to the general values of dialogue, teachers must also possess a *dialogical mentality*. This mentality will contribute to opening the intellectual and spiritual

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implications de la théologie interreligieuse dans l'éducation au dialogue interreligieux: Regards croisés des théologiens Jacques Dupuis, Claude Geffré et Perry Schmidt-Leukel, in: *Science et Esprit*, 72 (2020) 3, 369-390.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Nikola BIŽACA, O mjestu i ulozi proučavanja religija unutar studija katoličke teologije, in: *Crkva u svijetu*, 3 (2004.) 4, 379-410; JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa. Post-synodal apostolic exhortation on Jesus Christ alive in his Church, the source of hope for Europe* (28 June 2003), No. 53-57, in: <https://www.vatican.va>.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, *U službi zrelosti vjere i rasta osoba*, 205-212.

horizons of young people and testify to the dialogical nature of the Christian faith. At the same time, it will show the dialogical face of God and the Church, a face that looks forward to every encounter and sees an opportunity for communion and love in every interlocutor. Dialogue is the best means of realising such opportunities. It bridges the biggest borders and brings people together with all their similarities and differences. The teaching of the Catholic Church and the research of Catholic theologians and pedagogues in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue provide reliable and inspiring guidelines that can be very useful for teachers and students of Catholic religious education, but also for the school and society as a whole.

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# Religious Education and Religious Pluralism: Contribution to a Peacebuilding Education

*André Mujiyambere*

## **Abstract**

Nowadays, religious education has been under the spotlight in several European countries. Although there are only a few countries where there is no form of religious education in schools, many opposing voices have been raised especially against the mono-confessional religious education. The reasons put forward are, among many others, the promotion of religious diversity in a secularised and pluralistic society in a modern globalised world. Moreover, mono-confessional religious education has been accused of indoctrination and the lack of openness to other religions and worldviews. However, since the Second Vatican Council, in the Catholic church, mono-confessional religious education has been viewed as different from parish catechesis, yet complementary to it. What then could be the role of religious education in our global and multireligious world? Does mono-confessional religious education have the necessary resources to contribute to a peaceful and harmonious society? This contribution tries to answer that question.

**Keywords:** *religious education, pluralism, peacebuilding, interreligious dialogue.*

## Introduction

In recent years, religious education has attracted attention of the media and society. Issues related to the study of religion in public education have been discussed on an international level, especially in the northern hemisphere.<sup>1</sup> Some western countries, traditionally Christian, suppressed religious education in public schools or replaced it with other subjects which include other religions and cultures in order to broaden and enrich students' understanding of them, helping them to cope with the changing world.<sup>2</sup> In fact, in the early 1990s, religious education became the subject of debates throughout Europe, which were caused by social and political changes: by secularisation and increasing religious pluralism (following the migrations) in Western Europe, and by the new significance of religion in society after the collapse of communist regimes and the need to rebuild democracy in Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> In Africa, studies on Catholic teaching or education are numerous but those devoted to religious education in schools are rare. In some countries, religious education is provided in the form of catechesis,<sup>4</sup> while in other countries, where the presence of other religions, notably Islam, is well established, religious education is oriented towards inter-religious dialogue with a perspective of development and co-existence, which should be generalised everywhere, given the religious

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Robert JACKSON, *European Institutions and the Contribution of Studies of Religious Diversity to Education for Democratic Citizenship*, in: Wolfram WEISSE (ed.), *Religion in Education. A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries*, REDCo, Hamburg, 2006, 27-57.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Michael T. BUCHANAN – Adrian-Mario GELLEL (ed.), *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools*, Springer, Dordrecht, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ – Andrea LEHNER-HARTMANN, *Reflections on Theories of (Catholic) Education from the Perspective of Practical Theology*, in: CLAIRE E. WOLFFTEICH – Annemie DILLEN (eds.), *Catholic Approaches in Practical Theology. International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Bristol, 2016, 185-206.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jean-Paul NIYIGENA, *Les professeurs du cours de religion dans les écoles catholiques au Rwanda: quelle formation et quelle organisation pour quels objectifs?*, Pallotti-press, Kigali, 2018.



effervescence and diversity that characterise the African continent.<sup>5</sup>

The questioning of religious education by the secularised society is pointed out in a recently published book edited by Henri Derroitte and Diane Du Val D'Éprémèsnil.<sup>6</sup> Being accused of indoctrinating pupils and lacking openness and many other defaults, religious education is being replaced with a course on citizenship, presumedly for encouraging interreligious dialogue. Besides, the book points out that religious education helps to fight against fundamentalism and boosts all ethical and societal values. Taking into account some past and present conflicts and wars in history, one might wonder whether violence is part and parcel of religion. In fact, even though economic, political, social or strategic interests are more involved than religious concerns in many conflicts and wars, we cannot underestimate religious dimension in some conflictual situations. Indeed, in some ways, religion is or may have been instrumentalised or used as a catalyst in some conflicts.<sup>7</sup> Now here is our question: can religious education in schools contribute to social cohesion? If so, how and under which conditions?

## 1. Clarification of Some Concepts: Plurality, Pluralism and Peace Building

The distinction between plurality and pluralism is noteworthy. According to Skeie,<sup>8</sup> even if pluralism is used to refer both to a

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lindbergh MONDÉSIR, Vers une éducation au dialogue interreligieux africanisée: contribution de la vision éducative et théologique de Jean-Marc Ela, in: *Théologiques*, 28 (2020) 2, 90–112.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Henri DERROITTE – Diane DU VAL D'ÉPRÉMESNIL (eds.), *Un cours de religion pour quoi?*, Presses universitaires de Louvain, Louvain-la-neuve, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jean-Nicolas BITTER – Owen FRAZER, The Instrumentalisation of Religion in Conflict, in: *Policy Perspectives*, 8 (2020) 5, 1-4.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Geir SKEIE, Plurality and Pluralism in religious education, in: Marian DE SOUZA

multitude of religions within a certain society and the concern to have an education for all, plurality and pluralism are not the same reality. Plurality refers to a description of a diversity of religions, whereas pluralism refers to a normative valuation of that plurality. Pluralism should indicate an evaluation of a particular kind of plurality that is usually considered positive. Diversity of religions in a multicultural society is not pluralism. Nor is religious pluralism equal to syncretism. We can call religious pluralism that which makes possible a non-violent confrontation of points of view in matters related to religion,<sup>9</sup> hence respect for the diversity. Fostering the term “plurality” has the advantage and limit of sticking to a phenomenological approach.<sup>10</sup> It assumes a neutral standpoint alongside theological debates.

Peace is defined by Johan Galtung as the absence of suffering and the presence of fulfilment in the natural, human, social and world spaces.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, peace implies the strengthening of collaboration, integration, cohesion, and harmony of all members of society. It excludes not only direct violence, but also cultural and structural violence. Based on dialogue, peacebuilding is a long-term process which aims at long-life peace and bringing people together in a joint effort. Therefore, peacebuilding is a proactive

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et al. (eds.), *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions of Education*, Vol.1, Springer, Dordrecht, 2006, 307-319. “Without a real diversity of positions, there does not seem to be much argumentative strength in pluralism. A more common version of anti-pluralism is probably that of seeing plurality as a problem that should be solved by reducing it or transcending it, for instance by moving towards either dual oppositions or some kind of monism. Another view that opposes pluralism, and one often voiced in the debate about religions, is to argue that the plurality in question includes conflicting truth claims; and that the only solution is to choose one truth against the other possible alternatives”. Ibid., 310.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Michel TARDIEU, Le pluralisme religieux, in: Alain BERTHOZ – Carlo OSSOLA – Brian STOCK (eds.), *La Pluralité interprétative. Fondements historiques et cognitifs de la notion de point de vue*, Collège de France, Paris, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Henri DERROITTE, Cours de religion catholique et pluralité religieuse, in: *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 41 (2010) 1, 57-85.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Johan GALTUNG, *A Theory of Peace*, quoted by Oscar Daniel Franco CONFORTI, Education for Peace. What Building Peace Means, in: *BirLE - Journal*, 2 (2019) 4, 20-26.

approach to creating a more stable and peaceful culture, thereby preventing violent incidents from happening.

## 2. Religious Pluralism as a Theological Challenge for the Church

Since the Second Vatican Council, plurality of religions has no longer been considered a failure in the Church's mission, or a result of the sin of humankind. Rather, it refers to "the mystery of a plurality of ways to God which is part of the mystery hidden in God throughout the centuries and manifested to us in Jesus Christ (*Eph* 1:26)."<sup>12</sup> In fact, the Second Vatican Council inaugurated a new era in theology insofar as it officially passed a positive judgement on non-Christian religions by recognising that they reflect "a ray of the Truth" and can be bearers of values of salvation.<sup>13</sup> According to Geffré, the major challenge for Christian theology in the 21st century is religious pluralism.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, the Second Vatican Council inaugurated a new age for inter-religious relationships. The other religious traditions and

<sup>12</sup> Claude GEFFRÉ, *De Babel à Pentecôte. Essais de théologie interreligieuse*, Cerf, Paris, 2006, 48. "Ce pluralisme ne peut être seulement la conséquence de l'aveuglement coupable des hommes tout au long des siècles, encore moins le signe de l'échec de la mission de l'Église depuis vingt siècles. L'expression 'pluralisme de droit' est sûrement maladroite car elle semble sacraliser les différences religieuses. Mais elle renvoie simplement au mystère d'une pluralité de voies vers Dieu qui fait partie du mystère caché en Dieu tout au long des siècles et qui nous a été manifesté en Jésus-Christ (voir *Ep.* 1, 26)". *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> "They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church..." *Lumen Gentium* 14; "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men." *Nostra Aetate*, 2; "The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, colour, condition of life, or religion." *Nostra Aetate*, 5; "They [Christ's disciples] themselves may learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth." *Ad Gentes*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Claude GEFFRÉ, La théologie des religions ou le salut d'une humanité plurielle, in: *Raisons politiques*, 1 (2001) 4, 104-120.

their members have no longer been considered as antagonists or rivals and suitable for conversion, but rather as partners on the same pilgrimage on earth. The Catholic Church has learnt to relate itself ecumenically to other Churches, to respect and to support dialogue with the great world religions, and to cooperate with other groups and communities for the enhancement of society as a whole. A new relationship based on mutual respect has been established with various religions and their members in order to get to know and enrich each other.

Many Church documents dealing with evangelisation and education, published after the Second Vatican Council, emphasise the special place dialogue should have in Catholic schools and in religious education.<sup>15</sup> Debates about inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism<sup>16</sup> in theological fields are underway. But how can religious education address the issue of multi-religious classrooms in order to develop a model that makes it possible to contribute to peaceful co-existence between different religious traditions and different life philosophies?

<sup>15</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION (FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS), *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue. Instruction* (29. 03. 2022), in: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/03/29/220329c.html> (11. 11 2022); CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION (FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS), *Educating to fraternal Humanism. Building a "civilization of love". 50 years after Populorum progressio. Guidelines* (16 April 2017), in: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20170416\\_educare-umanesimo-solidale\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20170416_educare-umanesimo-solidale_en.html) (11 November 2022); CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 2013; CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third millennium* (28 December 1997), in: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_27041998\\_school2000\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html) (11 November 2022); CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School. Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal* (April 7, 1988), in: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19880407\\_catholic-school\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19880407_catholic-school_en.html) (11 November 2022).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jacques DUPUIS, *Vers une théologie chrétienne du pluralisme religieux*, Cerf, Paris, 1997; Claude Geffré, *De Babel à Pentecôte. Essais de théologie interreligieuse*, Cerf, Paris, 2016.

### 3. Mono-Confessional and Multi-Confessional Approaches

For a long time, the model of mono-confessional religious education in Western Europe has been undisputed, despite the presence of non-Christian religions. The majority of citizens were Christians, and to have Christian religious education at school was the norm. In the Catholic Church there was no conceptual difference between religious education in schools and catechesis. Since the 1970's, a shift has been made from the mono-confessional to the multi-confessional approach<sup>17</sup> to religious education, giving way to a multi-religious model. Henceforth, the Church has distinguished catechesis and religious education. They are different but complementary.<sup>18</sup> The difference is in the setting, aim, students and curriculum.

Religious education is set within a school, while catechesis is set within a parish. The aim of catechesis is primarily to increase the faith of those who already believe, while religious education is primarily intended to increase the knowledge of the nature of the Christian faith, the Christian identity. Religious education must be a scholastic discipline taught as any other discipline at school. It is a field of school studies. This gives it a status alongside other disciplines in the school's curriculum, in a necessary interdisciplinary dialogue and not as a mere appendix.<sup>19</sup> In catechetical formation, participants come from the Catholic parish community, whereas in schools, students from many parishes,

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Leni FRANKEN, Church, State and RE in Europe: Past, Present and Future, in: *Religion & Education*, Vol. 48 (2021) 4, 417-435.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools* (5 May 2009), in: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20090505\\_circ-insegn-relig\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20090505_circ-insegn-relig_en.html) (11 November 2022); CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools. Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, 74.

other Christian faiths and even other religious traditions are welcome. Religious education helps all of them to acquire knowledge on Christianity and other religions, as well as to reflect on values and fundamental questions of life.

In a secularised, liberal-democratic, multi-religious and cultural society, the mono-confessional approach has been considered as exclusivist and likely to lead to ethnocentrism. Today, many countries in Europe still offer a model of mono-confessional religious education for all religious communities that have the necessary preconditions (sufficient number of students, agreement with the state, adequately trained teachers, etc.). Religious education in public schools does not have strictly catechetical goals, but it is in the service of learning through religion and from religion, and an important component of that religious education is getting to know religions other than one's own. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has abandoned the exclusive approach and has adopted an inclusive model inspired by an increasing respect and appreciation of other religions. The most secular and plural countries like the UK, Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, some parts of Switzerland and former Eastern Germany offer a non-confessional model of religious education in schools.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, another approach has been developed: a multi-religious approach based on the assumption that all religions are equal. This multi-religious education has its limitations that should be considered.<sup>21</sup> Not interpreting or explaining differences

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ana Thea FILIPOVIĆ, Der Religionsunterricht in öffentlichen Schulen in Europa. Modelle und Entwicklungen als Indikatoren für die gesellschaftliche Bedeutung des Glaubens und die Anfrage an Theologie und Kirche, in: *Nova prisutnost*, 9 (2011) 1, 137-152.

<sup>21</sup> "But the problem with multi-religious religious education is that, while still in their early years, students are brusquely presented with the differences and incompatibilities between the different religions. Such a 'ruthless confrontation' at a tender age [...]. It is problematic from a pedagogical point of view. Merely external and objective descriptions of the different religions will in the end only hinder the emphatic understanding, from inside out, of other religions." Didier POLLEFEYT – Mieke DE VLIÉGER – Wim SMIT, Interreligious education: beyond mono- and multi-religious learning? in: <http://www.army-chaplaincy.be/be-nl/2013/02/02/interreligious-educ>

between religions can lead to relativism and not helping students to develop their identity and acquire values. Therefore, it was concluded that it is important to develop an inter-religious approach.

#### **4. Inter-Religious Approach and Respect of Otherness**

Inter-religious approach acknowledges pluralism and, even more, takes it into account by integrating such an aspect of the society in the curriculum. Religious education thus becomes a meeting point for different religious convictions. In this inter-religious model, students are not only informed, but also introduced, by a teacher who takes an explicitly religious standpoint, to the commitments and nature of different religions, giving them an opportunity to enrich and develop their personal religious experience. Pupils are guided in the formation of their own religious identities, in the confrontation with a Christian and pluralistic system of meanings. Therefore, in a pluralistic multicultural society, unity can be found in diversity. Such unity, however, is not given in advance. It has to be brought about.

As in the multi-religious approach, the inter-religious model indicates the distance from one's own tradition. However, this distance is only temporary and partial. And at the same time, inter-religious approach requires "commitment" from teachers and students, without hindering or excluding dialogue. This approach acknowledges that the truth is pluralistic and relational; that is why communication and dialogue are emphasised in a dynamic and searching way, each one being connected with his or her religion. From this connection, he or she participates in a conversation. Thus, pupils themselves become learning subjects

insofar as the subject of learning is also based on experiences. According to Geneviève Comeau, we allow ourselves to be touched by the authenticity of another's religious commitment, by his or her moral rectitude, by the ethical dimension of his or her religious life. My way of relating to the truth then becomes existential and relational.<sup>22</sup>

In a pluralistic context, the fact of having different religions and ideologies is not a threat to the development of religious identity. It rather favours mutual understanding and acceptance. It is also an occasion to build one's own identity through interaction, confrontation and dialogue with others. The inter-religious model is mainly characterised by three fundamental elements: respect for diversity, engagement, and dialogue. This approach can be considered as "weak pluralism", namely, an existing openness to dialogue, an acceptance and consideration of a form of relativisation of one's own religious convictions.<sup>23</sup> This approach promotes competences and values that foster contribution to a democratic and cohesive society. The aim of inter-religious approach is the respect of diversity, otherness, dialogue and engagement.<sup>24</sup>

In his Speech to Italian Catholic Religion Teachers, Pope Benedict XVI stated that the teaching of the Catholic religion in schools aims "to enlarge the area of our rationality, to reopen it to the larger questions of the truth and the good, to link theology, philosophy and science between them in full respect for the methods proper to them and for their reciprocal autonomy, but also in the awareness of the intrinsic unity that holds them together.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Geneviève COMEAU, Contribution du dialogue inter religieux à la paix, in: *Revue Projet*, 4 (2004) 281, 53-57.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Didier POLLEFEYT – Mieke DE VLIEGER – Wim SMIT, Interreligious education.

<sup>24</sup> From the didactic point of view, this can be achieved for example by the interpretative approach developed by British scholar Robert Jackson. Robert JACKSON, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*, Routledge – Falmer, London, 2004.



The religious dimension is in fact intrinsic to culture. It contributes to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom of life. [...] Thanks to the teaching of the Catholic religion, school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to understand the present better and to be able to plan wisely for the future.”<sup>25</sup> From a theological point of view, plurality and diversity are no longer a threat, or an obstacle but are to be considered as gifts from God. The Second Vatican Constitution, *Dei Verbum*, expresses the idea that God reveals himself in dialogue with people, history and the world. Jesus reveals the God of love who cares for people and calls for humanity, justice and peace, a God who frees people from sin and creates a perspective beyond human expectation. It is on the basis of this conviction that for Christians, dialogue is not only a pedagogical or anthropological opportunity, but a theological necessity.<sup>26</sup>

## 5. The Pedagogy of Christ as an Inspiration for Contributing to Respect and Peace<sup>27</sup>

When we let Jesus teach us, we certainly learn that peace consists of loving God and the neighbour, that love and respect for

<sup>25</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Catholic Religion Teachers, Paul VI Audience Hall, Saturday, 25 April, 2009, in: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/april/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20090425\\_insegnanti-religione.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090425_insegnanti-religione.html) (4 June 2022).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Henri DERROITTE, Quelle est l'expérience belge de l'École catholique du dialogue? Quelle pédagogie du dialogue mettre en œuvre, in: <https://ere.alsace/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/220314-H-Derroitte-Pedagogie-du-dialogue.pdf> (8 June 2022).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Pierre VIANIN – François-Xavier AMHERDT, À l'école du Christ pédagogie. Comment enseigner à la suite du Maître?, Éditions Saint-Augustin, Saint-Maurice, 2011.

others lead to God. Indeed, in his teaching, Jesus used to adapt his message to his audience, to his interlocutors, with great respect. He taught people by taking into consideration their mindset, listening to them without prejudice. Respectful of the conscience of his interlocutors, he invited them to find a path by questioning their living, deepening their understanding and making decisions that give meaning to their lives. Education for peace at school can be achieved through paths of simplicity, dialogue and universal fraternity.

Thus, the interreligious approach should help students overcome antagonisms and conflicts based on religions. By getting to know others and their religions, clichés and stereotypes would gradually fade away and give way to mutual respect. It is not a question of teaching relativism or syncretism, but of allowing oneself to be touched by the authenticity of others religious commitment, by their moral rectitude, by the ethical dimension of their religious lives. Rather than teaching dogma, this approach encourages respect and openness to the other. Even if interreligious dialogue is not automatically a factor of peace, even less the solution to all the problems linked to violence and conflicts, it is nevertheless a necessary condition to overcome clichés and misunderstandings, and to discover the richness of other religious traditions. With this approach, pupils discover that otherness and diversity are not a threat, but a richness willed by God, the Creator and Father of all. And all religions have resources to achieve this goal.

## **Conclusion**

In a secularised, liberal-democratic and multi-religious society, religious education has sometimes been contested. After the terrorist attacks on the USA in 2001, religious education in schools has gained importance, but it has been seen as related to

the goals of civic education in public schools. However, we are convinced that it is still important for students and schools. The issue is of the theological and pedagogical nature. Religious education has to find another way of talking about God and existential issues. Instead of indoctrinating students, it must enlarge the area of their rationality and reopen it to the larger questions of the truth and the good, the peace and the justice, the respect and the dialogue. The inter-religious approach that I propose can help young people to grow in respect of otherness and diversity. From the Christian point of view, the message and life of Jesus can serve as a model of the values postmodern society is longing for, so as to contribute to the cohesion and co-existence of its members.



PART THREE

## **PLACES AND CONTEXTS**



# Religious Education in Public and Catholic Schools in Croatia: How to Promote an Open and Dialogical Identity?

*Josip Šimunović – Gordana Barudžija*

## **Abstract**

*The article provides an overview of Catholic religious education in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia in a systematic way, consisting of three chapters. The first chapter elaborates a framework. First, the legal framework for the implementation of Catholic religious education in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia is presented, followed by the presentation of statistical data on the total number of students in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia and the number of students participating in denominational religious education. The school curricula represent the professional basis for the implementation of Catholic religious education and are therefore discussed in the third part.*

*The second chapter highlights the principles that promote dialogue and openness in teaching Catholic religious education in primary and secondary schools. To avoid dwelling only on theoretical considerations, this chapter offers concrete examples from practice in which religious teachers promote dialogue and openness in the construction of identity. Such and similar extracurricular activities call for the additional education of religious education teachers, which is also discussed in this chapter of the article. The article concludes with the third chapter in which Catholic schools in the Republic of Croatia are briefly presented.*

**Keywords:** *Catholic religious education, dialogue, identity, primary school, secondary school, Catholic schools, education of religious education teachers, Catholic religious education curricula.*

## Introduction

In the article, we will present how the teaching of Catholic religious education in public and Catholic schools takes place within the educational system in the Republic of Croatia, and what opportunities such an approach to education and the promotion of open dialogue opens up.

First, we introduce the legal framework consisting of the Agreements concluded between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Holy See, which are a prerequisite for the implementation of the teaching of Catholic religious education in schools. That is followed by the statistical data on religious education in the Republic of Croatia and in Catholic and public schools. The professional basis for the lessons is the curriculum, so in the third part, we present what preceded them and what the situation is like currently. Relying on the curriculum, we point out the methodological elements – correlation in the teaching of Catholic religious education; cross-curricular correlation; intradisciplinary correlation; interdisciplinarity and content elements that directly or indirectly lead to education for a culture of dialogue, such as discussions on ecology, marriage, and the family, and interreligious topics. We present a few examples from the practice of religious education and briefly comment on the importance of the professional development of religious education teachers. Finally, we examine several topics related to Catholic schools, as they are specific compared to public schools: Catholic schools and their identity in contemporary Croatian education.



# 1. Framework

## 1.1. Legal Framework

After the fall of communism and the advent of democracy, the Church in the Republic of Croatia began to open up to new recipients whose circle was continuously expanding. The addressees of God's Word thus "directly or indirectly become real people both outside the church threshold and outside the sacristy."<sup>1</sup>

In the 1991-92 school year, Catholic religious education once again became part of the school education system. Thanks to its "content and goals, it is instilled in a democratic and plural school, making an undeniable contribution to the comprehensive education of children and youth in them."<sup>2</sup> School religious education emphasises the holistic upbringing of people, promoting, in addition to the religious dimension, the personal and universal social and religious values.<sup>3</sup>

Religious education in high schools, in addition to providing comprehensive knowledge of the Catholic faith, helps students "to develop their own spiritual abilities, ethical and moral awareness as well as values, and to build a critical attitude towards life and the world."<sup>4</sup>

The legal framework for the teaching of Catholic religious education in the Republic of Croatia consists of the Agreements concluded between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia.

<sup>1</sup> Josip BALOBAN, *Djelovanje Crkve u novim društvenim okolnostima* [Actions of the Church in New Social Circumstances], Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1995, 5.

<sup>2</sup> HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA [CROATIAN BISHOP'S CONFERENCE], *Program katoličkoga vjeronauka u osnovnoj školi* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools], Nacionalni katehetski ured Hrvatske biskupske konferencije – Ministarstvo prosvjete i športa Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2003, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA [CROATIAN BISHOP'S CONFERENCE], *Program nastave katoličkoga vjeronauka za srednje škole* [Curriculum for Teaching Catholic Religious Education in Secondary Schools], Nacionalni katehetski ured Hrvatske biskupske konferencije, Zagreb, 2009, 14., in: [https://nku.hbk.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/plan\\_i\\_program\\_vjeronauka\\_SS.pdf](https://nku.hbk.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/plan_i_program_vjeronauka_SS.pdf) (accessed 26 May 2022).

The first is the Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia regarding their collaboration in the fields of education and culture, which was signed in Zagreb on 19 December 1996. Article 1 states the following:

1. The Republic of Croatia, in the light of the principle of religious freedom, respects the fundamental right of parents to religious education of their children and commits to guarantee the teaching of Catholic religious education, as part of the school curriculum and in accordance with the will of parents or guardians, in all public primary and secondary schools as well as pre-school institutions, as a compulsory subject for those who opt for it, under the same conditions as the teaching of other compulsory subjects.<sup>5</sup>

The following articles state that everyone is guaranteed the right to choose religious education, to be taught by qualified religious education teachers to whom the competent bishop issues a *missio canonica*, to have the option to organise other school activities related to education and religious culture in agreement with the competent school and church authorities. It is also determined that the Croatian Bishops' Conference will be in charge of the curricula and didactic material, that the relevant church and state authorities need to monitor the quality of religious education, and that religious education teachers are obliged to respect the relevant church and state regulations.<sup>6</sup>

Implementation Agreement on Catholic Religious Education in Public Schools and Religious Education in Public Preschool Institutions concluded on 29 January 1999 between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Bishops' Conference determines in more detail the status of subjects that

<sup>5</sup> *Ugovor između Svete Stolice i Republike Hrvatske o suradnji na području odgoja i kulture* [Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia regarding their collaboration in the fields of education and culture], Zagreb, 1996., in: <https://nku.hbk.hr/ugovori/ugovor-između-svete-stolice-i-republike-hrvatske-o-suradnji-na-području-odgoja-i-kulture/> (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

are obligatory for the students who opt for them, the equality of implementation conditions as for all other subjects, the minimum number of students required to form a class (7 students), teaching religious education on the basis of two school hours per week, competencies of the Croatian Bishops' Conference related to the curricula and textbooks, as well as other competencies related to monitoring the quality of performance and trainings of religious education teachers, as well as determination of who can teach religious education in schools.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2. Statistical Data

The Republic of Croatia is divided into twenty counties and the capital city of Zagreb. These tables show the total number of students by counties and the number of students attending confessional religious education. A useful note here is that in the Republic of Croatia, primary education is compulsory (grades 1-8), while secondary education is not compulsory.

The current records in the digital system e-Register (e-Matica) cannot be grouped by denomination and displayed that way, but new updates of the system take this into account and we believe that we will be able to have these statistics in the near future. Regarding the number of religious education teachers, according to the records in the e-Register, there are 2,222 employees in primary schools and 537 employees in secondary schools.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ugovor o katoličkom vjeronauku u javnim školama i vjerskom odgoju u javnim predškolskim ustanovama* [Implementation Agreement on Catholic Religious Education in Public Schools and Religious Education in Public Preschool Institutions], Zagreb, 1999, in: <https://nku.hbk.hr/ugovori/ugovor-o-katolicnom-vjeronauku-u-javnim-skolama-i-vjerskom-odgoju-u-javnim-predskolskim-ustanovama/> (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Statistical data were obtained through written correspondence with the Service for Quality Assurance and Information Support of the Education System, the Sector for the Gifted and Children with Disabilities and Information Support to the Education System, the Directorate for Support and Improvement of the Education System of the Ministry of Science and Education on 10 May 2022.

In the school year 2021-22 there have been 12 Catholic primary schools and 12 Catholic secondary schools with 2,202 students in primary schools and 2,364 students in secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>9</sup> In Catholic primary and secondary schools, Catholic religious education is a compulsory subject and is taught on the basis of two school hours per week. The total number of students in primary schools in the Republic of Croatia is 313 995, of which 276 356 students take confessional Religious Education. In secondary schools, the total number of students is 143 201, of which 108 305 students take confessional Religious Education. The majority of students take Catholic Religious Education.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.3. Curricula**

We have pointed out that the concluded agreements, providing a framework for the teaching of Catholic religious education, stipulate that the Croatian Bishops' Conference is responsible for the curricula of the subject Catholic religious education as well as for the related textbooks.

After Catholic religious education was reinstated as part of the educational system in the school year 1991-92, the Ministry of Education and Culture adopted the *Curriculum of Religious Education in Primary School and the Religious Education Programme for Secondary Schools (general instructions)*.<sup>11</sup> It is important to point out

<sup>9</sup> Statistical data were taken from the official website of the National Office for Catholic Schools of the Croatian Bishops' Conference, in: <https://katolicke-skole.hbk.hr/> (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Statistical data were obtained through written correspondence with the Service for Quality Assurance and Information Support of the Education System, the Sector for the Gifted and Children with Disabilities and Information Support to the Education System, the Directorate for Support and Improvement of the Education System of the Ministry of Science and Education on 10 May 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO PROSVJETE I KULTURE REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE, Plan i program vjerskog odgoja i obrazovanja [Curriculum of Religious Education], in: *Glasnik Ministarstva prosvjete i kulture RH. Posebno izdanje. Nastavni planovi i programi, Ministarstvo prosvjete i kulture RH, Zagreb, 1991.*

that in the same year, the competent Ministry published curricula for religious education for several other religious communities: Orthodox Christian Religious Education, Draft Curriculum Framework for Islamic Religious Education for Primary and Secondary Schools, Jewish Religious Education, Fundamentals of the Religion of the Christian Adventist Church, Fundamentals of the Gospel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Evangelical Curriculum.<sup>12</sup>

The following *Curriculum of Catholic Religious Education in Primary Schools* was approved by the Croatian Bishops' Conference at its 14th plenary session on 14 October 1997, verified by the Ministry of Education and Sports on 29 June 1998,<sup>13</sup> and was in use until the publication of the new *Curriculum of Catholic Religious Education in Primary Schools* in 2003.<sup>14</sup> The Croatian National Education Standard (HNOS) introduced a new approach to teaching in primary schools and the competent Ministry issued a *Curriculum for Primary Schools*<sup>15</sup> which brought adjustments for all subjects, including Catholic religious education,<sup>16</sup> and has been implemented ever since 2006. The last update occurred in 2019, when the *Curriculum of the subject Catholic Religious Education for Primary Schools and Gymnasiums* was devised as part of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform.<sup>17</sup> In four-year secondary

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 105-156.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA, *Program katoličkoga vjeronauka u osnovnoj školi* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools], Nacionalni katehetski ured Hrvatske biskupske konferencije –Ministarstvo prosvjete i športa Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO PROSVJETE I ŠPORTA, *Program katoličkoga vjeronauka u osnovnoj školi* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools], Nacionalni katehetski ured Hrvatske biskupske konferencije –Ministarstvo prosvjete i športa Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO ZNANOSTI, OBRAZOVANJA I ŠPORTA, *Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu* [Curriculum for Primary Schools], Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa, Zagreb, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 336-363.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO ZNANOSTI I OBRAZOVANJA, *Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Katolički vjeronauk za osnovne škole i gimnazije* [Curriculum of the subject Catholic

schools, the 2009 *Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for four-year secondary schools* is used,<sup>18</sup> while in three-year secondary schools, the *Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for three-year secondary schools* is used.<sup>19</sup>

Although the last document from 2019 emphasises the curriculum as the starting point for planning religious education lessons, the curricular approach is strongly emphasised in the *Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools* from 2003, while the open curriculum is the highlighted didactic-methodological foundation for planning and programming religious education.<sup>20</sup> Even more important for our topic would be to single out the described principles of school religious education: fidelity to God and mankind,<sup>21</sup> ecumenical and dialogical openness of religious education,<sup>22</sup> and the principle of correlation in religious education.<sup>23</sup> These principles are stated differently, but as they are important and unchangeable, they are also present in the last curricular document.<sup>24</sup>

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*Religious Education for Primary Schools and Gymnasiums*], Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja, Zagreb, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA, *Plan i program katoličkog vjeronauka za četverogodišnje srednje škole* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for four-year secondary schools], Nacionalni katehetski ured Hrvatske biskupske konferencije, Zagreb, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA. NACIONALNI KATEHETSKI URED, *Plan i program katoličkog vjeronauka za trogodišnje srednje škole* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for three-year secondary schools], Hrvatska biskupska konferencija – Nacionalni katehetski ured, Zagreb, 2014., in: <https://nku.hbk.hr/planovi-i-programi/plan-i-program-katolickoga-vjeronauka-za-trogodisnje-srednje-skole/> (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO PROSVJETE I ŠPORTA, *Program katoličkoga vjeronauka u osnovnoj školi* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools], 7.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 3-5.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 5-7.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO ZNANOSTI I OBRAZOVANJA, *Kurikulum nastavnoga predmeta Katolički vjeronauk za osnovne škole i gimnazije* [Curriculum of the subject Catholic Religious Education for Primary Schools and Gymnasiums], 5-9.

## 2. Principles and Examples

### 2.1. *Principles that Promote Dialogue and Openness*

Catholic religious education, as a school subject in primary and secondary schools, nurtures cross-curricular correlation in its lessons. We shall agree that there is no contemporary, modern schooling without (inter) subject correlation. The times which we live in simply require it.

In the correlated conceptualised school religious education, the content of the faith and the experiences of the students interact, they are in a dialogue, from which “consequences for the selection of topics, formulation of goals and methodological approaches” are derived.<sup>25</sup> This is also emphasised in our 2003 *Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools*, as it clearly states that “this principle affects the determination of all aspects of programming school religious education.”<sup>26</sup>

If the principle of correlation between the content of faith and the experiences of students is correctly set within religious education, it can contribute to the existential and constructive connection between these two realities. That is why care must be taken not to anthropologically narrow the content of Revelation, when students create an image of God to their liking instead of considering what God might mean for their lives, which would reflect understanding correlation as a systemic-theological principle. Also, religious teachers should pay a lot of attention to the ways they connect the content of religion and the experiences of students in the Catholic religious education lessons.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Georg HILGER, *Korrelationsdidaktik*, in: Norbert METTE – Folkert RICKERS, (ed.): *Lexikon der Religionspädagogik*. Volume 1, Neukirchener, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2001, 1106.

<sup>26</sup> HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA, *Program katoličkoga vjeronauka u osnovnoj školi* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools], 12.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Đuro ZALAR, *Korelacija kao sustavno-teološko i religiozno pedagoško načelo* [Correlation as a Systemic-Theological and Religious Pedagogical Principle], in: *Bogoslovska smotra*, 75 (2005) 1, 281-285.

The principle of correlation in the teaching of Catholic religious education in schools is implemented on two levels: correlation within the teaching content of the subject (intra-subject correlation), and correlation with certain teaching contents of other school subjects (cross-curricular correlation). Each of these levels has two more sub-levels: correlation within the subjects taught to the same age range (horizontal correlation) and correlation between subjects taught to different age ranges (vertical correlation).

The 2003 *Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools* emphasised that the purpose of Catholic religious education is "the systematic and harmonious theological-ecclesiological and anthropological-pedagogical connection of God's revelation and church tradition with the life experiences of students aimed to achieve systematic and complete, ecumenical and dialogically open learning about the Catholic faith on an informative-cognitive, experiential and active level in order to reach the maturity of the Christian faith and to achieve a comprehensive universal and religious education of students living in their religious and ecclesiastical, cultural and social space."<sup>28</sup> The prescribed purpose of confessional religious education in primary school reveals an intra-subject correlation, which is achieved through the didactic processes of religious education that connect the tradition of religion and the life experiences of students. The correlation within the teaching contents of the subject of Catholic religious education in primary school cannot treat religious tradition, religious contents and contemporary experiences of students as separate notions that are turned inward and have no interrelation.<sup>29</sup> The processing of religious content in teaching units is not just listing of facts without logic, connection and purpose. That content does

<sup>28</sup> HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA, *Program katoličkoga vjeronauka u osnovnoj školi* [Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Primary Schools], 37.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jürgen WERBICK, *Korelacija (načelo)* [Correlation (the principle)], in: Marko PRANJIC (ed.), *Religijsko-pedagoško katehetski leksikon*, Katehetski salezijanski centar, Zagreb, 1991, 380.



not represent an end in itself; its purpose is to find its active place in the lives of students, to shape their own thoughts, actions and attitudes.

In addition to the intra-subject correlation, there is also a correlation between different school subjects. Cross-curricular correlation provides students with a comprehensive education and turns learning the content of school subjects much easier. It can take place on two sub-levels: correlation between subjects taught at the same age level and correlation between subjects taught at different age levels.

There are various possibilities for correlating Catholic religious education in primary and secondary schools with other school subjects. Their successful implementation is conditioned by certain steps that need to be taken. Cross-curricular correlation can be methodological and substantive. Methodological cross-curricular correlation is manifested in the use of teaching methods, methods of work that are specific to a particular school subject.

Content cross-curricular correlation is manifested in the interrelation of the teaching contents of several school subjects, i.e., when a certain teaching content is taught within two or more school subjects with their particularities, establishing a well-rounded, complete teaching unit. It is commendable to always point out the content of the interdisciplinary correlation in the teaching of a particular school subject, including Catholic religious education, so that students could connect the content they have acquired through different subjects into a logical whole and thus facilitate learning.

Catholic religious education shares common teaching contents with many school subjects. Some of them are: Croatian, History, Biology, Geography, Ethics, Music, Art, foreign languages...

One form of content cross-curricular correlation is the day of integrated or project-based learning. These are organised in

primary and secondary schools during the school year. They help students form a complete picture of selected individual topics, as they are explored from different aspects. That is why school subjects from the domain of natural sciences, humanities, social sciences and technical sciences are included in the integrated and project-based learning. Each of the subjects provides its contribution to linking content, that is, its own correlation with the chosen topic.

We are taught to listen to scientists' speeches, strategic plans and programming, and politicians' and various associations' lobbying on various topics that can and are covered in integrated or project-based learning (e.g. water, forests, family, health, being a citizen in society, the city I live in, etc.). We are taught to read about these same topics of observation by journalists and analysts in daily, weekly, and monthly publications. We admire the works of artists, from writers, painters, sculptors to musicians who speak in their own way about the world and the realities that surround them. As a school subject that nurtures correlation with other school subjects, establishing collaboration in the exploration of common topics or parallels in the teaching content, the correlated Catholic religious education examines certain topics from the rich perspective of theological sciences. That is why, as such, it has its place during the days of integrated and project-based learning within which it deals with a given topic relying on the speech of the Church, church teaching and theological sciences.

We must not forget that field trips also enable the connection of the teaching contents of school subjects in which Catholic religious education can have a prominent place.

## ***2.2. Examples from Religious Education Practice***

There are many concrete examples from practice that show how religious teachers promote dialogue and openness in the construction of identity, at the level of the entire Republic of

Croatia. We have singled out several examples that are available on the website of the Zagreb Archdiocese Office for religious education in schools.

School	Activity
Rapska Primary School, Zagreb	Extracurricular activity <i>A million children praying together</i> , praying of the rosary for peace in every family and in the world. <sup>30</sup>
Primary School Eugen Kvaternik, Velika Gorica	Visit to the Islamic Centre <sup>31</sup>
Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac Primary School, Krašić Eugen Kumičić Primary School, Velika Gorica	<i>Bread Days</i> Expressing gratitude to God for all the gifts of the earth. <sup>32</sup>
Ekosspiritus Association in Turopolje	<i>Way of the Cross Hike</i> by the Ekosspiritus Association in Turopolje for the youth. <sup>33</sup>
Granešina Primary School, Zagreb	Festival of Student Cooperatives of the City of Zagreb <i>Flower by flower to a more beautiful Granešina and the world</i> . Products, the ways of making products and the activities of the student cooperative of the school are presented at the festivals. <sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Marijana DODIK, Milijun djece moli zajedno [A million children praying together], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/milijun-djece-moli-zajedno/2336> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Martina FILIPOVIĆ, Posjet Islamskom centru [Visit to the Islamic Centre], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/posjet-islamskom-centru/2335> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Katarina JAKOVLJEVIĆ, Dani kruha i zahvalnosti za plodove zemlje OŠ Eugena Kumičića iz V. Gorice [Days of bread and thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth at Eugene Kumičić Primary School from Velika Gorica], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/dan-kruha-i-zahvalnosti-za-plodove-zemlje-os-eugena-kumicica-iz-v-gorice/2326> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Marija PATRLJ, 68. Planinarski križni put [68 Way of the Cross Hike], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/68.-planinarski-krizni-put/2319> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Marija CIK, 18. Smotra učeničkih zadruga grada Zagreba [18. Exhibition of student cooperatives in the city of Zagreb], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/18.->

Fran Galović Primary School, Zagreb	eTwinning project <i>Prayers of our grandparents</i> <sup>35</sup>
Karlovac Technical School	As part of the UNICEF <i>School for Africa project</i> , activities related to the celebration of Easter have been carried out. Participants made Easter eggs and incorporated African motifs into the Croatian tradition of making them using the technique of decoupage, and a sales exhibition was organised in the school hallway. <sup>36</sup>
Bedekovčina Primary School	Research into the History of the Church - Glagolitic alphabet, which is the first alphabet in which Croats recorded their native language in 10/11 centuries. <sup>37</sup>

### **2.3. Religious Education Teacher Trainings**

In order for religious education teachers to carry out such and similar extracurricular activities, their continuous education is necessary. In the Republic of Croatia, education in the form of professional training is organised by the Education and Teacher Training Agency in cooperation with other institutions such as the National Catechetical Office of the Croatian Bishops' Conference, the National Office of the Croatian Bishops' Conference for Catholic Schools, diocesan catechetical offices and the Zagreb Archdiocese Office for Religious Education in Schools.

In the context of our topic, we single out three examples of professional gatherings: one for religious education and ethics

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smotra-ucenickih-zadruga-grad-a-zagreba/2295 (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Janja ŠKRABA-STANEŠIĆ, Molitve naših baka i djedova [Prayers of our grandparents], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/molitve-nasih-baka-i-djedova/2290> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Petra BELJAN, Afrički Uskrs u Tehničkoj školi Karlovac [Easter in Africa in Technical School Karlovac], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/africki-uskrs-u-tehnickoj-skoli-karlovac/2264> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ana MIHALJEVIĆ, Glagoljica [Glagolitic alphabet], in: <https://stin.hr/glagoljica/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

teachers, one for religious education teachers at the state level and one for religious education teachers at the archdiocesan level.

In 2012, an expert conference titled *Kohlberg's Theory of Cognitive Moral Development and Kohlberg-Fenton's Approach to Leading Moral Dilemma Discussions* was held in Zagreb. The general goal of the conference was to enable Croatian teachers of religious education and ethics to discuss moral dilemmas with students in a structured way based on Kohlberg's theory of cognitive moral development, using the Kohlberg-Fenton approach.<sup>38</sup>

The professional conference – Catechetical Winter School *What kind of society do we want to live in? School religious education from the perspective of Fratelli tutti* was held online on 7 January 2022. The goals of this expert conference were as follows: to understand the educational system as a meeting place for diversity; to perceive the place of religious education in school as important for the value perspective of the future of society; to link religious education and the contents of other subjects for the purpose of *civil society* development; to discover the ownership of religious education in the *responsibility for fraternity*.

Examples of good practice at this conference were created in the context of the *Reference framework of competencies for democratic culture; Volume 1, Context, concepts and model*.<sup>39</sup>

The question we posed then, and can repeat it today, is what kind of educational system do we work in? *What is the value system of the educational system? What is the basis of speaking about a person, civil society, freedom, respect for others? Where can answers to previously asked questions be sought? Issues of one's own identity,*

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Kohlbergova teorija kognitivnog moralnog razvoja [Kohlberg's Theory of Cognitive Moral Development], in: <https://www.azoo.hr/medunarodna-suradnja-arhiva/kohlbergova-teorija-kognitivnog-moralnog-razvoja/> (accessed 14 April 2022).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *Reference framework of competencies for democratic culture*, in: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture> (accessed 17 November 2021).

openness to others and acceptance are cross-curricularly questioned in various subjects. The curriculum for the cross-curricular topic of Civic Education for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia states: "The skills that Civic Education is most focused on are critical thinking on ethical principles and communication skills needed for social and political participation. Above all, these are mediation knowledge, skills and values, the art of peace-making and peaceful conflict resolution, the art of solving social problems on democratic principles (research, dialogue, respect for the other and the different, the art of recognising common goals in diversity). Responsibility, human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity are fundamental values promoted by learning and teaching Civic Education, and special importance is attached to the development of a responsible attitude towards public goods and a willingness to contribute to the common good."<sup>40</sup>

Catholic religious education explores the questions asked within the Christian context, and Pope Francis provided a good direction for today's world in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (especially the third chapter "Envisaging and Engendering an Open World" in points 87-153).

"Cultural, economic and political integration with neighbouring peoples should therefore be accompanied by a process of education that promotes the value of love for one's neighbour, the first indispensable step towards attaining a healthy universal integration."<sup>41</sup> So the expert conference for religious education teachers of the Zagreb Archdiocese titled *Dialogue and Interdisciplinarity in Religious Education* was devised in line with that.<sup>42</sup> The aim of the conference was to contextualise the

<sup>40</sup> Cf. [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2019\\_01\\_10\\_217.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2019_01_10_217.html) (accessed 17 November 2021).

<sup>41</sup> FRANJO, *Fratelli tutti. Enciklika o bratstvu i socijalnom prijateljstvu* (3. X. 2020), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2020, no. 151.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. MINISTARSTVO ZNANOSTI I OBRAZOVANJA, Odluka o donošenju kurikulumu

possibilities of dialogue in the life and work of religious education teachers, to describe how they deal with differences in perspectives, conflicts and difficulties in the educational process, and to distinguish how and using what tools to promote transparency and accountability in religious education vocation and work.

### 3. Catholic Schools and their Identity

#### 3.1. Catholic Schools in Croatia

The fruit of Croatian independence gained in the early 1990s was that the first Catholic schools were diocesan or religious seminaries, which reopened after forty-five long years,<sup>43</sup> becoming accredited gymnasiums. The previously mentioned Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia regarding their collaboration in the fields of education and culture confirms the right of the Catholic Church to establish schools of any level and the right of their staff to enjoy the same rights of all public school workers.<sup>44</sup> Another important document is the Implementing Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Bishops' Conference on Catholic Primary

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za međupredmetnu temu građanski odgoj i obrazovanje za osnovne i srednje škole u Republici Hrvatskoj [Decision on the adoption of the curriculum for the cross-curricular subject civic education and education for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia], in: <http://www.vjeronauk.hr/novosti/pregled/dijalog-i-interdisciplinarnost-u-vjeronaucnoj-nastavi/2411> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>43</sup> Seminaries and religious schools were closed, i.e., abolished in 1946, and in 1952 the Catholic Faculty of Theology was excluded from the University of Zagreb; more about it: Miroslav AKMADŽA, *Katolička Crkva u komunističkoj Hrvatskoj 1945.-1980*. [The Catholic Church in Communist Croatia 1945-1980], Despot Infinitus d.o.o. – Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, Zagreb – Slavonski Brod, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia regarding their collaboration in the fields of education and culture*, in: *Ugovori između Svete Stolice i Republike Hrvatske [Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia]*, articles 8 and 9.

and Secondary Schools,<sup>45</sup> signed on 23 May 2011, as it sets out in more detail the rights and obligations of Catholic schools in the Republic of Croatia.

"The bishops of the Croatian Bishops' Conference saw the importance of Catholic schools so they established the National Office for Catholic Schools within the Croatian Bishops' Conference in 2014. This Office's task is to focus on general issues of Catholic education in the area of Croatian Bishops' Conference's competence and resolve other issues within the scope of work of Catholic schools in line with the provisions of canon law, legislation of the Republic of Croatia and the concluded agreements."<sup>46</sup> In order to strengthen the identity of Catholic schools, a unique educational project of Catholic schools was adopted in 2015.<sup>47</sup>

As of today, there are 24 Catholic schools in the Republic of Croatia - 12 primary and 12 secondary schools. The first Catholic primary school opened its door in 2008 in Šibenik. That same year also marked the opening of the St Benedict Primary Music School in Zadar, followed by the opening of the Catholic Primary School in Požega (2009), The First Catholic Primary School in the city of Zagreb (2013), the Salesian Primary School in Zagreb (2014), St Ursula Catholic Primary School in Varaždin (2014), Catholic Primary School in Virovitica (2015), Josip Pavličić Catholic Primary School in Rijeka (2015), Ružičnjak Primary School in Zagreb (2015), Lotrščak Primary School in Zagreb (2016),

<sup>45</sup> Ugovor o katoličkim osnovnim i srednjim školama [Agreement about Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools], in: <https://katolicke-skole.hbk.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Ugovor-o-katoli%C4%8Dkim-osnovnim-i-srednjim-%C5%A1kolama.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>46</sup> Danijel HOLEŠ, Pogled na sadašnjost i budućnost katoličkih škola: stanje, izazovi i perspektiva [Overview of the Present and Future of Catholic Schools: State, Challenges and Perspective], in: *Vjesnik Đakovačko-osječke nadbiskupije*, 148 (2020) 12, 20.

<sup>47</sup> HRVATSKA BISKUPSKA KONFERENCIJA. NACIONALNI URED ZA KATOLIČKE ŠKOLE, Odgojno-obrazovni projekt katoličke osnovne/srednje škole [The educational project of the Catholic primary/secondary school], in: <https://katolicke-skole.hbk.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Odgojno-obrazovni-projekt-predlo%C5%BEak.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2022).



Catholic Primary School in Novska (2017) and Ivo Mašina Catholic Primary School in Zadar (2018). All Catholic secondary schools are gymnasiums, and most are seminary schools that were recognised and accredited in the early 1990s. These are: Don Frane Bulić Accredited Archdiocesan Classical Gymnasium in Split (1700), John Paul II Accredited Classical Gymnasium in Zadar (1748), Accredited Franciscan Classical Gymnasium in Sinj (1838), Ruđer Bošković Accredited Diocesan Classical Gymnasium in Dubrovnik (1851), Accredited Archdiocesan Classical Gymnasium in Zagreb (1928) and the Accredited Salesian Classical Gymnasium in Rijeka (1959). In the following years, new gymnasiums were established: Pazin College – Accredited Pazin Classical Gymnasium (1993), Fr Marijan Lanosović Accredited Classical Gymnasium in Slavonski Brod (1995), Accredited Women's General Gymnasium of the Society of the Sisters of Charity (1995 – successor of the school opened its door in 1926 but was forcibly closed in 1945), Accredited Jesuit Classical Gymnasium in Osijek (1998), Accredited Catholic Gymnasium in Požega (2007) and Accredited Catholic Classical Gymnasium in Virovitica (2007) In the school year 2020-21, 1945 students were enrolled in Catholic primary schools, and 2357 students in secondary schools.<sup>48</sup>

### **3.2. *Identity of Catholic Schools***

“Although still small in number, Catholic schools in Croatia are increasingly in demand because they are recognised as places where students are safe and receive all the necessary attention and support, develop a true Christian moral education and receive an excellent education. Besides that, they are highlighted as schools with great social and societal engagement.”<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> More on the topic: <https://katolicke-skole.hbk.hr/>.

<sup>49</sup> Danijel HOLEŠ, Pogled na sadašnjost i budućnost katoličkih škola: stanje, izazovi i perspektiva [Overview of the Present and Future of Catholic Schools: State, Challenges and Perspective], 21.

Catholic schools place full focus on the goal of their existence and activity, which is “education of the whole person in the light of the Gospel and frequent encounters with Christ as it draws from him all the energy necessary for work in order to create an atmosphere permeated with the *evangelical spirit of freedom and love* in the school community.”<sup>50</sup> All subjects in Catholic schools are permeated with this goal, including Catholic religious education.

The words of the Congregation for Catholic Education, which emphasise that the curriculum of Catholic schools is not, nor should be, only in the service of modern economic and technological developments, but in the service of educating the whole person,<sup>51</sup> clearly point to the efforts of Catholic schools. Catholic schools have always been something more because they constantly promote a society of wisdom, evaluate everything in the light of Christian and universal values, and educate in the light of the social doctrine of the Church and social responsibility.<sup>52</sup> They need to be filled with encounters and harmonious fusion of learning and life so that students can “gain professional formative experience, nourished by scientific research in different articulations of knowledge, and at the same time wise by connecting it with a life inspired by the gospel.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Cf. CONGREGAZIONE PER L'EDUCAZIONE CATTOLICA, *La scuola cattolica*, 1977, no. 33-37, 55, in: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19770319\\_catholic-school\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_it.html) (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. KONGREGACIJA ZA KATOLIČKI ODGOJ, *Odgajati za međukulturalni dijalog u katoličkoj školi* [Educating for Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools], Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2016, no. 65-66.

<sup>53</sup> KONGREGACIJA ZA KATOLIČKI ODGOJ, *Odgajati za međukulturalni dijalog u katoličkoj školi* [Educating for Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools], no. 62.

## Conclusion

We wanted to use this article to present the possibilities that teaching Catholic religious education in public and Catholic schools can provide in the light of the given topic of promoting open dialogue. Catholic religious education is not a closed and detached school subject. Since it was reinstated in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s, it has, among other things, achieved a correlative approach to the processing of its own content. It nurtures interdisciplinarity with both theological and non-theological sciences. The reality of the world in which we live requires that from Catholic religious education, but also catechesis in general. Catholic religious education is characterised by one evangelising peculiarity, which is that in today's culture it is encouraged to connect its knowledge with other contents of knowledge. As an original form of service to the Word, Catholic religious education makes the gospel present in the personal process of a systematic and critical approach to culture. In the context of the present time and its own place in the educational system, in many cases it provides students with a unique opportunity to be in touch with the message of faith.<sup>54</sup> Among other things, this makes Catholic religious education promote its identity and remain open to dialogue.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. PÄPSTLICHER RAT ZUR FÖRDERUNG DER NEUEVANGELISIERUNG, *Direktorium für die Katechese*, point 313, available at: [https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse\\_downloads/presse\\_2020/2020-06-25\\_Direktorium-fuer-die-Katechese\\_Arbeitsuebersetzung.pdf](https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2020/2020-06-25_Direktorium-fuer-die-Katechese_Arbeitsuebersetzung.pdf) (accessed 28 May 2022).



# Relationship Between the Church, State, and Society in Benin and Croatia: An Experiential Comparison

*Odilon-Gbènoukpo Singbo*

## **Abstract**

Many nations often have in common several historical realities, even if they are different by culture and their natural environment, i.e., geography. In this paper, the author tries to compare two countries: Benin and Croatia. The starting point of this reflection is the Catholic faith as a source of the integral development of humankind and society. Starting from the historical-political realities that have animated the lives of the two countries, the author identifies the points of convergence present in their histories and the dynamic relationship that unfolds between the States and the Church. The article is divided into six parts. The first part brings a brief historical presentation of the situation of the Catholic Church in Africa in general. The second part deals with the political and religious situations in both countries, dominated by communism and the persecution of Church. The third part emphasises the 1990s as a turning point in the history of both countries. While Benin was facing a political and economic crisis and was on the verge of a civil war, Croatia was a victim of the war imposed by Serbia. In the fourth part the author explores the difference between secularity and secularism, terms that are nowadays important for the understanding of the relations between the Church and the mentioned States. The fifth part deals with the collaboration between Church and State in Benin as well as the role of Catholic education in society. The last part highlights the agreements between the Holy See and both countries as the best way to realise peaceful relationship between nations.

**Keywords:** *Benin, Croatia, communism, war, religious education, Church-State collaboration, Vatican agreements, secularity, secularism.*

## Introduction

There is no doubt that the Catholic Church plays an important dual role in the world, even if its ultimate vocation goes beyond worldly realities. On the European continent in general and in Croatia in particular, a large part of what forms the European and Croatian identity would disappear if the role of the Church in their history were removed. The Catholic Church contributes to the strengthening of both social and religious justice in human beings. "They are in the world, but not of the world" (*Jn* 17). This statement of Jesus shows the paradox in which the Christian being and existence must be developed. Indeed, for the baptised person, a new identity is established, however, that does not erase his or her essence as a human being. It is a question of recognising oneself henceforth as enlightened by an interior light that makes a person "salt of the earth and light of the world" (*Mt* 5:13-16). This new identity, far from granting the Christian a new juridical or social status, confirms him at the heart of his society as a citizen henceforth influenced by the Christological significance of the world. By clearly stipulating: "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (*Mt* 22:15-22; *Mc* 12:13-17; *Lk* 20:20-26), Jesus indicates the responsible citizenship that is the foundation of the Christian challenge of being in the world but not of the world. The Church's social doctrine obviously contributes to this through its undeniable fight for justice and dignity, which is expressed in religious freedom, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and respect for human rights as set out since the Second Vatican Council.

After the first Synod of African bishops in 1994, Pope John Paul II recommended in the post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* the creation of Justice and Peace commissions, which would give the lay faithful a space to express themselves on social and political issues. These commissions played an important role in the civic formation of Christians in the early days of democracy and in accompanying electoral processes. It is in this context that the second Synod for Africa took place, which produced *Africae Munus*, which Pope Benedict XVI entrusted to the whole Church of Africa in 2011 in the first basilica of West Africa in Ouidah, Benin. According to him, "Africa's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is a precious treasure which I entrust at the beginning of this third millennium to the bishops, priests, permanent deacons, consecrated persons, catechists and lay faithful of that beloved continent and its neighbouring islands. Through this mission, Africa is led to explore its Christian vocation more deeply; it is called, in the name of Jesus, to live reconciliation between individuals and communities and to promote peace and justice in truth for all."<sup>1</sup>

I will try to briefly outline the nature of the relationship between the Church and the state in Benin and in Croatia as well as the consequences of such a relationship for society.

## 1. The Dynamics of the Catholic Church on the African Continent

The historians<sup>2</sup> who have been interested in the Church-State relations in Africa (here I am referring to Black Africa) generally

<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Africae Munus. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace* (19 November 2011), no. 1. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html) (Accessed: 15 July 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jean-Paul MESSINA – Jaap van SLAGEREN, *Histoire du Christianisme au Cameroun*, Karthala, Paris, 2005; Paul-Henry DUPUIS, *Histoire de l'Église du Bénin. L'aube nouvelle: 1901–1961*, Impr. Notre-Dame, Cotonou, 2005.

identify three periods corresponding to different stances adopted by African Churches. I would like to highlight that this is not the genealogy of the evangelisation of Africa, which also took place in three phases.<sup>3</sup>

First, there is the period of early colonisation, which generally specifies instances of coincidence with the evangelisation of Africa up to the mid-1940s. During this early period, the Catholic Church, dominated by the Western clergy being against the Western settlers, assisted in the work of “civilisation”, especially in the areas of education and health, while advancing the cause of evangelisation. The Church took a stand against the view that the “natives” were treated as minors.

But from the 1940s onwards, the Catholic Church was gradually eclipsed from the public scene by political parties, trade unions, the press and other social forces on which independence demands were grafted. Between 1960 and 1990, the local Churches adapted to the monolithic regimes according to the situation in each country. But in general, collaboration continued in the fields of health and education, except in countries that have experienced communism. Where the rulers, obsessed with autocratic drift, cannot obtain the explicit support of the episcopate, the Church is carefully confined to its religious and social missions. The few non-conformist bishops were intimidated, persecuted, or simply murdered. These three decades were marked by a great apostolic dynamism and growth in the number of Christians, but

<sup>3</sup> According to Gibellini, “The first evangelisation dates to the first five centuries of the Christian era, when the Gospel was spread from Mediterranean Africa to Ethiopia, but the North African Christianity had to give way with the fall of the Roman Empire and the advance of Islam. The second began with the era of the Great Discoveries, the opening of the Atlantic route to the South by the Portuguese, to whom the Papal Bull *Romanus Pontifex* from 1455 granted ‘the right, total and absolute, to invade, conquer and subdue all countries dominated by the enemies of Christ’, this was confirmed by other bulls, especially *Inter coetera* of Alexander VI (1493) which, after the discovery of the Atlantic route to the West, delimited the areas of influence of Portugal and Spain. But it was only during the European colonial period in Central and Southern Africa that the mission succeeded in building a Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa”. Rosino GIBELLINI, *Panorama de la théologie au XXè siècle*, Cerf, Paris, 1994, 526.



also by quarrels over leadership or ethnicity, against a backdrop of clientelism skilfully exploited by the regimes in place, which cracked many episcopal conferences. Many episcopates sank into silence. Here one may ask whether this was a reasonable realism to safeguard the “institutional interests of the Church” or a betrayal of its prophetic mission? Different and even conflictual interpretations of this attitude are allowed. Using the example of the Croatian Blessed Alojzije Stepinac, I would say that it is rather a lack of prophetism in the African context.

From the 1990s onwards, because of the democratic winds, local Churches rediscovered their public role and began to speak out on social and political issues. In some countries, the clergy was asked to play a major role in the national sovereign conferences, which were real tools for arbitration and transition. Indeed, some bishops have presided, with varying degrees of success, over these conferences at a time of serious transition to political pluralism. Let us remain in the Beninese context and mention the role of Bishop Isidore de Souza. I will circle back later to the impact of his role in the civil and ecclesial context of Benin. These men of God were expected to impartially arbitrate the quarrels between the emerging opposition and the nostalgia of the one-party regimes. They assumed these functions in an *ad hoc* manner.

## **2. The Political and Religious Situations of Benin and Croatia**

### ***2.1. The Case of Benin***

Independence in Benin marked a decisive turning point in the emancipation of the country. Regimes have succeeded one another from that time to the present day. Proclaimed a Republic on 4 December 1958, Benin acceded to international sovereignty on 1 August 1960, under the name of Dahomey. The country is known

for the “exemplary” nature of its democratic process, which began in February 1990, following the National Conference of Active Forces, which was successfully led by Bishop de Souza. Since then, several presidential, legislative, and local elections have sanctioned the devolution of political power. More generally, the country’s contemporary political history can be divided into three major periods: the period of political instability, the military-Marxist period, and the period of democratic renewal.

The first twelve years of independence were a time of political instability. A series of *coups d’état* followed one after another until 1970, earning the country the name “the sick child of Africa”. From then on, the country experienced a series of political instabilities that culminated in the army’s seizure of power on 26 October 1972, with Battalion Chief Mathieu Kérékou sweeping away the politicians of the day.

The second phase, military-Marxist, extends from this seizure of power to the National Conference of February 1990. In 1975, the military government made decisive strategic and ideological choices. It must be said that the political landscape of Benin was an amalgam of socialist, Marxist, and communist ideologies. The Republic of Dahomey was renamed the People’s Republic of Benin. It proclaimed its adherence to the socialist economy of Marxist-Leninist orientation. The country was draped in a dictatorial cloak. Several opponents were assassinated, tortured, and exiled. The Church was treacherously persecuted, and its property confiscated by the communist regime. From the mid-1980s onwards, the government was forced into an unprecedented economic situation, which was the result of a series of factors: international gloom, corruption, and imperialism. Here we can already see a common point in the political and social life of Croatia and Benin.

## 2.2. The Case of Croatia

Before briefly presenting the case of Croatia, let us highlight some models of church-state relationship according to some authors. According to Sokol and Staničić, we have three general models of church-state relations in theory and practice. "The first is the model of the state or national churches; the second one is the cooperative or the concordat model; and the third is the model of strict separation of the church and the state (the separation model)."<sup>4</sup> They consider that these three models are not only "pure" models, though they can be in several combinations. In general, there are six models: "Aggressive animosity between the church and the state (communist regimes), Strict separation in theory and practice (France), Strict separation in theory but not in practice (USA), Separation and cooperation (FR Germany), Formal unity, but with substantial division (UK, Denmark, Israel, Norway), and Formal and substantial unity (IR Iran, Saudi Arabia – where, of course, there is a substantive unity of the respective Islamic communities and the state)."<sup>5</sup>

Like Benin, Croatian Catholic Church experienced the aggressive animosity of communism. This country has a very rich history, both politically and in terms of Christianity. Therefore, I do not pretend to give an exhaustive presentation of this history, which is marked by glory and, above all, the cross. Politically, it is known that the same political system, in this case the communism, applies the same *modus operandi*: persecution, confiscation of church property. According to Croatian historian Miroslav Akmadža, at the very end of the Second World war, in March 1945, Croatian Catholic bishops gathered in Zagreb, where they published a letter defending the right of Croatian people to their state and

<sup>4</sup> Tomislav SOKOL – Frane STANIČIĆ, Pravni položaj Katoličke Crkve kao gospodarskog subjekta u pravu Europske unije i hrvatskom pravu [Legal Status of the Catholic Church as an Economic Entity in EU and in Croatian Law], in: *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu*, 68 (2018) 1, 44.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 44.

condemning Communist violence against the Catholic clergy. This was shortly before the NDH<sup>6</sup> collapsed and the Communists seized power in the new Yugoslavia. Not surprisingly, after assuming power, the Communists were hostile to the Catholic Church, and Archbishop Stepinac was arrested and sentenced to prison. The Communists could not accept the fact that there was such a large and powerful organisation in the country that was not only religiously, but also nationally defined, and moreover out of their control. The communist government tried to put pressure on the ecclesiastical authorities in Yugoslavia to weaken the ties with the Holy See and to create a “people’s Church” that would be controlled by the new government, but that policy was avoided thanks to archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac and the Bishops’ conference of Yugoslavia. All the bishops unanimously signed the Pastoral Letter of September 1945, in which they strongly condemned the actions of the new government. The regime then gave up its former strategy and openly confronted Archbishop Stepinac and the Catholic Church. Arrests of priests, suppression of the religious press, confiscation of church property, restrictions on religious education, closure of religious schools, and various other forms of violations of religious freedoms ensued. After Tito’s death in 1980, Croatian bishops were worried about the future of Yugoslavia. No matter how critical they had been of Tito, they feared unfavourable developments after his death, even an armed conflict, that unfortunately came true.<sup>7</sup> The 1990s were thus marked by the Homeland War, as Serbia attacked Croatia. The role of the Church here is undeniable. Although it will be explained in detail later, it could be mentioned

<sup>6</sup> NDH is an abbreviation of *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* that means Independent State of Croatia.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Miroslav AKMADŽA, *Stepinac – In his words and deeds*, AGM, Zagreb, 2021; *Katolička crkva u komunističkoj Hrvatskoj 1945.-1980.*, Despot infinitus, Zagreb, 2013.; *Crkva i država - Svezak I. 1945.-1952. Dopisivanje i razgovori između predstavnika Katoličke crkve i komunističke državne vlasti u Jugoslaviji*, Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, Slavonski Brod, 2008. I also recommend the volumes 2, 3, 4 and 5.

here that the role of the Church was about two main fields. First, its caritative engagement towards people regardless of which country they belong to. Second, the constant invitation of the Church to peace and reconciliation. The evocative sermon of Cardinal Kuharić in Petrinja on the feast of St Lawrence, in 1991, during the Homeland war, summarised this role: "If my opponent burned down my house, I will not burn his! If he destroyed my church, I would not touch his own. In fact, I will take care of it. If he left his home, I will not even take the needle out of it. If he killed my father, brother, sister, I would not return the same measure, but I will respect his father, brother, son, sister's life!"<sup>8</sup>

Croatia stayed longer in this dictatorial system and lost many more lives than Benin. It should be noted that unlike Benin, Croatia, in an amalgam of states under Yugoslavia, was subject to decisions from Belgrade. It is interesting to note the prophetic courage of many priests, religious men, women, and lay faithful in those moments of persecution. In this, in my opinion, lies the strength of this local Church, which did not hide in the sacristy in times of crisis, nor did it give in to the pressure of the dictator. The motto of the first martyrs of the Church: *Non possumus!* applies here. This period allowed for an internal strengthening of the Church with the emblematic figure of the Blessed Martyrs Alojzije Stepinac.<sup>9</sup> The Church stood by the people.

### 3. The 1990s as a Turning Point in the History of Both Countries

Let us return to the situation in Benin to note that, overwhelmed by the ideologies of the Communist Party of Dahomey,

<sup>8</sup> Franjo KUHARIĆ, Propovijed u Petrinji, in: <http://laudato.hr/Novosti/Hrvatska/15-travnja-1919-rodio-se-kardinal-Franjo-Kuharic.aspx> (16 May 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Robin HARRIS, *Life and Times of Croatia's Blessed Alojzije Stepinac*, Gracewing Publishing, Leominster, Herefordshire, 2016; Esther GITMAN, *Alojzije Stepinac – Pillar of human rights*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2019.

the people grumbled in protest. On 6 December 1989, the dictatorial government abandoned socialism as the ideological orientation of the state and convened a National Conference. Moreover, the politically condemned were amnestied and could return to participate in the “Estates General” announced for February. The time of democratic renewal, consecrated by this great meeting of the nation’s living forces, is still underway. From 19 to 28 February 1990, the National Conference brought together delegates from different components of the country under the presidency of Monsignor Isidore de Souza, who left his mark on the history of Benin as a representative of a wise Church concerned with the happiness of all the people.<sup>10</sup> A wind of democratic renewal has enveloped Benin<sup>11</sup> up to the present day.

On the Croatian side, this period coincides with the Serbian aggression on Croatia. Here, we again see the important role, not only of the local Church, but also of the universal Church, through Pope John Paul II, who supported the sovereignty of the young Croatian state for its independence. In my opinion, the post-war period represented a privileged point of influence of the Croatian Church on the social-political scene. Indeed, the prophetic and social dimension that the Church showed in those times raised its importance in the hearts of the faithful. But today, the question is whether the Church still has the same influence and importance in society?

#### **4. From Secularity to Secularism**

Nowadays, we are faced with a situation that revolves around the understanding of two concepts: secularity and secularism.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Richard BANEGAS, *Action collective et transition politique en Afrique. La conférence nationale du Bénin*, in: *Cultures & Conflits*, 17 (1995), 18-20.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Afize D. ADAMON, *Le renouveau démocratique au Bénin: la Conférence nationale des forces vives et la période de transition*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 1995.

Secularity does not mean ignorance, but rather respect for religion, an expression of the freedom of the citizen; secularity cannot be equated with either atheism or agnosticism; it is and remains a philosophy of respect for beliefs, but also of rejection of discrimination; it is tolerance and respect for differences; and the secular state is a state that does not exercise any religious power, and in which religious denominations do not exercise political power. In the Beninese context, it can be said that the country has favourable predispositions for a relationship between the State, the Church and society in a perspective of secularity understood as the non-interference of one in the affairs of the other, but at the same time a constructive and objective collaboration for the good of people, each according to its role and competence.<sup>12</sup> It could be said that in its logic of thinking and action, even "Christianity has a secularising nature that leads to the desacralisation and autonomy of earthly realities within which the secularity of the political represents a partial aspect of an even broader, general historical process."<sup>13</sup> The religious landscape of Benin is heterogeneous and multicultural. According to the statistical report of the *National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis* (INSAE), Benin has 25.5% Catholics.

In Croatia, the situation is much more homogeneous, with over 78% of citizens declaring themselves as Catholic.<sup>14</sup> In both countries, the question is whether the declaration of belonging really corresponds to a daily life of faith according to the demands of the gospel. In Croatia, we can say that for some, it is a superficial or facade membership, while in Benin, it is a

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Frane STANIČIĆ, A Contribution to the Debate on the Republic of Croatia as a Secular State and on the Terms Secularization and Secularism, in: *Pravni Vjesnik*, 35 (2019) 3-4, 9-11.

<sup>13</sup> Željko TANJIĆ, Dajte caru carevo, a Bogu Božje. Orisi teološko-filozofskog pogleda na odnos Crkve i Države, in: *Bogoslovska smotra*, 82 (2012) 4, 942.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA, DRŽAVNI ZAVOD ZA STATISTIKU, Objavljeni konačni rezultati Popisa 2021, in: <https://dzs.gov.hr/vijesti/objavljeni-konacni-rezultati-popisa-2021/1270> (22 September 2022).

membership at risk of syncretism. In both cases, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Let us return to the question of secularity and secularism. In my opinion, Benin is at the moment much more anchored in a logic of secularity, whereas Croatia, due to its geographical and cultural position, is approaching the slope of secularism, especially under the influence of certain political actors who tend to deny the crucial role of the Church in the Croatian national history. Secularism in this context means an unjustified effort to reject all that is religious, and especially Catholic. One of its manifestations is the dictatorship of relativism of which Pope Benedict spoke. That dictatorship “does not recognise anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.”<sup>15</sup>

In this sense, the following remark can be made: There is no doubt that the religious landscape of the western world, which often mirrors African countries, is experiencing a decline in the religious phenomenon, or at least a metamorphosis, because each new generation is less religious than the previous one. This led many sociologists in the 1990s to raise the question of *unchurching of Europe*,<sup>16</sup> or secularisation as the removal of sectors of society and culture from the authority of institutions and the symbols of society. Others spoke of a post-Christian Europe.<sup>17</sup> In my opinion, we should rather speak of a social exit from religion, of a loss of the relevance of religion in the life of Western society, but it is not a question of its disappearance at the level of individual consciences. If it is true that the context of the life of faith in

<sup>15</sup> Mass “Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice”. Homily of His Eminence Card. Joseph Ratzinger Dean of the College of Cardinals, Vatican Basilica, Monday 18 April 2005, Available from: [https://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice\\_20050418\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html) (Accessed: 2 October 2022).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Sheena ASHFORD – Noel TIMMS, *What Europe thinks. A study of Western European values*, Brookfield, Dartmouth, Aldershot 1992, 3-5.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Yves LAMBERT, *Vers une Europe post-chrétienne?*, in: *Futuribles*, (1995) 200, 85-101.



Europe has this tendency to *un-church*, the Croatian context is more positive and very similar to the situation in Benin because many Christians still practice the sacramental life, even if there is always the risk of conceiving the sacraments from a traditional point of view without deep commitment.

## 5. Church-State Collaboration

Let us return to the relationship between the State and the Church, noting that after the dictatorial period, the *Conference of the Living Forces of the Nation* of February 1990 revealed to the world the image of Benin as capable of dialogue, reconciliation, and democracy. This historic achievement, which was decisive at the time, remains today the prestigious mark of the identity and conscience of a nation that had long been mocked everywhere else for its ephemeral governments.

From the missionary period to the present day, the relationship between the Church and the State in Benin can be divided as follows:

- 1st Period: from the arrival of missionaries<sup>18</sup> to the period of independence (1861-1960), characterised above all by a mission of civilisation, the result of more or less direct collaboration between the missionary and the coloniser, with an ignorance of the real needs of the people. Let us mention that the first missionaries came to Benin 1861: “18 April [1861] Thursday. In the morning, we went a little to the North to discover the land (...). Towards noon, we arrived in front of the Whydah<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Renzo MANDIROLA, Francesco Borghero Premier missionnaire du Dahomey. De 1861 à 1865, in: *Histoire et missions chrétiennes*, 2 (2007) 2, 45-61.

<sup>19</sup> It is about the city of Ouidah, one of the African slave trade ports. It is known today for its monuments to the slaves and especially for its “gate of no return” which symbolised the gate through which the sons and daughters of this country left, but no longer returned. During the jubilee of the year 2000 the Catholic Church built a new gate called the “Gate of Hope”, especially as a sign of homage to the works of the missionaries.

trading post (...). We were received with hospitality until we found a place to establish the mission",<sup>20</sup> states a diary entry by Fr Francesco Borghero who was to become the first interim superior of the vicariate of Dahomey.

- 2nd Period: from the period of independence until the revolution (1960-1972), characterised by an effort to push the Church out of the public arena.
- 3rd Period: from the revolution to the *Conference of the Living Forces of the Nation* (1972-1990), characterised by the continuation of the removal of the Church from the public scene, as the Church tried to reinforce its proximity to the oppressed people.
- 4th Period: from the Conference to the present day (1990-2023), a very remarkable and inescapable presence of the Church in social events and the growth of the local clergy as well as of the number of the faithful. This is the period of the Framework Agreement between the State and the Vatican.

Throughout these four periods, the emphasis is always on the social dimension of the gospel. The people – Catholic or not – benefit from the fruits of the Church's social work. When we read the history of the first missionaries in our country in the last 160 years, we must admit that they did not arrive in the context of justice because some of them were linked to colonisation. However, they gradually opted for justice by working for the promotion of humankind. We realise how much they were concerned about the social condition of the people they wanted to evangelise by creating schools, health centres, institutions for the advancement of women, boarding schools for boys and girls to combine instruction and education, etc. Several generations of

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Ouidah is also symbolical city where the first basilica of west Africa is built and where pope Benedict signed and gave the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* in November 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Renzo MANDIROLA, Francesco Borghero Premier missionnaire du Dahomey, 42-43.

men and women benefited from these efforts, which were only possible thanks to the meagre resources they collected locally.

It is precisely here that we must highlight that the Catholic school is older than the public school. Indeed, while the Catholic school exists since 1862, that is, one year after the arrival of the first missionaries, the first public school was opened 30 years later, that is, in 1892. Because of the multiculturalism in Benin, the Church understood very early the importance of Catholic schools in all dioceses.<sup>21</sup> In summary, it must be said that the Catholic Church in Benin, aware of the needs of the people, is doing everything possible to perpetuate the actions of the missionaries and to contribute effectively to the construction of social justice in Benin. Apart from the creation of social aid structures (Caritas, orphanages, hospitals, training centres, etc.) and schools of Theological and Pastoral Initiation in several dioceses, a question remains: Are Catholic schools really at the service of the formation and education of all people, or are they reserved for the wealthy minority, capable of paying for schooling that is often above the middle class standard of living? This is justified by the fact that Catholic schools are not supported by the state. But in many dioceses, one gets the impression that the schools serve more as a financial income than as a non-profit source for the education of the people.

## **6. The Vatican Agreements for a More Prophetic Presence of the Church**

When we think about the contemporary relations between the Catholic Church and the Republic of Croatia, and between the Catholic Church and the Republic of Benin, we can mention

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<sup>21</sup> According to the information I got from the *National Direction of Catholic Education*, today, there are 523 Catholic schools in Benin: 113 nursery schools, 266 elementary school, 138 middle and high schools, 5 universities and a teacher training college.

that they are based on agreements between Croatia and the Holy See that were ratified in 1998, and for Benin in 2018. In both cases, these agreements are based on the Constitutions of both countries and the proclamation of the Second Vatican Council on the separation and independence of the Church and the State. In the most positive sense, these Vatican agreements considered the fact that most of the citizens of the Republic of Croatia are Catholics and that the Catholic Church has historically played an extremely important role in Croatian society in the spiritual, cultural, educational, political, and economic fields. In the context of Croatia, the Catholic Church played a significant role in the process of international recognition of the Republic of Croatia as well as an extremely important social role during the severe threats during and after the Homeland War. Contracts regulate the status of Catholic schools, charitable and cultural institutions; in Croatia, the issue of restitution or compensation of seized property was resolved, and in both countries, the issue of state financial support to the Catholic Church was resolved.

In the case of Benin, even if we do not yet see the concrete application of this Agreement, we can hope for an improvement and a great evolution between the Dahomey of 160 years ago and the Benin of today. On the Croatian side, the Agreement is largely implemented. This can be seen in the implementation of Catholic religious education as one of several confessional forms of religious education in all state schools, and the financial intervention of the state to support the charitable work of the Church. Even if some political parties try to challenge this agreement by seeking its revision, Croatia is an example of the concrete realisation of the Agreements between the State and the Church for the benefit of the whole society.

Finally, let us point out some paradoxes between the two nations. We know that national consciousness is not always linked to the physical existence of a state as a national entity. Indeed,

Croatian national consciousness is older than the Croatian state as we know it today, and this consciousness is kept alive thanks to the role of the Church both within the former Yugoslavia and among Croatian people in the diaspora, especially among those who emigrated after the Second World War. The case of Benin and many other African countries is quite the opposite. National consciousness began to be developed after the birth of the state within its current borders imposed by the conquerors who did not consider identity and cultural sensitivities of local people. And this consciousness became more vivid just after gaining independence.

In the light of the brief historical context of the two states, we can say that even if the Church in Benin enjoys respect, its mission of evangelisation and education still has a long way to go if we consider the presence of syncretism, intellectual individualism, and above all, the lack of vision in the management of human resources. In the case of Croatia, the Church, in my opinion, has not sufficiently seized the opportunity, the *kairos*, to become more involved in changing the communist mentality through the creation of cultural and educational structures. The most promising time, in my opinion, was the time after the Homeland War, as I have the impression that the Church had believed that the collaboration with the political world will always be favourable. The Church has lost some of this prophetic vision of its mission in the 1990s and is now losing its importance in society. Politics often exploits the Church, but finally does not consider the values promoted by it when it comes to passing laws. Two sides, those who want the Croatian national state and the Catholic Church, used to have a common enemy: the communist party and the dictatorial regime of Yugoslavia. Today, this enemy seems to have disappeared, but the mentality has remained, often against the values of the Church, which has not been able to be sufficiently missionary among its people through the said structures. But it is still not too late.

## Final Thoughts

One of the common points between Benin and Croatia is above all the role of Christian education and the permanent duty of the Church to work for reconciliation. According to *Africae Munus* "Reconciliation, then, is not limited to God's plan to draw estranged and sinful humanity to himself in Christ through the forgiveness of sins and out of love. It is also the restoration of relationships between people through the settlement of differences and the removal of obstacles to their relationships in their experience of God's love."<sup>22</sup> For Croatia, this need for reconciliation is linked to the consequences of the Homeland War. First, an internal reconciliation within the people themselves needs to occur, followed by the reconciliation with the aggressor. But such reconciliation presupposes the objective truth regarding history. For Benin, Catholic schools must become more inclusive for the Christian education to serve in the formation of the future socio-political actors, in the spirit of sincere patriotism and development, of a sincere experience of multiculturalism which must turn into interculturality within the country, as well as in relation to other countries.

Both countries can learn from each other. Benin, but also many African countries can learn from Croatia a more rational way of living the faith, but also how to work on the development of local resources for a more responsible and autonomous church. Indeed, the tendency is to always wait for help from the Western churches for the realisation of various projects, whereas African countries have human resources that can help in a self-development. The way in which Croatia recovered quickly from the damages of the war can serve as an example for African countries. In this sense, they can learn the true meaning of patriotism which does not mean blind and excludes nationalism.

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<sup>22</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 20.

Croatia can learn from the Church in Benin but also in Africa an acceptable emotional level of the way it lives the faith. Indeed, sometimes it seems that faith is enclosed within cold rules and lacking any concrete link with the reality that the lay faithful live. The gospel concerns man in his morphological, psychic, and spiritual totality. The joy of the gospel, which the African Christians show, can serve to revive the hearts of the Croatian Christians. It is not an epidermal and emotional experience of faith, but a commitment of the whole Christian being.

The two events common to both countries – the experience of communism and the events of the 1990s – can serve as points of reference for Christian formation and the education of younger generations, so that they learn to appreciate the price paid for the rooting of the faith. Finally, the way in which Croatia has managed to implement the agreements with the Holy See can serve as an example for many countries in Africa, since the benefits of the agreements are not only reaped by the Catholic Church, but also by other religious denominations and even by the civil society. In this way, and respecting the requirements of secularity, the Church in Africa can easily realise its prophetic vocation to the service of humankind.





# The Role of Religious Education in the Advocacy of the Common Good in the Democratic Republic of Congo

*Martinien Bosokpale Dumana*

## **Abstract**

Since the accession of the Democratic Republic of Congo to independence, the authorities in all areas of the country have been going in circles in the management of public affairs. There is a serious management problem. As a result, we are witnessing the misappropriation of public funds without any concern or scruples; corruption is at an all-time high and tribalism is undermining the institutions of the State and the Church. All this reduces the population to misery and precariousness.

To overcome this lack of responsibility, schools train citizens and young people in both the advocacy of the common good as well as responsible and transparent management of it, that should leave no room for suspicion. The most effective way to do this is through citizenship education. The role of this education is to initiate the Congolese to become true citizens, and to create a religious culture of respect for people and their property within the religious education; an education that will have to replace the anti-values tacitly erected as a regulatory norm in the Congolese society.

**Keywords:** *education, religion, advocacy of the common good, Democratic Republic of Congo.*

## Introduction

Speaking on the role of religious education in the advocacy of the common good in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is the theme of this paper, implies reflecting on the contribution of a man, trained in Catholic schools, within the institutions of the State. Rather than assessing the quality of work carried out by each Catholic learner in his or her professional environment, which would be very ambitious, I will focus attention on the means that religious education uses to make learners capable of participating actively in the management of the *Res Publica*, within the Congolese State. If a community wants to have citizens with appreciable ethical conduct, it must begin by training them at the school level, by providing them with the necessary assets to devote themselves to the service of their society. The school is the place of preparation for a civic and political life worthy of citizens.

In this contribution, I propose to examine the place reserved for religious education in the citizenship education classes within the schools of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The interest of this paper will be simply pedagogical. It will focus on the hypothesis that religious education is a preparation for the respect of man and the public good. For, “it is man who must be at the heart of any political commitment,”<sup>1</sup> and preparation begins on the school bench. To try to verify the hypothesis thus formulated, two points will be considered. I will speak, first of all, about religious education and the education for citizenship. The objective will be to examine the relationship between citizenship and religious education in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I will then propose some reflections that aim at achieving permanent

<sup>1</sup> Léonard SANTEDI KINKUPU, *L'Église et la construction d'une nation. Contribution en République Démocratique du Congo*, in: *Congo-Afrique*, (Mars-Avril 2014) no. 483-484, 218-228, here 221.

dialogue between Catholic education, civic education, and the advocacy of the common good.

My method will be analytical. I will first present the achievements of religious education in the teaching of citizenship, before examining its limits and proposing future perspectives.

## **1. Religious Education and Education for Citizenship in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

Let's start with a simple, purely linguistic definition. Citizenship education is a set of pedagogical principles that aim to provide learners with the necessary assets to become worthy citizens within society. Thus defined, citizenship education is first and foremost a pedagogical concept, and concerns the area of educating citizens to become responsible members of society. As can be seen, citizenship education involves two important elements, namely becoming a citizen and responsibility. Becoming a citizen is not a matter of chance. It is not acquired by the simple fact that we belong to a given society. The national or continental identity of an individual does not elevate him or her to the level of a responsible citizen. Instead, citizenship requires continuous training, awareness and aspiration to live a good life. In other words, citizenship is an educational task that involves the moral education of learners in line with ethical aspirations.

Citizenship is education-oriented. An uneducated person cannot dream of becoming a worthy citizen of his or her society. In this sense, school becomes a place of learning not only theoretical knowledge, which makes the learner capable of analysing life situations, but also the principles of good life. It contributes thus to the construction of learners' personalities and disposes them to lead a fulfilled life in "the respect of the common good and of the given word, the sense of the effort, the love of the work and

the patriotism.”<sup>2</sup> If becoming a citizen is a pedagogical process which finds its genesis on a school bench, the responsibility is a civic affair. It requires the citizen, who has become that thanks to the assets acquired in school, to demonstrate the training received in his or her professional environment. Responsibility is the ability to answer for one’s own actions and to behave as a person of dignity in all circumstances.

In the teaching of citizenship education in the Democratic Republic of Congo, learners are taught how to become citizens. This means “to integrate fully into the political community of which one is a member.”<sup>3</sup> Learners are taught, from the school period onwards, how to take an active part in the socio-political organisation of their state, as a full-fledged person. This teaching allows learners to prepare themselves to acquire a legal status in order to exercise their role as citizens, i.e., to vote, to be elected, to express themselves, to participate in an association, in short to exercise their role as citizens.<sup>4</sup> These ideas contained in the citizenship education subject also meet those developed by religious education in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Here, access is given to “the dignity of man”<sup>5</sup> attested by his capacity to participate in the organisation of the socio-political life of his country.

What religious education brings to the education for citizenship is the insistence on the respect of the human person, on personal dignity, first of all, as a civic and moral person, that is to say the one who is called to bring a dignified life in the fear of

<sup>2</sup> Léonard SANTEDI KINKUPU, *L’Église et la construction d’une nation*, 223.

<sup>3</sup> Bertin BEYA MALENGU, *Éducation à la citoyenneté*. Cours à l’usage des étudiants de première Licence en Droit, Communications Sociales, Relations internationales, Médecine, Santé Publique, Sciences informatiques, Economie, etc. (Manuscript), Kinshasa, Université Catholique du Congo, 2021-2022.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Léon DE SAINT MOULIN – Roger Gaise N’GANZI (eds.), *Église et société. Le discours socio-politique de l’Église catholique du Congo (1956-1998)*, Vol. 1: *Textes de la conférence épiscopale*, Kinshasa, Faculté catholique, 1998, 19.

God and the respect of others. From this point of view, religious education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, when combined with education for citizenship, can provide it with the Christian fundamentals that consider the integral formation of man.

Religious education and education for citizenship are called upon and complement each other, without being confused with each other. What religious education brings to the education for citizenship is in line with the social teaching of the Church, as relayed by the Bishops of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), which is exactly the effort to see the believers of our country assume the responsibilities entrusted to them within the state, with the dignity of God's children. In this sense, the social teaching of the Church, as a "specific reflection on the problems of the society,"<sup>6</sup> contributes to the enrichment of the subject of citizenship education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Even if it is not possible to draw up a balance sheet on the quality of service rendered by the former students of Catholic schools in the institutions of the state, it should nevertheless be stressed that Catholic education contributes to the formation of the high political executives of our country.

But, if religious education meets the goals of education for citizenship in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it should also be noted that this teaching contributes to the understanding of the meaning of common good. For only those who have learned a sense of responsibility and respect for the public good can contribute to the good of all, right from school. Let us see now how religious education contributes to the sensitising for the well-being of all.

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre BOISARD, Les obstacles rencontrés par l'enseignement social chrétien, in: L'UNIVERSITÉ VOLANTE INTERNATIONALE, *L'enseignement social chrétien*, Fribourg (Suisse), Éditions Universitaires, 1988, 19.

## **2. Catholic Education and the Advocacy of the Common Good in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

At the outset, it is appropriate to clarify the meaning given to the concept of the common good, in order to identify the way in which its advocacy is envisaged in the context of Catholic education. We would like to start from its general meaning before addressing it in the understanding of Catholic education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, “the common good is described as being either the observance of a social pact, or the social result, miraculously transmitted, of personal interests that act without obstacles, or as being the supreme happiness of the majority.”<sup>7</sup> From this definition, three meanings of the common good can be sorted. First, it is the observance of a social pact that has been transmitted and received; second, personal interests that act without obstacles; third, the supreme happiness of the majority.

Two meanings of the definition of the common good hold our attention, namely the inheritance transmitted and received, but also the meaning of supreme happiness of the majority. If the first meaning leads us to think of the common good as something that precedes us and whose transmission to others is a civic duty, the second meaning implies that the common good needs to be considered as a matter concerning the greatest number of the population. Far from wanting to decide between these two aspects of the common good, we consider the fulfilment of everyone as the common denominator of these two definitions. This is what meets the position defended by religious teaching which defines the common good “in a general way, as being the whole of the conditions necessary for social life, which allow the groups but also each of its members to reach more completely and more

<sup>7</sup> Manfred SPIEKER, La responsabilité des corps intermédiaires pour le bien commun, in: L'UNIVERSITÉ VOLANTE INTERNATIONALE, *L'enseignement social chrétien*, Fribourg (Suisse), Éditions Universitaires, 1988, 156.

easily their own fulfilment.”<sup>8</sup> Since the development of all beings is the objective of the common good, religious education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo becomes one of the factors of this objective’s realisation.

In the existence of any society, the common good is the goal of all social action. What people are called upon to do is oriented towards promoting the happiness of all in order to allow the blossoming of the group, but also of each member who is part of it. “The common good is inseparable from the very existence of society. It is its purpose. The common good is the goal of social production. It enables people in society to strive for happiness.”<sup>9</sup> From this point of view, we can say that the very purpose of living together is the fulfilment of all. We can only live well to the extent to which each member of the group works for the satisfaction of others and vice versa.

One of the common goods that religious education helps to maintain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is peace. Religious education works to promote peace, first of all, in the school environment, by teaching students mutual respect and tolerance in the face of cultural and ethical diversity. In a Catholic religious institution, marked by the presence of Catholic pupils, the problem of respecting “the Catholic identity of the establishment, [appears also as] the problem of a complicated crossing between the proclamation of the Christian faith and the gratuity of the welcome, to see the perilous crossroads of the otherness between peril and dialogue.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the first mission of religious education is to promote peace in the context of cultural diversity.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>9</sup> Roland MINNERATH, *Doctrine sociale de l'Église et bien commun*, Paris, Beauchesne, 2010, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Rémi CAUCANAS, La question de la présence d'élèves et enseignants non Catholiques dans les écoles Catholiques, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion?* Actes du colloque International du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda, Éditions jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 99-112, here 99.

In addition, religious education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributes to fostering peace in society marked by the phenomenon called the Revival church. "In Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, it is possible to find a church on almost every avenue, with large sound equipment, a pastor who is often self-taught, and who attracts many followers."<sup>11</sup>

In such a context, the pupils of Catholic schools are trained in the respect of religious opinions in the classroom with their classmates. If religious education participates in the promotion of the common good through education for tolerance, it must be situated within the general framework of "education for values in a pluralistic democracy,"<sup>12</sup> as developed in the social doctrine of the Church. Here, the emphasis is on respect for freedom of opinion, difference of views, race, custom and gender, which is found in a democracy. In the particular context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the promotion of peace and the rule of law is part of the common good that religious education aims at. This goal cannot be achieved without respect for democratic principles in which diversity of opinion is privileged. "The value of Democracy can only be exercised to the detriments of these other values which are peace and public order, which condition any undertaking aimed at the establishment of the rule of law."<sup>13</sup> It thus appears that religious education, by insisting on respect for the person and cultural diversity, contributes to the construction of a just Congolese society, where men and women of different origins feel happy to live together.

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<sup>11</sup> Martinien BOKPALE DUMANA, *Le cours de religion et la question des dérives religieuses dans le sillage des Églises de réveil*, in: Jean-Paul NIYIGENA (ed.), *Religions et défis actuels de l'école. Quelle pertinence du cours de religion?* Actes du colloque International du 8 au 12 juillet 2018, Butare, Rwanda, Éditions jésuites – Lumen Vitae, Bruxelles, 2019, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Roland MINNERATH, *Doctrine sociale de l'Église et bien commun*, 139.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



But, if it is true that religious education contributes to the promotion of peace, first in the school, then in the society where men and women of different origins live, then it must be noted that in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, much remains to be done. The responsibility of the State is not yet fully effective in the Congolese society; several areas of social life, such as the effective management of the teaching staff, still suffer from the involvement of the state in the promotion of the common good. Even if the implementation of the project of free education has taken place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, several factors, notably the effective follow-up of the school calendar, the training for the improvement of teachers' capacities, etc., have not been taken into account.

In this sense, even if in the religious context one works for the common good, "there is common good whose realisation is the duty of politics."<sup>14</sup> The Congolese state must put in place a policy that engages people in the promotion of the well-being of all. The task of the Church, through religious education in the Congolese context, is also to remind the state of its obligations related to the realisation of the common good. The role that the Congolese state must play from now on implies doing everything possible for the effective promotion of the common good in the context of living together. Among the tasks of the State, one must count the organisation, structuring and effective implementation of the conditions for the realisation of the happiness of each and every person. On that front, the Congolese State is still dragging its feet.

Not only is the state still dragging its feet in the structuring of the common good in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also and above all, it is unable to apply the principle of subsidiarity, a guarantee of the promotion of the common good. "Subsidiarity concerns the organisation of society, and more precisely the

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<sup>14</sup> Manfred SPIEKER, *La responsabilité des corps intermédiaires pour le bien commun*, 155.

relationship between its various natural components;<sup>15</sup> it is the recognition of the place that each social structure must occupy in the promotion of the happiness of all. Among these social structures, it is advisable to quote “the family, the commune, [...], the company or the administration in which one works, the associative world, in short, all the forms of organisation called intermediate bodies, which are situated between the family and the State.”<sup>16</sup> Consequently, it is necessary to make other intermediary organs of social life responsible so that they work to promote happiness. To do this, the Congolese State decentralises the activities of the promotion of the common good to the level of each social organisation so that it can help it to reach its objectives. “Only a healthy politics, involving the most diverse sectors and skills, is capable of overseeing this process. An economy that is an integral part of a political, social, cultural, and popular programme directed to the common good could pave the way for ‘different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress, but rather directing that energy along new channels.’”<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

The common good is not an acquired, static good, won once and for all. Nor is it a horizon that can never be reached. On the other hand, it remains a quest whose realisation implies the participation of each sector of the national life, from the family and the school to the public institutions of the State. It is on this note that we wish to conclude this contribution which presented

<sup>15</sup> Roland MINNERATH, *Doctrine sociale de l'Eglise et bien commun*, 38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> FRANCIS, Encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* of the Holy Father Francis *On Fraternity and Social Firendship* (3 October, 2020), in: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html#\\_ftn164](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html#_ftn164) (16 May 2023) no. 179, referring to *Laudato sí*, 191.

the role of religious education in the advocacy of the common good in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Two aspects were approached in this paper: the first aspect was to justify the place of religious education in the teaching of citizenship in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The fundamental reason was to see how religious education participates in the formation of the Congolese citizens, starting from the school environment. For, if the common good is everyone's concern, citizenship is one of the conditions for the realisation of the happiness of all in a world marked by cultural, linguistic, ethnic diversity, etc.

The role of religious education is to participate in the promotion of a society where tolerance is an indispensable value for the promotion of the common good. In a society torn from within by conflicts in all their forms (ethnic conflict, armed conflict, criminality, poverty, etc.), members cannot work for the happiness of all. The objective will be to privilege the private interest to the detriment of the well-being of all, that is to say the common good.

This is why religious education is part of a pedagogy that will participate in the promotion of respect for human dignity, for the good of others and to the benefit of all. The second aspect of this contribution consisted in showing the link between Catholic education and the common good in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The point of this second argument of my paper revolved around the idea that if the common good is an aspiration of the whole society, religious education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the means of its realisation. It trains learners to live in peace, in a context marked by religious diversity and the phenomenon of the revivalist churches. Peace is a condition for the acquisition of happiness in a pluralistic context. The responsibility of the State, which is not fully assumed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is to guarantee the proper treatment of teachers,

to monitor the functioning of projects set up for the happiness of all and to promote the democratic principle of subsidiarity.

The role of religious education in the advocacy of the common good in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a task to be done, redone and protected, because our society is characterised by cultural diversity, the promotion of democracy, which implies respect for the opinions of others, and the plurality of religion which calls for tolerance in living together.

# Citizenship, Gender, and Religious Education in Kenya: A Contextual Approach

*Mary N. Getui*

## **Abstract**

*The (ideal) responsible citizen can be described as someone who is religious and appreciative of religion; someone who is educated (knowledgeable); one who is actively engaged in the community; one who appreciates pluralism, co-existence and social cohesion, and is an agent of change. The Constitution of Kenya is cognisant of this and has devoted several parts of the Constitution to the matters of citizenship. It is noted, however, that there are several social issues of concern that make it difficult for individuals to be responsible citizens or to contribute towards responsible citizenship. This calls for a revisit and an analysis of education in general, particularly religious and gender education in pre-colonial Africa, and formal education, in an effort to trace and identify helpful and healthy religious and gender practices, as well as challenges in forming and educating for responsible citizenship. The home, the school and the Church are considered as key institutions in promoting religious education and gender education. The Church in particular has a greater responsibility because it has a large following and can enhance the efforts of the home and the school in producing responsible citizens.*

**Keywords:** *Education, Gender, Religious Education, Responsibility, Citizenship.*

## **Introduction**

In an attempt to address the topic of this article titled “Citizenship, Gender, and Religious Education in Kenya: A Contextual Approach” within the theme “The Contribution of Religious Education to the Creation of Responsible Citizens: European and African Perspectives”, the following aspects are addressed: the ideal (world) citizen; citizenship in the Constitution of Kenya; gender and the ideal citizen; issues and challenges citizens face in Kenya; agents, and agencies of both religious and gender education in Kenya; and lessons on gender and religious education for the Church in Africa.

### **1. Gender and the Ideal Citizen**

The communication sent out regarding the Symposium which was held in Zagreb, Croatia in July 2022, included the Book of Abstracts with a subsection titled “Introduction to the Topic of the Symposium”. The content therein highlighted what the world ought to be, and the contribution of the citizen towards realising this world. The said citizen should:

- i) be educated (knowledgeable)
- ii) be responsible
- iii) play an active part or role in society
- iv) apply democratic principles of behaviour
- v) live comfortably in a plural community
- vi) have an educational confrontation with religious views and beliefs
- vii) recognise that religion can contribute to greater humanisation of people and society

- viii) be engaged and involved in more responsible civic co-existence and social cohesion
- ix) be an agent of change.

In the spirit of this article, it can be argued that these ideas apply to both men and women, hence they are gender encompassing. At this stage, it is appropriate to have a working understanding of what gender entails. Gender is defined as “social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed [rather than biologically determined] and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable.”<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Citizenship in the Constitution of Kenya (2010)**

In the matters of citizenship, the Constitution of Kenya<sup>2</sup> is quite elaborate. Suffice to single out the following: Chapter One: 1. Sovereignty of the People; Chapter Two: 8. State and Religion; 10. National Values and Principles of Governance; Chapter Three: 12. Entitlements of Citizens; 13. Retention and Acquisition of Citizenship; 14. Citizenship by Birth; 15. Citizenship by Registration; 16. Dual Citizenship; 17. Revocation of Citizenship; 18. Legislation of Citizenship; Chapter Four: The Bill of Rights: Part 1 – General Provisions Relating to the Bill of Rights; Part 2 – Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; Part 3 – Specific, Application

<sup>1</sup> UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, Concepts and definitions, in: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm> (22 November 2022); see also FECCLAHA, *A Guide to Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Building and Conflict Transformation: A Faith Perceptive*, December 2017, vii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Constitution of Kenya*, 2010.

of Rights; Part 5 – Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission.

From the above highlights, it is clear that Kenya insists on the primacy of citizenship, with emphasis on the sovereignty of the people, the place of religion, values and principles of governance, the rights, privileges and obligations of the citizen.

While the Constitution of Kenya can be hailed as being friendly of and to the citizen, Ochula<sup>3</sup> is of the opinion that not all citizens may be privy to the Constitution, nor to the duties, rights and privileges therein addressed. In an article titled “Elections a Chance to Take Citizenship Seriously Again”, within the electioneering of 2022, which was an election year, Ochula has cautioned, counselled, and reminded that “Citizenship is a critical foundation of a democratic society.”<sup>4</sup>

Being a citizen does not merely mean belonging to a society, enjoying certain rights and privileges; it goes beyond the right to have an ID or a passport and to vote in an election. It includes certain responsibilities to society, not least to fellow citizens and to common life. Citizenship involves more than just status. It involves a practice. And it can be judged according to a notion of excellence. Elections present an opportunity for Kenyans to take citizenship seriously. Serious citizenship calls for political intelligence; a certain literacy about the political society and the people seeking elective positions; casting a vote; not to be apathetic, gullible, or content with being bystanders on issues of public interest.

Further, serious citizenship is to take part in debates, guided by knowledge, reason and fairness; being prepared to listen; weighing available evidence and being able to make sound or tough decisions; being willing to speak out, to speak the truth

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Michael OCHULA, *Elections A Chance to Take Citizenship Seriously Again*, in: *Daily Nation*, Friday, 15 July 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



and to wisely take a stand on pertinent issues; to act not primarily to advance one's own interests but in line with what is considered as best for common good; to elect leaders who are willing to make personal sacrifices and compromise; to be motivated by patriotism, loyalty to the community; a desire to make society better; to be wary of fake news, disinformation, and tribal kingpins; and good citizens exhibit and model virtue.

Ochula's ideas indicate a need for education or refresher programmes on the Constitution that would make citizens aware of their rights, obligations and responsibilities to themselves and the wider society. It should be emphasised that these ideas apply to both men and women.

### **3. Issues/Challenges Citizens Face in Kenya**

A critical examination of the issues raised by Ochula brings forth the factors underlying the lack of the Constitution's awareness and its application filled with ignorance, assumptions, illiteracy, indifference, and fear. These factors have a bearing on religion, gender, and education.

A broad spectrum of the common issues and challenges that both men and women face, and the undertone of the need for gender and religious education for responsible citizenship, are well covered in the publication "Responsible Leadership in Marriage and Family"<sup>5</sup> that I edited. A summary of the issues that I would like to present to the African and international readers is as follows:

Kaguongo Wambari has indicated that morality, which is a religious value, is central in human well-being, and calls for reasoning and individual responsibility. He cautions on being

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mary N. GETUI (Ed.), *Responsible Leadership in Marriage and Family*, Action Publishers, Nairobi, 2008.

wary of misunderstanding and underrating morality. In essence, therefore, religious education and gender education should encompass morality, and these are essentially for good citizenship.

Adam K. arap Chepkwony has highlighted moral issues as understood in the African indigenous set up. He opines that these moral issues granted the individual a sense of identity and belonging. Chepkwony is concerned that the introduction and grasp of foreign values in Africa has caused a cultural dilemma. The thesis is that African moral values are still relevant and applicable today. These moral values, if and when well embraced, would contribute to the formation of good citizens.

Eric Aseka focuses on ethics and collective responsibility. He emphasises the essence of habits, character, and the work ethic. Aseka also points out that the Church is a key stakeholder in reform through social empowerment and in the crusade against corruption. Two points related to good citizenship that can be inferred from Aseka's ideas are that ethics is crucial for good citizenship; and also that the Church, as an institution, has a role to play in the formation and realisation of good citizens.

Janet Nguru notes that young people in Africa are faced with various moral challenges, such as substance abuse, sexual disorders, and maintaining healthy relationships especially with and within the family. Nguru opines that it is necessary for parents and the wider community to understand adolescents and adolescence, to develop good communication with them, and consequently, prepare them for family and life in general, and for good citizenship. It is also necessary to be alert in regard to the reality and demands of the contemporary society. Further, Margaret Gecaga echoes Nguru's sentiments when she puts it across that sex education is invaluable and should be offered to both boys and girls, more so in the formal school setting. She highlights how sex education was conducted in traditional African society. She also points out the need to provide factual

information on sex so that young people are free to question and determine responsible decision-making and respectful co-existence with those of the opposite sex. This approach would definitely play a key role in the formation of good citizens.

Emmy Gichinga also emphasises the importance of marriage and the challenges this key human institution faces. Her plea is that due diligence should be applied while preparing for marriage and more so in the selection of a spouse. Gichinga observes that the indigenous African values placed on marriage served to make marriage stable, and expresses the need to apply the same in contemporary Africa. It is in stable marriages that good citizenship is cultivated and nurtured. Still on the topic of marriage, Zablon Nthamburi has addressed polygamy and Christianity in contemporary Africa. He considers that this is a critical matter that calls for theological and pastoral attention of the Church, because of the many related schools of thought and theories. Theological and pastoral concern and counsel are the domain of the Church, and they can be used to inspire good citizenship.

Eunice Kamaara, using a case study model, has raised ethical dilemmas that African Christian families are facing in the context of HIV and AIDS in Kenya. A strong point she puts across is that, faced with the ethical dilemma of saving a life or saving a marriage, many African Christians choose to save a marriage. This implies the significance of an arranged marriage, an institution that can propel good citizenship, but sadly can also be an avenue that leads to self-destruction. In the context of home management, Frederick Wangai has covered communication between husband and wife, leadership and finances in the home, wives at work, property and inheritance; and why these issues must be faced head on. Indeed, these are the issues that can contribute to a lopsided society if not handled well. Philemon Mwaisaka has addressed the dicey topic of work and family, focusing on the impact of working mothers on family and especially children,

management of resources and deceptions in life, and some issues to be wary of, such as prestige, power, pleasure, possessions, approval of others, materialism and the significance of role modelling. He strongly recommends that the home is where the values of good citizenship can be nurtured.

My own focus is on the challenges of aging, retirement and retrenchment, and the impact on the Family in Africa. Coping mechanisms, such as adopting a healthy lifestyle, are provided, and it should also be noted that the elderly have a lot to offer that needs to be tapped by the rest of the community. The elderly are walking encyclopaedias and have invaluable counsel that could contribute to the development of good citizenship.

Zacharia Wanakacha Samita's article deals with the family and the Church in new Christian Religious Movements with regard to their characteristics, content, contributions and some concerns. Samita concludes that religion plays an important role in the moral-ethical formation of individuals and the wider society, and much more on the formation of the integral human person in the family set up, thus producing a well-grounded citizen.

Beatrice Churu-Ebale's thoughts on religion and ethics in schools bring to the fore the fact that religion and ethics are at the kernel of whatever we do, and more importantly of identity and self-expression. She poses fundamental questions as to whether the education system represents the values of a people; and whose values the education system is at the service of. She highlights some of the obstacles to ethics education, such as disengagement from home and family; a content-centred curriculum; not paying due attention to the emotional and creative dimensions of the human person and human development; leadership crisis in schools; pessimism, social misconduct, spiritual starvation and education without a soul. She recommends offering an education with a vision; accompaniment and motivation of teachers; and the need for a community to be responsible for education,

which calls for participation, dialogue, and being rooted in one's tradition, an education that does not ignore the inner self and that contributes to a society with moral fibre.

J. N. K. Mugambi's article "Rites of Passage and Cultural Education in Tropical Africa" explores the significance of rites of passage as focal points of cultural education with particular reference to human sexuality and personal responsibility. The author indicates that religion is a central pillar of culture, through which people have defined and authenticated their identity. The rites of passage are a means of education through which members of the community are socialised to become full participants with specific roles and responsibilities.

#### **4. Agents and Agencies of Religious and Gender Education in Kenya**

It is considered imperative that a historical overview be the guide in analysing the agents and agencies of religious and gender education in Kenya, namely the informal pre-colonial school and the colonial formal school.

##### **4.1. *The Informal Pre-Colonial School***

In his book "Facing Mount Kenya", Jomo Kenyatta<sup>6</sup> has devoted a chapter on the system of education prior to the advent of the Europeans. While the focus is on the Agikuyu people, the ideas could be regarded as universal for pre-colonial Africa. What entails a good citizen among the Agikuyu is systematically and comprehensively analysed. While time has had its effect on some of the indigenous beliefs and practices, we would like to use the present tense.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jomo KENYATTA, *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kenway Publications, Nairobi, 1978.

It is important to point out that in the pre-colonial African set up, there is a thin line between the sacred and the secular. This is well summed up in the sentiments of two leading African scholars, namely John S. Mbiti and Laurenti Magesa. The former, in the book “African Religions and Philosophy” has observed that “... traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life.”<sup>7</sup> In the publication “Introduction to African Religion”, Mbiti continues by noting that African religion is found in rituals, ceremonies and festivals of the people; in shrines, sacred places and religious objects; in art and symbols; in music and dance; in proverbs, riddles and wise sayings; in names of people and places; in myths and legends; in beliefs and customs; in all aspects of life.<sup>8</sup> Magesa’s view is well summed up in the title of one of his publications titled “What is not Sacred? African Spirituality.”<sup>9</sup> This recognition of the core and centrality of religion in the African indigenous set up is noteworthy in analysing religious and gender education and its contribution to good citizenship among the Agikuyu.

Kenyatta notes that among the Agikuyu, the character of a child – boy and girl – is formed within these circles – family, local group and then within the whole society. It can then be inferred that a good citizen is produced by the entire community, and character is of paramount significance.

Further, Kenyatta says that education begins at birth and ends at death; in between, there is continuous education. Hence, it is deduced that education is lifelong. The homestead is the school, and mother’s lap is the first school. This gives primacy to the

<sup>7</sup> John S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi, 1969, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. John S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, Heinemann, London, 1975, vii.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Laurenti MAGESA, *What is not Sacred? African Spirituality*, Action Publishers, Nairobi, 2014.

home and the mother, as playing a key role in the education of the child, and in the formation of citizens, especially the female child in the context of domestic chores. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that the father also has a distinct role as a co-educator, and a sole educator, especially in imparting and impacting the male child. This happens when a boy joins his father carrying out the designated male activities, such as tending the animals or breaking the ground for cultivation. It is also worth noting that it is the parents who are blamed and reprimanded if their child did not live up to the norms, obligations and expectations of the community. This brings in a related point that children learn through observation, which challenges the parents to be alert as their every move could easily be picked up by their children. In the same manner, a wayward child is not spared, for example, a boy who did not show due responsibility in herding animals could be subjected to identifying the family herd from a deliberately mixed herd. An older sibling serves as a mentor for younger siblings, regardless of gender.

In the Agikuyu way of life, there is a system defined for each stage or level of life. Babies are taught by the mother, and the nurse (a member of the family who could be a sibling, aunt or grandmother) through lullabies and general songs, the history and traditions of the family, their clan and wider society. This approach is easy and does not cause strain to either the learner or the instructor. The learner assimilates key aspects of identity and belonging without much hassle. This is significant in recognising the invisible but/and significant place of religion and gender in and for laying a foundation of and on good citizenship. Mother, who is the first teacher, also plays a role in teaching the child the right manner of speech. She uses songs to teach the important names in the society, and what those names signify. In the African context, names are very loaded, a name can reveal the names of the ancestors of the family, the circumstances of birth, the family dynamics such as the position of that person in the family.

The mother also teaches the child how to walk and sit properly because a straight figure is admired. Another important aspect that the mother addresses is the use of the hand, hence in essence, the child is introduced to the world of work early. A good citizen is the one who contributes to the wellbeing and welfare of self and others through the labour of their hands. Use of the hand is also encouraged by the father as he relates with his sons. Friendly games with the mother and peers represent another method used to impart knowledge to the learner. Another method used to nurture the young population comprises of mental exercises, namely riddles and puzzles. This is applied especially in the evenings, while the evening meal is being cooked or after the meal has been served. This provides opportunity for the family to gather together and bond. Good citizens are creative and critical thinkers, who also value family togetherness.

There are various other aspects in the Agikuyu system of education that have a bearing on gender education, religious education and responsible citizenship. Observation of taboos and prohibitions such as those to do with cleanliness promoted health. A young man who goes through initiation successfully, marking transition from childhood to adulthood, acquires new responsibilities such as a license to build his own hut and to consider marrying, and is now also a warrior who can go to war to defend the community. Indeed, this new status also dictates the kind of friends and company he keeps and associates with. He can also engage in corporate activities of the community. Freedom of personality is emphasised as well. Life experiences are learning opportunities.

To sum it up, the Agikuyu system of education which is embedded in the religious-cultural beliefs and practices of the community, aims at producing responsible instructors and learners who appreciate their context and are ready to make individual and corporate contributions for the common good.



## 4.2 *The Formal School*

The formal type of education, which is also referred to as Western education, was introduced in Kenya, and in other parts of Africa by the missionaries. Mbiti<sup>10</sup> notes that Christianity expanded rapidly in the first half of the 20th century through the joint efforts of overseas missionaries and African converts. Schools became the nurseries of Christian congregations and the converts earned the name "Readers". The same buildings were used as schools on weekdays and as catechetical schools during the weekends.

It is significant to note is that Mission Christianity was not prepared to face a serious encounter with the religious-cultural reality in Africa, including the informal type of education discussed above. Education for responsible citizenship should pay attention to and take into consideration the situation analysis of the location and start off with an effort to appreciate, understand and respect the status quo, and then consequently, make some inroads.

The missionaries did not fully comprehend the complexity of African culture and religion, which, as we have noted, is both secular and spiritual. The missionary Western type of education was focused on saving the souls of the apparently religionless Africans. This led to the compartmentalisation of the people into the converted and the not converted; and the introduction of a new way of life for the converted, which would definitely impact those not converted, especially if they were members of the same family or spatial affinity.

Religious education which can be equated to catechism was offered to those to be converted or those converted. This revealed a certain level of segregation. The converted were also introduced to the Western type of education, which deprived them of the

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. John S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 232.

cultural type of education. Unlike pre-colonial education, which was context-based, the new type of education was foreign.

Initially, the Western type of education was reserved for boys and men. The initial beneficiaries were the children of the converted and the occasional naughty child or social misfit that the family or community wanted a break from. The sons of colonial administrators, such as chiefs and headmen, were also sent to school, especially after the benefits of going to school became apparent. This included employment in the colonial and mission outfits, and drawing wages that were used to meet financial obligations, including paying the taxes. Initially, Western education was more of a religious instruction, and it was also not gender sensitive, as girls were excluded. The need to send girls to school arose when it was realised that the mission boys would require enlightened girls for wives. This brings to the fore that gender sensitive and inclusive education is for the benefit of the wider society; and in turn, it can serve as formation for responsible citizenship.

As time went by, more subjects were included in the mission schools. These offered mainly artisan courses, such as carpentry and masonry, so that the missionaries and colonial authorities would be served. It was not for the benefit of the local population. The girls were introduced to homemaking subjects, such as home science, so that they would make good wives and enlightened homemakers.

Because of patriarchy, families continue to prefer sending boys to school so as to accrue the consequent financial and related benefits for posterity and social standing of the family. The other gender related issue is the way careers/ disciplines have been classified as male or female. The former includes engineering and medicine, while the latter are nursing and teaching. With time, however, the trend is changing and equal opportunity drive seems to increasingly bear fruit.

As noted above, formal education in Kenya is attributed to the missionaries. For a long time, Christian Religious Education was taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools, until Islamic Religious Education and Hindu Religious Education were introduced into the syllabus at the secondary school level, so that Muslim and Hindu students would have an option. With time, Christian Religious Education, Islamic Religious Education and Hindu Religious Education at the secondary school level continued to be offered in secondary schools, but not as compulsory subjects. Overall, what clearly comes out is that there is high primacy placed on religious education, both from the family and government policies for children, regardless of their gender. The expectation is that religious education will guide and provide values and life skills for good citizenship. One critical and controversial issue that has remained unanswered is whether religious education should be offered as an examination subject or as a life skills subject. The Programme on Pastoral Instruction is offered in some primary schools whereby external instructors of the denominations represented in the school come once a week and spend time with the respective pupils. There is a manual for instruction on key social issues/topics, such as living by faith, living a life of love, creation, books of the Bible, community, God is all in all, powerful provider, living a life of generosity, living a life of witness. At face value, the gender dynamics in the curriculum and the pastoral programme imply that the content is gender neutral. The instructors are also men and women, and so are the learners.

Kenya has many universities, both public and private. Some of the private universities are faith-based; they are sponsored by respective denominations or faith traditions. This goes to show that faith institutions have an interest in education, even more so higher education. Many of the public and private universities also offer Religious Education. Some universities also offer Gender Studies, or have mainstreamed gender in the various disciplines.

Education has various components, including extracurricular activities. Some of the extracurricular activities/ programmes in schools and colleges that have a bearing on religion include clubs such as Young Christian Students or Young Catholic Students and Christian Union. Students join these programmes out of their own volition. Leadership, teamwork, ecumenism and community service are some of the values derived from religious extracurricular activities and programmes. These are also worth mentioning in the formation and nurture of responsible citizenship.

Based on what has been discussed above, it can be summed up that the agents and agencies of religious and gender education in Kenya include the indigenous systems centred on the home, the missionaries and other arms of colonial administration, the government, institutions of learning through curriculum and extracurricular activities. The ultimate goal is to cultivate for responsible citizenship. It is to be recognised that this good intention may not necessarily be realised, given what has been discussed in section 3 above.

## **5. *Lessons on Citizenship, Gender, and Religious Education for the Church in Africa***

The Church in Africa refers to all those who affiliate with the Christian faith. In Kenya, Christians are estimated to represent about 82% of the total population.<sup>11</sup> The lessons highlighted below may oblige much more those in leadership, such as the clergy, the Church administrators, parents and teachers because of the positions they hold and the high expectations from the general population. Nevertheless, individual Christians are citizens in their own right and are to be held accountable on the matters of Citizenship, Education, Religious Education and Gender Education.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Susan MURIMI, Christianity in Kenya, in: Isabel Apawo PHIRI – Dietrich WERNER – Chammah KAUNDA – Kennedy OWINO (eds.), *Anthropology of African Christianity*, Regnum Books International, Oxford, 2016, 605.

The individual responsible citizen and Christian has a responsibility to:

- i) determine and appreciate who they are and what they can contribute to the society. What society expects of each individual is that they be religious, hence the Church, the Home and the School have a duty to assist the individual to realise and fulfil this;
- ii) seek an education, to be knowledgeable, to play an active role in society, to critique the status quo, to promote social cohesion and to be an agent of need;
- iii) appreciate that society encompasses men and women, who are distinct, unique and special in their respective spaces; healthy socialisation can contribute to harmonious cooperation and the common good;
- iv) appreciate, acknowledge and exercise civil responsibility, obligation and duty to self, to others and to the state.
- v) be wary of the common challenges and issues confronting humanity; and seek to address them amicably;
- vi) revisit and appreciate the indigenous socialisation practices; determine and consider the principles that can be applied in contemporary Africa;
- vii) appreciate formal education in all its expressions, including co-curricular activities and programmes, religious education and gender education;
- viii) consider oneself as agent/institution; and crusader of responsible citizenship.

The responsibility to churn out responsible citizenship lies with the socialisation at home, in the school and the church. Gender education and religious education have the mandate, the duty, the responsibility, and obligation to contribute towards a society of equity, equality, dignity, community and common good.

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