Religion, Church, and Theology in Times of Crisis : Theological and Religious Pedagogical Research : Proceedings

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Proceedings of the two international research seminars for postgraduate students organised by the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb and the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Ruhr University of Bochum in 2022 and 2023

RELIGION, CHURCH, AND THEOLOGY IN TIMES OF CRISIS
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Proceedings

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Preface

This book of proceedings is a result of a successful two-year collaboration between the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Zagreb and the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Ruhr University in Bochum. Cooperation was established on the initiative of the heads of the Departments of Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics of the two faculties, Prof. Ana Thea Filipović, PhD (Zagreb) and Prof. Bernhard Grümme, PhD (Bochum). It was carried out with the organisational and financial support of the Vice Dean for Science Assist. Prof. Branko Murić, the Office for International Cooperation and the Office for Postgraduate Studies at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Zagreb. Organizational cooperation was also provided by Marius de Byl, an assistant at the Department of Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics at Ruhr University in Bochum. The project was also supported by UNIC.

Two international research seminars were organised for postgraduate theology students under the established cooperation on the topic "Religion, Church and Theology in Times of Crisis Theological and Religious Pedagogical Research". Both seminars were held online. The first seminar took place from March 31 to April 1, 2022, and the second was held on April 28, 2023. Both seminars are included in the cooperation programme between two faculties within the UNIC network. The theme "Religion, Church and Theology in Times of Crisis" was broad enough to encompass various research of postgraduate doctoral students from Zagreb and Bochum from various theological disciplines. Additionally, the theme provided a framework for students to locate and present their individual research projects within the context of the seminar. Since the beginning of the new millennium, and especially in the last few years, the world has perceived itself as threatened by various events and phenomena that cause crises. As a result of this, it can be noted that we are currently living in a time of multiple crises: the global financial and economic crisis of 2008 and 2022-2023, the ongoing European migrant crisis which began in 2015, health crises caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, war crises (especially the war caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the Israeli-Palestinian war in 2023), resulting in an energy crisis and food shortages, as well as environmental crises, etc.

It is known that religion and the Church play an important role in times of crisis by shaping people's beliefs and behaviours. Whether it is a natural disaster, war, pandemic, or economic crisis, people tend to turn to their faith for comfort, guidance, and strength. Religion is viewed as a source of hope and meaning during difficult times. Individuals search for comfort in prayer and spiritual practices. Many studies have shown that people with a strong religious faith tend to experience less anxiety, stress, and depression during times of crisis. Religion can also motivate people to work towards social justice and advocate for those who are marginalised or suffering. While religion has been viewed as a resource in times of crisis, it can also be a possible source of tensions, as evident not only in war conflicts but also in other types of crises.

Churches provide a sense of belonging, community, and support during crises; they also inspire people to act. Many faith-based organisations are involved in relief efforts, providing shelter, food, and medical aid, rebuilding homes, and supporting local communities. Churches also offer counselling services, support groups, and other resources to help individuals and families cope with the aftermath of crises. At the same time, it can be observed that the Catholic Church is currently experiencing an institutional crisis, visible in inner polarizations, loss of credibility due to widespread sexual abuses that have been discovered, as well as the abuse of authority, power and conscience, and its difficulty to renew itself against the background of the signs of the times.

Theology plays a significant role in helping people in the Church and beyond to interpret and understand crises. It provides a framework for understanding the experiences and helps make sense of crises, especially of the suffering and tragedies that occur. In such scenarios, theology faces specific challenges in trying to provide meaningful and satisfactory answers to the questions that arise. However, it must be prepared to respond to the specific challenges of different crises, engaging in dialogue and partnerships with other fields, such as psychology, science, and public policy, to develop comprehensive answers. At times, Christian theology appears to be facing a crisis of significance, of losing old audiences and connections to new ways of thinking and speaking, although it is also searching for new connections, new audiences, and new languages. This challenge requires theologians to engage in dialogue with experts not only in science and academy, but also in Church communities and civil society. Christian theologians are required to offer new responses to the challenges people are facing in specific contexts and circumstances.

The presentations of the students at the first seminar gave rise to very current topics that show a developed awareness of young researchers

about the need for theological responses to the reality that surrounds them, particularly regarding the following: the Church's communication and the Church's pastoral care in crisis situations (illustrated through examples of war, dictatorship and pandemic) from a historical and pastoral perspective; pastoral activity in the army; pastoral challenges in the family; intercultural competences of religious education teachers; digital self-training of religious education teachers through collaboration and sharing; orientation of religious education teachers in international classes; religious education as a process of "translation"; religiosity and values of young people today in different contexts; the use of qualitative methods in theology.

At the second seminar, students elaborated on several important topics related to religious education, exploring its problematic issues, contributions, and approaches, using modern philosophy, mass culture, and other avenues as ways of reaching new audiences today. They discussed the spiritual experience during crises, causes of the theology crises, as well as important figures who served as role models in their respective times and circumstances. Besides the diversity of contexts and questions, there were shared concerns which included the following questions: how to imagine the future of theology, how to speak of God in increasingly secular and plural contexts, how to be a more inclusive Church, etc.

The research seminar was not only an excellent platform for students to present and share their research results, but also provided much more than that. The international atmosphere provided them with the opportunity for networking and cooperation. The post-presentation discussions proved valuable for doctoral students enabling them to broaden their own perspectives, scrutinise research problems and questions, and gain new insights and ideas. Insights into the contextual differences between Germany and Croatia made us aware of the advantages and disadvantages encountered in theological and religious pedagogical work. New acquaintances created the possibility of learning from others and opened up opportunities to share knowledge and experiences. In that sense, the seminar also played a role in initiating further projects by individual doctoral students, which, for example, examined religious education from a transnational perspective. The postgraduate study path requires rigorous research and the acquisition of various competencies, including language and presentation skills, which they had the opportunity to improve. The element of motivational stimulus necessary for long-term research, requiring regular renewal, should not be neglected either.

Not all contributions presented have been included as articles in this volume. However, the book of proceedings provides a comprehensive

insight into various topics and research directions related to the issue of "Religion, Church, and Theology in Times of Crises" that engage young theologians from the two faculties today. The volume concludes with an article written by Prof. Bernhard Grümme.

Ana Thea Filipović
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Translating Processes and Religious Education – Facing Multiple Crises

Marius de BYL

Abstract

In view of the current multiple crises and the initial diagnosis of theology's diminishing relevance in public and social contexts, this article explores a perspective from the field of religious education regarding the concept of translation. Referring to the overall social-ecclesiastical as well as curricular framework conditions in North Rhine-Westphalia, the article first introduces elementary terminological approaches to understanding translation, before exploring the religious-pedagogical contextualization. On the path to such an understanding of translation, which will be reflected in particular in the context of religious education, interdisciplinary insights fromfields such as the sociology of space or postcolonial studies, among others, will play a decisive role in shaping the main focus and perspective of this contribution: facing multiple crises.

Key words: crisis, translation, religious education, communication

1. Current baseline: facing multiple crises?

As recently as 2010, two-thirds of the German population identified as Christians, of whom about 30.2 percent identified as Catholics (cf. Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2010, 6). The statistics published for 2021 – more than ten years later – show a clear trend, but one that has been apparent for some time: The proportion of Christians in Germany has fallen to below 50 percent, with Catholics accounting for 26 percent (around 21.6 million people) and Protestants for 23.7 percent (around 19.7 million people) (cf. Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2022, 74). Regarding this issue, Bishop Dr. Georg Bätzing, president of the German Bishop's Conference, points to a profound crisis of the Catholic Church in Germany: "Die Zahlen des Jahres 2021 zeigen die tiefgreifende Krise, in der wir uns als katholische Kirche in Deutschland befinden. […] Es gibt keine Selbstver-

ständlichkeiten mehr für uns als katholische Kirche. Wir müssen uns neu erklären, erläutern was wir tun und warum wir es machen. Zur Kirche zu gehören ist ebenso wenig eine Selbstverständlichkeit wie aktiv in ihr mitzuwirken. […] Und dennoch bin ich überzeugt: Die Botschaft des Evangeliums hat Kraft, die wir mit allen, die der Kirche angehören, zur Entfaltung bringen und ins Leben übersetzen können." (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2022, 5) The most recent data also confirm these trends: taking into account all demographic factors and social dynamics (such as admissions and re-admissions, but also departures from the Church), it can be stated that the membership figures within both the Catholic and Protestant churches are now shrinking to a significant extent and with continuity. According to data from July 2023, 47.8 percent of the population in Germany are either non-denominational or of a different faith, which also includes the other two monotheistic religions (cf. Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2023, 70). However, these categorisations do not allow any in-depth examination at the level of individual religiosity, so statistics must always be interpreted in view of this limitation.

The last sentence of the above quotation from G. Bätzing seems remarkable, as it refers to the act of translating the Holy Gospel into life and understands this act as existential to face this crisis in an appropriate way, unfolding the power-giving potentials of Church, at the very least.

Especially with regards to the aftermath of the global pandemic as well as the war in Europe, it seems that this existential act of translation itself has to face a society entangled in multiple crises. The question arises: is the Catholic Church still able to translate the message of the Gospel ("die Botschaft des Evangeliums") into life under the outlined conditions? At this point, we cannot universalise the'church' and its mission and presuppose a certain context of society as a whole. In this respect, we can state with certainty that the crisis facing the Church, with the looming threat of a loss of relevance, intersects with a society presently characterised by crisis situations.

With this in mind, we aim to examine theology as a relevant reference discipline ('Bezugswissenschaft') in both contexts — religious education in school and Church — though our primary focus will be on religious education in school settings. At present, the transformation dynamics of increasing non-denominationalism and a tendency towards the objectification of religious education ('Versachkundlichung des Religionsunterrichtes'), as outlined by R. Englert (cf. Englert 2020, 131–137), among others, are significantly influencingthereligious education processes within school context. From this point of view, denominational religious education, whose frame of reference is thus theology, is also attested to fa-

cilitate engagement with religion(s) in a mode that Englert describes as "religionswissenschaftlich und sachkundlich" (Englert 2017, 27). These developments seem to call theology into question in a similar way as the (Catholic) Church is called out in contexts of social public sphere: is theology as a scientific reference of religious education losing its relevance? In what way can the dimension of translation processes, the title of this contribution, become an enriching moment in the context of this critical inquiry?

2. Terminological approaches and framework

2.1. Religious education in North Rhine-Westphalia

During the pandemic, it has been observed that theology has hardly succeeded in establishing presence in public spheres, continuously participating in public discourses, and thus demonstrating its added value to society. Even as a reference discipline for religious education, formally legitimised in the curriculum, it remains of little relevance. Clichés persist, portraying religion as a school subject devoid of substantial content[1] that stimulates thought, challenges, and, in terms of competency, fails to adequately foster the ability for argumentation and reflection on matters pertaining to religion(s), among other things. The school, as a place of learning, continues to be a setting where theology holds minimal significance. In view of social developments, with decreasing numbers of baptisms and church members overall, is it still possible at all to incorporate theology, in its breadth, and Christian religious traditions into the discourse on religious education in such a way that it is possible to adopt perspectives from it? Can we counteract this fading significance through a revitalisation of religious education?

First of all, translation can serve as a revitalising factor for the future of religious education, which, for its part, must be context-sensitive in view of emerging erosion dynamics in society. Therefore, in order to approach the process and the (religious pedagogical) understanding of translation within religious education, we need to make some brief terminological approaches to church, religion(s) and theology, as well as a framework definition of religious education in Germany, especially in North Rhine-Westphalia.[2]

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[1] In German, religious education is often referred to as a 'Laberfach'.

[2] Due to the limited scope, this contribution must be restricted to North Rhine-Westphalia. For a more comprehensive understanding within the context of a nationwide cross-section, cf. e.g. Woppowa 2023; Domsgen/Witten 2022.

In the context of denominational cooperation ('konfessionell-kooperativer Religionsunterricht'[3]) and the respective varied dynamics across the individual federal states of Germany, religious education in North Rhine-Westphalia is still denominationally bound – "in Übereinstimmung mit den Lehren und Grundsätzen der betreffenden Kirche oder Religionsgemeinschaft […]." (Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 2005, § 31) At the substantive level of religious education, this refers to the confrontation with "dem Wahrheitsanspruch und der existenziellen, die Lebensgestaltung herausfordernden Bedeutung des christlichen Glaubens […]." (Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 2019, 9) The aim is to facilitate the reflection of "Religion und Religiosität entsprechend der Bezugswissenschaft Katholische Theologie und dem Glauben der Kirche." (Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 2019, 8f) This illustrates the presence of theological claim of religious education, which, especially in the mode of perspective-taking, is aimed at the responsible handling of the Christian faith and other religions, worldviews, one's own religiosity, and responsible conduct within the Church, society and world. (cf. Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 2019, 8) Thus, religious education should create a space for critical and reflective discussions on religion(s) and religiosity.

2.2. Theology and religion

Given this consideration, it seems quite plausible to understand theology as the hermeneutics of the believed God, as scientia fidei: "Theologie ist Reflexion nicht einfach Gottes, wie er ist; nicht einfach Gottes, der sich und insofern er sich geoffenbart hat; sondern Gottes, dessen Offenbarkeit geglaubt wird, dessen Kundgabe im Glauben bewährt wird." (Knop 2017, 238f) Consequently, theology always remains intertwined with a participant perspective that is constitutive for it (cf. Knop 2017, 237) — as the previously outlined curricular framework has already laid the foundation.

In this context, religion is understood as the existential relationship of human beings to something ultimate, which Christian theology translates as God revealing himself in Jesus Christ and becoming man (cf. Könemann 2015, 5). Such an approach to a fundamental understanding of religion must, however, allow itself to be questioned self-critical-

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[3] https://www.schulministerium.nrw/konfessionelle-kooperation-im-religionsunterricht.

ly with regard to substantial as well as functional constrictions: neither the outlined contour of religion is understood as a basic anthropological constant nor as a functional set of instruments, for example, to cope with contingencies. Thus, the reference to a procedural-communication-oriented understanding of religion can sensitise for those narrowing dangers: "Religion ist eine sprachliche Weise der Selbstbeschreibung, und sie existiert nur als eine solche." (Danz 2018, 29) As a consequence, it is not based on any substantial identities or contents. It is a form of cultural communication (cf. Danz 2018, 31). Although one does not have to share such a communication- and language-practical contextualisation of religion, the synthesis of the above implications suggests that religion can be understood as the relation to something ultimately valid (Bezug auf Letztgültiges) that is expressed through language and consequently constituted by communication processes. In such processes, a personal subjective relation to something ultimate can take place, that is, transferred to the Christian context, the unjustifiable consummation of a subject who entrusts himself to God in freedom and bases his life on God's choice for a man (cf. Knop 2017, 237).

These processes become existential, so to speak, through the self-interpretation to be expressed through language in the process of communication. Such an existential reference qua interweaving with self-interpretation must be available to individuals as an opportunity. Religious communication in the context of teaching practice could be framed as "the linguistic expression of relating oneself to the religious", whereby the sphere of the religious is concretely constituted through traditional linguistic forms (such as prayer, metaphors, narratives, parables, etc.), which testify to "the (diachronic) dynamics of people from different centuries" to "search for linguistic possibilities of precisely this relating." (de Byl 2023, 40)

Looking back at the framework in the context of decreasing numbers of church members and baptisms, it would be easy to say that – especially denominational – religious education inevitably reaches its limits because of the loss of (Christian) religion. However, the increasing distance from religion and non-denominationalism should not to be equated with the disappearance of religion(s); rather, the latter are increasingly dispersive, while (religious) traditions are being disassembled and reconstructed (cf. Grümme 2021, 167). This framework into which translation is to take place thus remains profoundly plural and deals with many dimensions of religion(s) and individual religiosity[4]. The individual reconstruc-

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[4] Religiosity can be framed as the subjective, meaning-constituting practice of the interpretation which underlies religions and, at the same time, makes them possible (cf.

tion of deconstructed traditions now brings us to the concrete religious pedagogical contextualisation of translation process in the classroom.

3. Translating processes and religious education—contextualization

In order to avoid the danger of an inflationary use of translation, the following contours are essential: the most important premise in this context is a holistic broadening of the concept of translation, which frees it from the restrictive framework of a 1:1 equivalence (cf. de Byl 2023, 34-36). Translation, as a dynamic and transformative process, takes place in real social exchange relations (in "realen sozialen Austauschbeziehungen") (Renn/Straub/Shimada 2002, 9). As an interdisciplinary process, it has to expand its focus from literary contexts to translation an as understanding process between people and cultures. The actual process of bringing something into a new context and language remains relevant, but is decidedly broadened by many factors acting on and around translation. Translation can thus be considered holistically performative and rooted in practical contexts. Concrete translations take place dynamically, transform what is to be translated, transfer translators into new horizons of meaning of those translations, but also leave parts untranslated, claim interpretive sovereignty and level out differences.

In a contextualisation of religious education, it will be important to delineate translation processes as holistic processes of interaction ('ganzheitliche Interaktionsvollzüge'), the goal of which is mutual exchange and an attempt to reach understanding. However, this attempt could also fail; translation could become a tool of one-sided assimilation in the face of power imbalances (cf. Renn/Straub/Shimada 2002, 9). From this outlined ambivalence of a broadened understanding of translation, an impetus for the intended contextualisation of religious education could unlock the potential to break through asymmetries in a power sensitive way.

Understood as a reciprocal process of interaction, it is currently already being addressed, to some extent, in religious education research, particularly in recent discussions related to the postulates for language-sensitive teaching ('sprachsensibler Unterricht' (cf. Altmeyer 2021)). Thus, referring to the differentiation between different religious modes of communication proposed by Stefan Altmeyer, Lena Tacke profiles trans-

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Könemann 2015, 5f.). It can also be regarded as the individual potentiality to inscribe oneself in the religious mode of communication for self- and world-interpretation. Religion, however, does not presuppose this for human beings in terms of capability theory.

lation competencies as the basis of heterogeneity-sensitive language education ('heterogenitätssensible Sprachbildung') and states that translations make it possible to deal with the existing difference in perspective in an argumentative and communicative way (cf. Tacke 2022, 105f).

In view of the limited scope of this contribution, further contributions, and insights from research in religious education, which are relevant for my subsequent reading of the concept of translation in religious education, are mentioned here by way of example.

Manfred Pirner, drawing on the ideas of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, develops an understanding of translation in which the dimension of public sphere(s) is constitutive, and which consciously affirms the particularity of Christianity, theology, and Church as well as their dependence on the dialogue with others. Translations must, so to speak, assert themselves on the terrain of self-reflexivity, on which, in the determination of the relationship between (secular) modernity and religion, the former self-reflexively perceives its limits, and the latter — made specific in Christianity — perceives its particularity. From this acknowledgement, an openness for dialogue with secular and interlocutors with different religious and ideological perspectives emerges (cf. Pirner 2015, 448). There is not one singular public sphere, but a variety of plural public spheres into which theology must make itself understood (cf. Pirner 2018, 59). On this basis, the demands inherent in a theology that are contoured as public become evident, highlighting a self-transcending impetus of theology to bring its own tradition into society, which can be considered decidedly public-religious-pedagogical insofar as it aims to participate in public education, always aware of its own limitations and dependence on openness and readiness for dialogue. (Public) theology, within the outlined contexts, requires a multilingualism ('Mehrsprachigkeit') that enables it (theology) to maintain its connection and linguistic competence in various social forums, in order to stimulate translations into addressee-specific language games (cf. Pirner 2018, 59).

The deconstructive moment in an age of 'posttraditionality', as previously mentioned with regard to traditions, is relevant for an alterity-theoretical refinement of the concept of translation, as proposed by Bernhard Grümme: "Nicht mehr fraglose Autorität, in deren Licht und unter deren Last Gegenwart auf Zukunft hin zu gestalten ist, nicht mehr unhinterfragter Fundus an Lebensformen, an Sinnzusagen und Orientierungen, müssen nun Traditionen überhaupt erst eigens legitimiert werden." (Grümme 2021, 171) Consequently, traditions are intersubjectively conditioned, and their social relevance, to a certain extent, legitimised on the basis of their need for justification in terms of truthfulness and plausi-

bility. In its self-referentiality to those social dynamics, shifts as well as transformations of post-traditionality, Grümme points out the relevant consequences for religious education as the indispensable task to become self-reflexively aware of the rank of traditions, their heterogeneity and power structure (cf. Grümme 2021, 172). Three emphases unfold from this task: translations, in the context of religious education, should be considered intersectionally, alterity-theoretically as well as power-critically. Intersectional and especially social and political-structural categories have an equally multifactorial effect on religious teaching, learning, and ultimately on educational processes (cf. Grümme 2021, 211). Theoretical alterity, with regard to the mentioned untranslatability ('Unübersetzbarkeit',) is to be marked as the destructive force that interrupts translation processes, and elicits irritation, provocation, and ultimately experiences of complete strangeness, which, in sum, can only facilitate a necessary, self-reflexive pause in the moment of interruption. Translation can thus be considered a destructive transformation that challenges one to think because of the translation of others (cf. Grümme 2021, 211). Questioning power relations, translations are sui generis subject to hegemonic basic structures, power dynamics and encroachments (cf. Grümme 2021, 212).

Practical translations are in a way interwoven in a web of encroachments, assimilations and levelings by the respective actors. The reference to the heterogeneous learning conditions of the students, who are no longer unaffected by power conflicts and encroachments when they are assigned to certain groups whose distinguishing feature is a different religious socialisation, is crucial and guides the direction of religious education.[5] On the didactic level, religious education faces a much more intensive task of nurturing students' exploratory endeavors in terms of language and content in such a way that new interpretative perspectives can emerge in intermediate spaces ('Zwischenräumen'), a kind of transdifferent, which create something new qua translation and existentially transform the traditional in the mode of religious language use. Consequently, translation, approached in this way, becomes a reciprocal process, which primarily refers to the communicative level of religious education. This level, however, does not concentrate exclusively on classroom discussions but encompasses all forms and possibilities of articulating interpretative perspectives (for example, also in writing) within the classroom.

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[5] Martina Kumlehn uses the example of non-religious people to show the particular relevance in this regard (cf. Kumlehn 2015, 156-158).

4. Space of translation and theological centre – not only facing crises but overcoming them?

Given the limited scope of this contribution, the aforementioned insights and contributions regarding religious education, which only claim to be exemplary, open up new horizons and perspectives on the erosion dynamics outlined at the beginning. The goal is to maintain the capacity for discourse not only during crises but also to support theology and, within the context of my considerations, religious education in their denominational reference, as well as to sustain their capacity for connection and future relevance.

For the space of the 'transdifferent', wherethe new can emerge, I propose the concept of a space in which translations are accomplished as holistic, reciprocal, and critically reflexive transformational processes. In this context, an exploration into the sociology of space can contribute further insights (cf. Löw 2017). Space is to be thought of as an "Organisation des Nebeneinanders", and sociological considerations of space thus reflect the relational interconnections of social goods and people (cf. Löw 2017, 12f). Without delving into details, the reference to two central factors in the constitution of space becomes crucial for my considerations: such an understanding of space deems both social goods and people (as the building blocks), as well as their relationship to each other, as elementary (cf. Löw 2017, 155f). Consequently, this analysis of space enables the decoding of social disparities, structures and mechanisms that constitute space under the relational conditions just mentioned (cf. Löw 2017, 210ff). In any case, this view and understanding of space reveals the demands placed on the localisation of a theological centre in the context of fundamental translation processes within the space of religious education.

This space is to be profiled with a theological centre, where the need for translation of theological content is centred in such a way that a space emerges that places religion, religiosity, and theology in the discourse of the translators involved in religious education, both teachers and students, in a way that is both sensitive to heterogeneity and critical of power. Such a space can succeed in creating framework conditions within which students and teachers participate as translators in discourses of religious education. In a sense, it is a matter of establishing a framework of discourse in religious education that facilitates and open conversation related to traditions and content within religious education, while claiming a theological perspective. In such a space, both teachers

and students are seen as translators whose translations are transformationally interwoven. Through such a dynamically understood process, asymmetry can be dissolved. conversations in the context of school as occurring within such a 'space' and viewing everyone involved in religious education as translators sets groundwork for the framework conditions to be created for conversations in religious education. This includesdiscourses that raise awareness of conflicts related to interpretive power and reveal that something unavailable (etwas Unverfügbares) remains in what is to be translated. It highlights that certain aspects or even contexts are left untranslated, requiring each translator to engage in self-critical reflection on their individual approach; in the recognition of the lasting otherness, for example, of a tradition to be 'woven' into translation processes, so as not to succumb to the danger of one-sided assimilation mentioned earlier.

The repeatedly cited assumption of perspective is mentioned here not only in connection with heterogeneous language education within religious education and, more fundamentally, in connection with the demands on language-sensitive teaching, but —by extension—as holistic process which actively involves theology in translation processes. This involvement occurs in a manner that is publicly and critically reflexive and a contextualized way that the theological perspective of the believed God is intertwined with the potential of participation from the first person. Such a reframed religious-pedagogical foundation for translation has the potential to provide theology with the necessary revitalisation, especially with regard to two aspects. On the one hand, with regard to a hermeneutic claim to initiate the perspective of the believed God, revealing himself in Jesus Christ—the Christian message, so to speak—in the first person singular. However, this initiation is not understood as a consequence of a clear differentiation between participant and observer perspective, but as the (hermeneutic) initiation of the mode of perspective-taking, an essential condition for the possibility of adopting a first-person point of view. The other aspect mentioned refers to its capacity for discourse and reflection while recognising its particularity and interdisciplinarity in the public domain, in consequence and on the basis of the first constitutive, and therefore including the critical-reflexive confrontation with that believed message in the context of religious education discourses.

5. Conclusion

The international research seminar between Bochum and Zagreb that preceded this volume underlined the pressing need to critically and reflectively contextualise theology, especially in times of multiple crises.

Using the analogy of the power of the Gospel's message translated into life, as stated by G. Bätzing, this contribution has tried to give address the challenge of designing sustainable religious education in times of crises and social dynamics that render traditions fragile, with the help of an understanding of translation that is oriented towards religious education. With translation, there is now a focus that underlines the need—not only in religious education—for a context-sensitive theology that is aware of its particularity, that is both self-confident and critically-reflexive in public discourses. In this respect, translation can be regarded as the means of articulating religious traditions. For example, within our context, it serves as a mode of expressing the Christian testimony of the believed God, who reveals himself in Jesus Christ, in such a way that tradition as well as social transformation can be brought into a productive-constructive interrelationship in a meaningful way. To conclude the framework outlined in this work:

The Gospel message can have the power to be translated into life. In view of the transformation dynamics outlined above and a perceived loss of relevance of Church(es) in their institutionalised form, it will be all the more important in the future to engage in conversation with and about Church, religion and faith in appropriate forms. Theology, as a decisive point of reference in the (scientific) communication of the Christian faith, has the elementary task of critically reflecting this power with all potential participants in the discourse as translators of their individual perspectives of interpretation. Only by adopting this approach can it ultimately be possible to face multiple crises.

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Biography

Marius de Byl was born in Oberhausen, Germany, in 1994. He studied Catholic theology and classical philology in Bochum. After his traineeship in Duisburg and work at various schools in North Rhine-Westphalia, he has been a research assistant at the Chair of Religious Education and Catechetics at the Ruhr-University in Bochum since 2020. In his doctoral project, he is developing a theorem of translation in religious education.

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Make Theology Great Again:
From Crisis to Renewal of Theology

Marko GRČEVIĆ

Abstract

The aim of this article is to identify problems and factors that cause crises and, in turn, hinder the proper functioning of theology. Theology crisis is contextualized within a wider crisis of religion in contemporary society. Furthermore, the article analyses the crisis following the Volf-Croasmun division on the external and internal crises of theology. The main elements of an external crisis are loss of jobs, loss of audience, loss of reputation of theologians and two additional elements: anti-intellectualism and clericalization of theology. The basic elements of an internal crisis are a lack of synthesis and hiperspecialisation, as well as division among theologians into conservatives and liberals. The last part of the article offers some constructive and positive visions corresponding to Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium* on ecclesial universities and faculties. These positive directions encompass three aspects: the kerygmatic character of contemporary theology, the importance of promoting a culture of dialogue, transdisciplinarity among theological and other scientific disciplines, and the establishment of networks of cooperation between theology faculties and other various academic institutions.

Key words: theology, crisis, renewal, theologians, anti-intellectualism, dialogue

Introduction

Nowadays, it is often heard that theology is in crisis. However, "crisis is a regular state of theology like Jesus' gospel lives and creates crises in the church community and in society" (Šarčević 2021, 259). Crisis has become a constructive dynamism of theology. The church, and especially theologians, are faced with the challenge to evaluate and constructively criticise theology and various approaches to theological work. In this ar-

ticle, we have undertaken this very task. Our noble intention is to detect and accurately describe deviations in our theological context. More importantly, we aim to provide a positive vision and suggest ways of renewing theology so that it can fulfil its true mission.

In this article, the ideas of Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun serve as a comprehensive framework for our reflection on the crisis and renewal of theology. Miroslav Volf is a well-known Croatian protestant theologian who is the director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. Matthew Croasmun is an associate research scholar at the same center. Therefore, the foundation for this article is rooted in a protestant American context. However, our task was to examine these ideas in the context of the Catholic Church and theology, especially in Croatia.

It is very important for theologians to be self-critical contemplative and possess the ability to recognise and interpret signs in our society. Theology is understood as gnoseology of *signa temporum* (cf. Šarčević 2021, 238). These signs of the times should be observed, assessed, and criticised, which is often best achieved through dialogue. To be able to hold dialogue, we have to speak the same language which would be understandable to everyone. Theologians should use kerygmatic speech which is authentic and understandable because it stems from personal encounters and experiences with the Truth.

Furthermore, we come across the invitation of *Veritatis gaudium* which calls for the establishment of faculties of theology as cultural laboratories (cf. *Veritatis gaudium*, 3). These "laboratories" should provide favourable conditions for the "osmosis" of faith and culture (cf. Rađa 2021, 269). These "laboratories" are envisioned as the birthplace for new theology which transcends old divisions between *fides et ratio*, theology and pastoral work, faith, and life.

1. Religion and Church crises as context

One does not have to be an expert in social sciences to notice certain changes occurring within the Catholic Church in Europe. From a sociological perspective, noticeable shifts are happening: fewer people identify as believers (cf. Green 2010, 300 – 311), fewer people are baptized, irrespective of their demographic situation, and fewer people are attending Church services (cf. Brenner 2016, 563 – 583). On the other hand, there have been numerous scandals within the Church. We specifically point to paedophilia, which, by its occurrence and victims, stands out as the most significant issue in Church history, commonly associated with the Inquisition and crusades. It must be acknowledged that, in certa-

in cases, the Church didn't respond appropriately and, at times, lacked appropriate systemic measures against abusers. Unfortunately, in some cases, certain structures prioritized the life and wellbeing of abusers over that of the victims. Nevertheless, there are now many newly established institutions[1] aimed at preventing abuse and promoting a non-tolerant environment for abuse.

We can have an optimistic or pessimistic view of those dynamics. We can talk about the decline of religious and moral values and describe the current time as an apocalyptic age. On the other hand, we can adopt a more optimistic perspective and view this crisis as a catalyst for change and meaningful engagement. One thing is certain, the image of the Church is undergoing significant changes. The Church has become a subject of widespread criticism. In the context of neoliberalism, religion and theology have been deemed irrelevant or subjected to numerous critics, with their contributions to society often overlooked in both historical and contemporary context. However, the Church shouldn't solely attribute these challenges to external enemies within neoliberal societies and political systems. The Church and theology must acknowledge their own role in the current state of affairs. Therefore, there is a pressing challenge for the Church to take control of its own destiny. The key question arises: what source should provide the ideas and strength needed for these changes?

It is evident that the Church in Europe is in crisis, and it must be acknowledged that the "intellectual core" of the Church—theology—is also in crisis. Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, whose ideas we are going to discuss in this section, assert that theological crises are caused by some new and strange factors in theology. Firstly, they talk about deviation among theologians, highlighting the existence of „accidental theologians" (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 13). According to them, these individuals are sometimes "more successful" in theology than academic theologians. How? They often have significant presence in social media, expressing their quasi-theological opinions on YouTube or sharing their essays and meditations on Facebook.[2] Those "accidental theologians" are faithful individuals who have attended catechesis within a Church community and became interested in theological questions. Often, they gather their theological knowledge from internet sources, pamphlets,

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[1] Catholic University in Zagreb has its Centre for Fostering the Wellbeing of Vulnerable Persons. Online: https://www.unicath.hr/centarzadobrobit (last accessed October 7, 2023).

[2] For protestant context, we found this example. Welcome to Accidental Theology. Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glvOrOOvEns (last accessed October 5, 2023).

or even some popular quasi-theological literature.[3] They are very active on social media, representing their often conservative positions, especially in moral teaching, referring to saints and certain Church councils, frequently omitting the latest council. This trend indicates a rise in fundamentalism among believers who gain their theological education independently of established theological terminology in Catholic theology. The primary source of their theology is mainly a common quasi-theological opinion and position which is formed through personal experience or, worse, through ideologically instrumentalized constructs. This category of experience is very important for many forms of fundamentalism, as these accidental theologians observe only their experience as valid and obligatory form of theological reflection and positions. They frequently disregard the polymorphic character of theological reflection and strictly adhere to dogmatism (cf. Vacchiano/Strauss/Hochman 1969, 261). This approach to theology is very harmful for the discipline itself and leads into a deep crisis because it partially denies fundamental theological principles which include critical reflection and the polymorphic and dynamic character of theological system. Moreover, it results in a misunderstanding between theology and other sciences that adhere to strongly scientific criteria.

The other issue to consider is why academic theologians lack significant influence in public sphere, or why our believers seem more receptive to the fundamentalistic and ideological views which are presented by "accidental theologians". The answer may lie in in the very nature of the contributions by these "theologians". They often offer synthetic and distinct views tied to dogmatism. This approach eliminates the need for the effort required to consider things from different perspectives. It also eliminates the need for discernment. Everything is presented as simple, and solutions are already prescribed by traditional agenda. For these individuals, theology is a monolithic rather than systematic. People often seek clarity and practicality. The question arises: why are they unable to find these qualities in academic theology?

2. External crisis of theology

Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun have emphasized two aspects of theological crisis: external and internal (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 60).

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[3] Quasi-theological literature includes books written by church community leaders about certain theological themes, not concerning relevant theological sources but writing from personal experience as the main source, or worse, writing from an ideological standpoint.

The external crisis is more visible and evident to observers, whether they are theologians or not. In this brief analysis, we will begin with the external crisis. It makes more sense to start with the external, more visible state and then try to present the reasons for that in internal state of theology. Much of the external crisis is the sum and result of cultural, anthropological, social and economic elements and context. However, this external occurrence is merely an externalised manifestation of the internal state of theology, which Volf and Croasmun don't find so healthy (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 60).

Some of the issues are related to the general job market, where theologians lack consistency for a variety of reasons. Firstly, theology professors have an audience mostly made up of priestly candidates. The Church in Europe is experiencing a shortage of spiritual vocations, resulting infewer theology students. Secondly, as a consequence, the Church is closing seminaries and faculties that are mostly connected with them. This situation is also evident in Croatia.[4] Thirdly, there is a declining interest in theology. We are also facing a decline in interest in vocations such as a religious education teacher.[5] Theologians are becoming a marginalised group of intellectuals which don't hold any significant influence on society. What's more, they are losing their traditional audience. The question arises as to why theology and theologians have become unpopular, or more precisely, uninteresting, and unattractive. Some of theologians have reported a sense of uselessness or redundancy, even within the Church context (cf. Šarčević 2021, 255). In the 1950s, theological literature was widely popular. Today, the number of people reading academic theology is negligible. Even in the past, theology books were not widely read by laypeople. As Volf and Croasmun claim, a small segment of faith communities—the clergy—used to read the work of academic theologians (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 60). While both technical and popular versions of theological work exist, today, clergy no longer reads theology, considering it largely irrelevant to their profession. The clergy is generally not interested in themes offered by exegesis, or some systematic reflections done in trinitarian theology or christology. Our clergy is mainly interested in intellectual material they can incorporate into homilies or catechesis. They leave theology to theologians and don't perceive theo-

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[4] Catholic Faculty of Theology – University of Zagreb, Regional study in Rijeka, is currently in the process of closure. Online: https://www.ri-nadbiskupija.hr/2021/dan-teologije-i-dodjela-diploma/ (last accessed October 5, 2023).

[5] For comparison, we could analyse the number of students of the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Croatia in 2023 and compare it to the numbers from five or more years ago.

logy as something useful for their service. Do clergy read our scholarly theological journals? Unfortunately, not so much.[6] Theologians are hold similar views regarding their potential audience. According to Volf and Croasmun, they do not consider laypeople or clergy as relevant to their work (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 64). This often results in a discrepancy, with theologians working in their cabinets without a connection to the real-life situations of specific communities.

On the other hand, we have problem which could be named as "clericalized" theology, theology as a monopoly of clergy (cf. O'Collins 2004, 14). A person cannot finish their master's degree in theology without being asked by its fellow colleagues or relatives if they have ever considered becoming a priest or a nun. Theology requires and implies a life of faithfulness and a sense for the Church. If a person has these elements and practices theology, his colleagues and even the individuals may ask themselves–shouldn't I commit fully to religious life and become a priest? It seems as though the priest is closer to God and to the spring of grace which gives divine cognition. The priest is also, seemingly, the embodiment of theology and the most relevant person to engage in theological work. This is the wrong path for theology. The result of such mentality is a reductionist way of practicing theology. This type of "clericalized" theology remains a sacred science, as it is, but it remains untouchable, distant for believers, the laity who are the primary audience of theology. The primary mission of theology is evangelization; it should be open to God's people and the world. We don't need theology only for theologians or priests. It seems as though the theology is perceived as a science about the divine nature, and that knowledge is reserved just for the chosen ones. This approach results in the marginalization of theology as irrelevant for anyone other than priests and academic theologians, and irrelevant for any other context beyond Church. However, we know that theology has much to offer to everyone and is useful in various contexts. The question about "clericalized" theology is also a question of the identity of priests and laity. Are priests sacred persons distant from people and their living environment? Are lay people still just objects of pastoral care and sacramentalization? A change of mentality, provoked by the Second Vatican Council, is needed if we want to introduce lay theologians not as "theological monsters"(Lakeland 2015, 331) but as fundamental

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[6]   There is potential for further research on how many parishes or priests, personally, in one diocese, are subscribed to theological journals. According to personal verbal information, the figures for several Croatian dioceses are more than disappointing.

Church officials. A change in mentality is also needed if we want to make theology relevant in all fields of people's lives.

Another problem is anti-intellectualism, which is prevalent within some Church communities (cf. Nel 2016, 1 – 9). They often blame theologians for the loss of faith because theologians, according to their view, rationalize and demystify matters of faith (cf. Franz 2004, 21). They don't see the much-needed perspective of independent criticism, which should be omnipresent in Church life. That's one of the most important missions of theology; to be a corrective element in the Church context (cf. Kušar 2000, 736). "The obligation to be critical, however, should not be identified with the critical spirit which is born of feeling or prejudice. The theologian must discern in himself the origin and motivation for his critical attitude and allow his gaze to be purified by faith. The commitment to theology requires a spiritual effort to grow in virtue and holiness" (*Donum veritatis*, 9). Pope-theologian Benedict XVI is often quoted by the anti-intellectualistic circles. He talked about the arrogance of intellectual elites and cited a spiritual writer who said: "Leave knowledge; there is a lot of delusions and internal emptiness in it." Ratzinger often took Saint Francis of Assisi as an example of a person who didn't care much about theology (cf. Ratzinger 2010, 389). The circles of contemporary anti-intellectuals cite this pope-theologian in their fundamentalistic and anti-theological spirit of laziness (cf. Šarčević 2021, 228). They label theology as unnecessary and deviant, and theologians are often, according to their view, causing great damage. They often say that "we need more saints and fewer theologians" (Halik 2012, 175 – 176).

"We can say only that theology has lost its traditional audience but hasn't acquired a new one. People aren't trying to find answers to life's big questions in theological books. As a result, we can say that theology is losing favour, particularly in academic and intellectual circles" (Volf/ Croasmun 2019, 67). People are trying to find answers mainly in popular psychology literature. Religious and theological views of the world and life are often not something relevant to them. Does theology even have that power—not so much to provide answers—as to ask the right questions? Or is theology stuck in its own parallel world?

To conclude, we must concur with Volf and Croasmun that theology has "no spectacular new insights to offer. What does theology *have* to offer? The external crisis of theology—loss of jobs, loss of audience, loss of reputation—has much to do with the stuttering of theologians as they try to answer this question. Its external crisis, that is, stems in part from an internal crisis" (Volf/Croasmun 2019, 70).

3. Internal crisis of theology

According to Volf, the internal crisis is "mainly persisting because theology has forgotten its purpose: to critically discern, articulate, and commend visions of the true life in light of the person, life, and teachings of Jesus Christ" (Volf/Croasmun 2019, 71). Volf and Croasmun have identified problems in two destructive coping strategies that are associated with two central dimensions of theology: descriptive and normative (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 71). There is a danger that arises from the reductive application of the first, descriptive dimension. It is a result of the competition of theology with other sciences in the context of late-nineteenth-century universities. Theology and theologians were often labelled as repeaters and reinterpretations of their predecessors. Natural sciences became pioneers of the scientific revolution, whose ideal was to produce new reliable and useful insights and knowledge. Theology wanted to align itself with these scientific disciplines and accepted much of the influence of their methodology and hermeneutics. Friedrich Schleiermacher serves as an illustrative example of this shift. He divided theological disciplines in as many descriptive ways as possible (cf. Schleiermacher 2011, 31–69). In this intellectual and scientific context, theology evolved into a more scientific and comparative study of religion, and the self-understanding of theologians changed. They became scientists primarily engaged in producing knowledge related to religion and religious and sociological phenomena. In this context, theology has transformed into a science whose subject is Christianity and the realm of religions rather than, as traditionally understood, God and everything else in relation to God (Thomas Aquinas) or the knowledge of God and ourselves (Martin Luther and Jean Calvin) (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 72). The self-understanding of theology seems to have drifted away from God as the central subject, evolving more towards a particular segment of the world and religions, and away from norms and purposes that could be found in the basic messages of reflection of theology. It seems as though theology has shifted more towards facts and causes, treating them as independent elements rather than integrating them into a unified and meaningful context. Knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the world of religions have always been and must remain an important part of theological reflection, but they are not the core of theology.

The self-understanding of theology has three notable consequences. The first is disciplinary specialization (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 74). This often results in a loss of the sense of unity within the subject being studied. We can discuss the hyper-specialization of knowledge, which impli-

es the exclusion of a studied subject from its context. Consequently, the studied subject becomes incomprehensible (cf. Morin 2000, 112). Even St. Thomas Aquinas said: "The more one descends to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects" (*Summa Theologiae* I/II, q. 94, art. 4). The word "university" suggests that scholars and scientists within it are engaged in pursuit and accumulation of knowledge that contributes into a unified whole theology used to function precisely as the unifying science, providing synthesis after deep analysis and reflection. However, the current situation suggests a shift toward a "multiversity" model (Kerr 1963, 15). It seems as though academic theologians generate a significant amount of interesting research and insights, yet there appears to be a lack of knowledge or concern on how to integrate them into a synthesized whole that offer meaningful contributions to practical life or provide useful insights in matters of faith. Often, the works of theologians lack clear and distinct conclusions which would be useful to non-theologians. This absence of unity may not represent a problem for some disciplines, but for theology, it does.

This lack of synthesis and unity leads to another problem – the reduction of theology to the acquisition of knowledge, resulting in an inability to articulate normative questions and instructions. While such normative offers were central to theological tradition, they were never the sole focus of theological efforts. Often, it seems as though theologians focused on expanding knowledge feel unable or uneasy to offer practical wisdom, normative judgements, or proposals related to Christian convictions and practices (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 76). At times, it seems as though some theologians are merely producing "papierkorbliteratur". [1] This refers to the abundance of literature and bibliography that is produced without providing any useful insight or composed with too excessive aesthetic and metaphorical language, lacking concrete and meaningful contributions (cf. Šarčević 2021, 262).

We often hear that theologians tend to debate arcane topics that appear detached and distant from real life. It is true that theology is often too late to address current themes and problems. It seems as though theologians often discuss and write about "safe" topics from a more temporal distance, avoiding current actualities which could expose them to criticism and public debates, and which also demands effort. Theologians should be brave and expose themselves in both theological debates and public debates. This approach would provide them with more opportunity to promote Christian values and be more relevant to contemporary society.

Topics perceived as detached from real life and theologian's reluctance to contemporary topics could be deemed as problems, but there are

more significant and essential problems for the normative engagement of theologians. One such problem is nostalgia for past times and structures on the conservative side, as well as suspicion and unconstructive criticism on the liberal side.

Conservatives are often characterized as people who constantly complain. They perceive the current generation as eroding the faith "which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). They often talk about the moral decline that will lead to the apocalyptic end of our civilization. They condemn contemporary cultural changes and call for a return to the old virtuous ways of Christian living. Therefore, it becomes crucial that the essence of our response to the so-called moral decline should be to articulate and offer a positive vision of life, Church and theology which calls us forward.

"Progressives relish critique. They interrogate and unmask; they trouble and traumatize; they expose and subvert; they demystify and destabilize. Their critique is often infinite; it applies to everything—to biblical texts and figures to the Church today and throughout its history, to God and to all aspects of modern societies—and it never stops. Their critique becomes a rule and offers no positive alternative. They shy away from offering a positive vision in whose service they undertake their critique, for then this vision, too, would recursively become a target of the critique" (Volf/Croasmun 2019, 80). Inability to offer positive vision, provide positive feedback and act according to their views are often characteristics of liberal theologians. The reason for their inability to act in accordance with their views lies in their mainly theoretical approach to theological work, lacking real insight into the life of the Church. This is because they are often observing Church from the external standpoint, like outsiders, and that gives them material for criticism, but prevents them from "sentire cum Ecclesia" (cf. Steiner 2015, 535 – 546) and from offering practical and positive visions.

In conclusion, Volf's and Croasmun's statement perfectly sums up the gist of the problem. To paraphrase, in order to change theology, we need the "I have a dream" theology, not an "I have a complaint" theology (cf. Volf/Croasmun 2019, 82).

4. Foundational principles for the renewal of theology

"I don't think analysis of religion suffices. I'm happy to benefit from sociology, anthropology, and psychology. But you have a vibrant religious world, and academics sometimes aren't aware of how potent two billion Christians, one billion Muslims, and all the other religious folks

are. If you just analyse religion, you're doing good work, but socially, you're inconsequential. You're not shaping the world" (Volf/Croasmun 2019, 112). In this paragraph, Volf and Croasmun express the idea that the main purpose of theology is not to merely analyse different religions from various scientific angles but rather to change the world through the evangelisational mission. According to Volf and Croasmun, changing the world is the main purpose of religion and theology. Volf has a special formulation of changing the world through theology, which he terms "flourishing" (cf. Volf 2016). However, the world cannot flourish through analyses alone, but with concrete, substantial, and meaningful contributions, which are presented in Jesus Christ's gospel. A theology that is concrete and substantial, offering meaningful existential insights, cannot be flexible in its basic theological principles. The main theological principles include its purpose and subject matter. As previously mentioned, the purpose of theology is the flourishing of the world because God came for the life of the world (Jn 10, 10). "Christian theology shouldn't be mainly about God because the mission of God isn't mainly about God— neither about God apart from the world (*theologia* in the patristic sense) nor about God in God's relation to the world (*oikonomia* in the patristic sense). To make this claim is decidedly not to say either that God is not the cornerstone theme of theology or even that theology has no business reflecting on God's own being apart from God's relation to the world" (Volf/Croasmun 2019, 105). Therefore, we see that the subject and the purpose of theology are intertwined. God is the cornerstone of theology. However, we think, we perceive, and we write about Him right now, at this moment. Humans are inevitable subjects of theology. The Kingdom of God is the fundamental biblical image of flourishing life. However, "the most basic and consequential conviction about the kingdom of God is the obvious one: it is neither kingdom alone (a world apart from God) nor God alone (God without the world), but the two together. The kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed and enacted is a particular kind of dynamic relation between God and the world: it is 'the world with God' and 'God with the world'" (Volf/Croasmun 2019, 109). Thus, the purpose of theology is to foster flourishing of t human lives in relation to God. That relation is the common home of God: "when God comes to dwell in the world and when the world has become and experiences itself as being God's home" (Volf/Croasmun 2019, 109). God in this context is the main subject of theology.

Nowadays, in theological formation, there is often a lack of theologicity, or we could describe it as de-theologisation (cf. Šarčević 2021, 234). This particular deficiency implies the utilisation of all other auxiliary dis-

ciplines, during the shift in the self-understanding of theology—away from God or from God-and-the-world-in-relation and towards a particular segment of the world (Christianity or religions in general). The main problem is the lack of theology in its basic settings. Theological formation without flourishing as its purpose and God in relation to the world as the subject matter becomes a dry and sterile academic pursuit. Therefore, it is imperative to emphasise the following: don't forget to incorporate theology rooted in real-life issues in our theological and religious studies programmes. Educating religious education teachers and pastoral ministers without adhering to the fundamental principles of theology is challenging. If we do that, we reduce theology's specificity to mere science. In that case, the purpose of religious education is brought into question; is its main purpose merely to provide "facts and causes" in religious education, or should it aim to inspire people and harness the potential of Christianity for the flourishing of the world? The objective should be to offer a beautiful and enriching worldview, as prescribed in Christ's gospel. We are not theologians of "facts and causes", but rather for the sake of God (cf. Moltmann 1995, 1). One of the most influential documents of Pope Francis about church faculties and universities uses the term kerygma. "First, the most urgent and enduring criterion of renewal is that of contemplation and the presentation of a spiritual, intellectual, and existential introduction to the heart of the kerygma, namely the ever-fresh and attractive good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (*Veritatis gaudium* 4). In this sense, our theology should be kerygmatic. That is the path for the renewal of theology. Kerygma, in theological context, means to shout from the joyful experience of discovering the Truth. It entails enthusiastic speech that finds the right words, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis in the *Evangelii gaudium* gives a precise description of the nature of these kerygmatic ways of practising theology: "The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements that are most needed today: it has to express God's saving love, which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness, and a harmonious balance, which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines, which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes that foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth, and welcome that are non-judgmental" (*Evangelii gaudium* 165). The theologians who are doing theirtheological work in kerygmatic way will always be free thinkers, enthusiastic about the possibility of encountering the Truth. Their theology will stem from the experience of that encoun-

ter. They cannot be confined as the programmatic or court theologians (*dvorski teolog*) (cf. Šarčević 2021, 264) who think, speak, and write according to what is acceptable to some dominant structures. We can freely say that we live in time of theology of changed accents (cf. Šarčević 2021, 238). We can talk about theology that springs from personal experience and encounters with the Word in contemplation. We could also say that theology is increasingly becoming *scientia practica* than *scientia speculativa,* as pope Benedict XVI stated (cf. Ratzinger 2010, 382), but only in the sense that Christian *lex vivendi et orandi* is *conditio sine qua non*; a condition without which there is no theologian in Christian and ecclesial sense. The accent is changing from an academic endeavour to that concerning the pastoral care (cf. Šarčević 2021, 238).

We must acknowledge the fact that we live in the world of "facts and causes" rather than metaphorical stories with hidden meanings. This world doesn't inquire much about the purpose of everything, except for financial or materialistic purposes. That world does not need any other subject matter than human. It seems a bit strange to discuss with it about some religious worldview, to talk to it about sin or grace. At times, it seems as though we have forgotten these terms. We need to recognise that contemporary society is also in crisis, a crisis caused by anti-intellectualism (cf. Šarčević 2021, 230). If declare yourself a theologian, it might sound to some academic circles as if you are a magician from medieval times trying to impart your "magical" knowledge to them. Sometimes, it seems as though theologians are using a language which nobody understands. Practising theology can sometimes appear as though you are talking about something that doesn't interest people as much or only on certain occasions, such as weddings, baptisms or when seeking a priest for meaningful eulogies. This observation doesn't solely pertain to atheists or agnostics. Even faithful people have adopted such lifestyle and worldview. It appears as though theology is in exile in this contemporary society, living in diaspora amid secularistic pluralism (cf. Šarčević 2021, 231). We have to find a common language with one another even in theological circles and especially with contemporary society, culture and science. This dialogue should occur in three directions: firstly, by promoting culture of dialogue and encounter. Dialogue as ideal is also very important for internal ecclesial context. Secondly, through trans-disciplinarity, we should find synthesis among multiplicity of point of views and theological reflections. The third direction promotes dialogue among church faculties and universities with other academic institutions (cf. *Veritatis Gaudium* 4; Rađa 2021, 272).

We can offer theology that resonates with people and has the power to change the world. This type of theology can only arise when God is the subject matter, and the flourishing of life is its purpose. God is one of the deepest human needs. That claim is central for theology. Although it may seem as though the modern world doesn't talk about God, it doesn't mean that it doesn't need and crave a connection with the divine. Without delving too deeply into sociological analyses, which suggest a new wave of religiosity seen in popular religious movements such as Pentecostalism (cf. Cox 2006, 28 – 29), we need to assert that theologians must speak and not cowardly remain silent about matters entrusted to them.

Conclusion

Theology serves as a wellspring from which ideas and narratives should emerge to guide the path of the Church, allowing it to shape its own destiny. The core of the Church is its spirituality. Therefore, spirituality is a source of strength, emotion, and momentum for change. Changes in the history of the Church have consistently arisen from the poverty and modesty of charismatic people. But the 'brain' of the Church is theology. Christ is the head, and theology represents his own thoughts, which are mediated to us through the Holy Spirit. To paraphrase Volf, we can say that theology is Christ's intention and his deepest concern for human flourishing. Thus, theologians should always have extensive experience of personal encounter with the Truth through faith as a special form of cognition (cf. Murić 2021, 59). This encounter should serve as the main source of theological thought. The specificity of theology as science requires a perspective of faith and personal involment, as well as experience of the subject which is studied. With this in mind, we can talk about a shift in theological accents (cf. Šarčević 2021, 238) from *scientia speculativa* to *scientia contemplativa et practica* (cf. Šarčević 2021, 238). The renewal of theology will emerge from the authenticity of theologians, making their ideas relevant to people who are starving for answers and wholeness in the specific areas of their lives. A renewed theology should be kerygmatic. This implies providing spirited and personal testimony of encounter and enthusing people with practical and tangible Message aimed at fostering renewal among people who will flourish in every sense of the word. Renewed theology should always be dialogical since the nature of theology is relational and dialogical (cf. Kramer 2019, 112 – 126). To disregard this perspective would mean to neglect theology itself. Theology shouldn't compete with other sciences and keep emulating them in pursuing scientific acclaim. Instead, theology will find its identity in

faith as its epistemological specificity, and through it, theology will find its mission to enlighten people of God. Finally, this renewed theology should be distinct and clear, synthetic, and unified. It should provide, if not only normative and practical formulations, then at least high-qualitiy material for discernment and further reflection.

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Biography

Marko Grčević was born in Zagreb in 1996. He studied Catholic theology in Rijeka and Zagreb. Following his graduation, he took on the position of a religious education teacher in the Archdiocese of Zagreb. In 2022, he began his doctoral studies at the Catholic Faculty of Theology – University of Zagreb, specialising in the field of ecumenical theology. His doctoral research focuses on the influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Church and theology.

Professionalisation of Religious Education Teachers in a Culture of Digitality

Kathrin TERMIN

Abstract

The culture of digitality is not only a temporary phenomenon, but it is also omnipresent, facilitating various opportunities that are used every day. Diverse digital possibilities have increasingly come to the fore due to the Covid-19 pandemic, attracting significant attention.

During lockdown, teachers, in particular, have attended online training courses more often, engaged in social media networking, and thus, acquired professional and informal training.

In September 2021, the "relilab" (relilab.org) started as a flexible training format providing religious education teachers from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland the opportunity to explore topics of religious teaching and digital learning. The platform, therefore, serves as an the ideal place for religious education teachers and their research regarding their professionalisation within a culture of digitality.

An online questionnaire gathered data concerning the participating teachers' motivations and their previous training. Subsequently, 22 religious education teachers were interviewed through narrative interviews to reconstruct action-guiding orientations. The transcripts are currently undergoing evaluation.

Keywords: culture of digitality, religious education teachers, professionalisation, online questionnaire, narrative interviews

1. Initial situation

The far-reaching effects of digitisation on people's lives have been brought into greater awareness by the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to increased attention and acceptance. In the course of digitisation, sociologist Dirk Baecker speaks of a fourth media era, the era of electronic

and digital media, which currently prevails, following the era of orality, writing and letterpress (cf. Baecker 2018). "Media-related change has far-reaching social significance for people's social relationships, for identity formation and world view, and for economic reproduction" (Breiter 2010, 13).

The term digitality often comes up in this context. "Digitality combines the terms 'digital' and 'reality/materiality', thus standing for the increasing networking of analog and digital realities" (Pirker 2019, 78). Felix Stalder goes a step further and speaks of a "culture of digitality"" that essentially has three characteristics: referentiality, communality and algorithmicity (Stalder 2019, 13). The "culture of digitality" is not just a temporary phenomenon, but rather ubiquitous.

Children and young people nowadays are already growing up in a "culture of digitality" as a matter of fact. Digital media has become an integral part of their lives, which children and young people use for consumption, participation, and creation. Nevertheless, this matter is still given little attention in the school context.

To get an overview of the media usage behaviour of children and young people, it is worth taking a look at selected results of the representative German KIM (Childhood, Internet, Media) study and JIM (Youth, Information, Media) study. The KIM and JIM studies, which are conducted annually by the media educational research association Southwest, collect quantitative data on the media use of children aged 6-13 and young people aged 12-19.

The latest results of the two studies indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought the topics of digitisation, media use and media consumption even more to the fore. Even children mention a variety of aspects of the Internet, which gives them access to digitality. While the Internet is mainly seen as a source of information (cf. KIM-Studie 2020, 36), the potential effects and consequences of their usage practices have not yet been sufficiently analysed. The main aspects of Internet use among children and young people are communication and entertainment. When asked about their media activities in their free time, it becomes clear that the majority of young people (97%) use the Internet every day (cf. JIM-Studie 2021). The content that children and young people encounter on the Internet thus has a major impact on their lives. Young users also display a certain scepticism toward digital structures in everyday life, "which puts them in a dilemma: on the one hand, they know about possible risks, but on the other hand, they still want to use the applications so that they are not excluded from communicating with others, for example" (Leven/Palkowitsch-Kühl 2021, 128).

These structures are accessed via digital media. The media have played a central role since the dawn of mankind. Pirner emphasises that the human being is "by nature a cultural being and to that extent has always been 'interwoven in media', a 'homo medialis' (Pirner 2012, 60). "And the nature of those media that play the dominant role in human culture right now play a significant role in shaping who we are as human beings" (Pirner 2012, 60). Currently, digital media is an integral part of today's society. Digital media opens up spaces of experience and socialisation for children and young people (cf. Nord 2021, 257-280), which play a central role in their development and also with regard to religious education. Therefore, in many contexts, a strengthening and promotion of digital education of children and young people is called for (cf. Pirker 2020b, 13).

The fact that the development and acquisition of competencies for life in a digital world are essential tasks in schools is made clear by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs' strategy "Education in the Digital World" (Kultusminister Konferenz 2017), which was published in December 2016 and supplemented by recommendations in December 2021 (Kultusminister Konferenz 2021). School education should make a decisive contribution to the cumulative promotion of media competencies, starting at the primary level, and this is increasingly called for by the strategy paper. The strategy paper lists six areas encompassing a total of 61 competencies (cf. Kultusminister Konferenz 2021, 16-19). The goal of digital education in schools is seen as enabling students "to lead a self-determined and responsible life in a digital world" (Kultusminister Konferenz 2021, 11). The competent use of digital media should not be practiced as an additional cultural technique, but rather integrated into the subjects in an additive manner (cf. Kultusminister Konferenz 2021, 13).

In this context, "[j]ust about every subject [...] contains specific approaches to the competencies in the digital world through its subject and action approaches. Thus, specific subject competencies are acquired, but also basic (subject-) specific characteristics of competencies for the digital world" (Kultusminister Konferenz 2017, 12).

The supplementary recommendation to the strategy goes a step further and "puts into perspective the path from 'teaching and learning with digital media and tools' to learning and teaching in a constantly changing digital reality, which becomes evident as a culture of digitality, particularly in cultural, social and professional modes of action, and in turn triggers digitization processes" (Kultusminister Konferenz 2017). In addition, this educational mandate also and especially poses new chal-

lenges for religious education in Germany as a regular subject anchored in the Basic Law.

Above all, the religious education teachers, as central actors, bear the responsibility for transforming the existing religious education and setting new accents. As key figures for contemporary religious education, they hold a special significance. Depending on the type of school, the number of religious education teachers varies, and not all schools are able to facilitate an exchange about teaching content and current developments within a subject group.. Religious education teachers are responsible for the thematic content of their lessons, aligning with the competency expectations of the curricula. In this context, religious education teachers should pay attention to current developments and requirements. It is their duty to expand their professional competencies on the basis of these developments to include competencies in the area of digitisation and digitality and to use the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom.

If one also considers the goals of religious education, human experiences are the starting point for theological reflection. Based on this, the experiences of the students are central to the conception of religious education from the perspective of the didactics of religion (cf. Boschki 2021, 74) and have to be taken into consideration by the teachers of religious education. The orientation towards experience as a didactic principle of religious education is still valid and receives a holistic perspective on the human being through the principle of subject orientation (cf. Boschki 2021, 74). Religious education in school contributes to the "sensitization for the relationship to oneself, to others, to the world in which we live, to time and to God" (Boschki 2021, 74).

"In the orientation towards the subject, therefore, not only supra-temporal experiences (such as joy, suffering, failure, guilt, death, etc.) come into play, but contextual factors, time-related events in biography and society, as well as current developments (e.g. digitalization) are seen as essential prerequisites for religious learning [...]" (Boschki 2021, 74). Digitalisation is defined in this context as a current development and an essential prerequisite for religious learning.

Through the factual and action approaches in religious education, the promotion of digital and technical competencies can take place on both content-related and methodological level. The methodological level includes the diverse use of different digital media and tools in religious education, such as the use and creation of films. The content level, however, is divided into two areas that are closely linked to each other. On the one hand, there is traditional content that has shifted into the digital

world of the students, such as the topic of cyberbullying. On the other hand, digitality has created new content that was not previously part of the students' lives, such as the use of social media.

2. Professionalism of religious education teachers

The religious education teacher, who designs teaching projects and initiates religious learning in religious education, plays a decisive role here, because "[o]ther than subject matter, digital competencies do not have an object in which they can prove themselves or become fruitful. Only in combination with subject-specific competencies and related content do digital competencies receive a focus in which they can be applied, practiced, reflected upon, and promoted" (Gesellschaft für Fachdidaktik 2018, 2).

Within the framework of the general educational and upbringing mandate, religious education teachers support students in developing a mature and socially responsible personality (KLP I 2019, 11) and enable them to competently cope with existential issues of their lives and their living environment. As mentioned above, the living environment of children and young people has changed fundamentally. Given the fact that the digital world has become an inseparable part of students' lifeworld, religious education faces new anthropological and ethical questions. Leven and Palkowitsch-Kühl mention the following "new and at the same time familiar challenges [for religious education work]:the question of self ("Who am I?") in the face of multiple network identities, the question of one's position in the community ("Where do I belong?") in the face of an increasingly differentiated society, and the question of trustworthiness ("Who can I believe?") in the face of the many channels and actors in digital media" (Leven 2021, 131).

The influence of each teacher is central to the success of teaching (cf. Hattie 2020). "This applies even more to religious education, because it deals with personal topics like no other subject and therefore requires a professionally measured authenticity on the part of the teacher" (Pirner 2017, 274). The design of religious education by the religious education teacher is in a development process due to the mediatised and digitalised lifeworld of the students. In order to trace this development process, it is indispensable to delve into the religious education teachers and their professionalism. Teachers of religious education operate under specific conditions of action, which fluctuate between state and ecclesiastical requirements. The situations in which they operate are very complex and cannot be mastered according to a predefined scheme, so in this context, we

speak of professional action (cf. Riegel 2021, 135). On the basis of models of general teacher professionalism, attempts have already been made to determine factors influencing the professional actions of religious education teachers. The structural theoretical approach particularly emphasises "that teacher action is not simply exhausted in routine actions in predictable situations, but on the contrary, it is precisely the handling of uncertainties and unpredictabilities that is characteristic of this profession" (Pirner 2017, 275). Although the teacher develops routines over time, he or she also needs "extensive subject-specific and subject-didactic knowledge as well as a high level of reflective competence in order to be able to react flexibly in different situations of demand" (Heil 2015). Because the work in religious education is very student-oriented, this is especially important for the religious education teacher. The tension between "routines" and "dealing with new things" finds special attention in the structural model of the professional religious education habitus according to Mendl, Heil and Ziebertz (cf. Heil 2015).
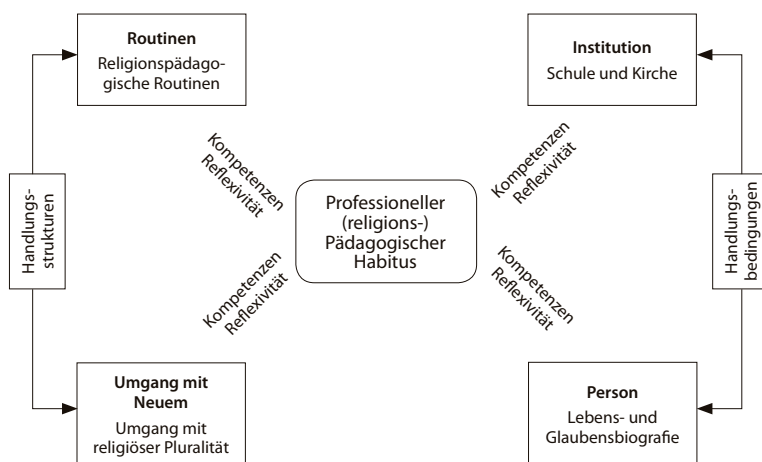
Source: (Burrichter 2012, 81)

"The interplay of the categories reveals what constitutes religious education professionalism" (Heil 2006, 85). The religious pedagogical habitus is a product of constant reflexivity. "Even experienced teachers have to ask themselves again and again to what extent the familiar repertoire of possibilities for action does justice to the concrete teaching situation" (Riegel 2021, 135). Due to the curricular integration of "competencies for the digital world", as well as the digitally supported design of teaching and learning processes, which is demanded of all school subjects by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in the strat-

egy paper "Education in a Digital World", a further development of the professional habitus of religious education teachers is required. In this context, it is important that religious education teachers take a positive view of media, "one that does not merely sketch out threat scenarios, but rather focuses on the inevitable contribution of (digital) media to individual development as well as their necessity for social cultures and discourses" (DBK 2021, 19-20).

Is this view already present among religious education teachers? How do religious education teachers define digital education in their subject and how do they position themselves? How have religious education teachers professionalised themselves in the field of digital education so far?

Professionalisation can take place in various phases of teacher education, autodidactically, or as part of initial, continuing, and advanced training. During the lockdown, teachers, in particular, increasingly participated in online advanced training courses, networked on social media, and thus gained professional and informal training in the use of digital technologies (cf. Pirker 2020a, 490).

The development of religious education professionalism is complex and requires a willingness to continually professionalise. All (religious education) teachers first acquire professional expertise within the framework of their academic education (first phase of teacher education) and the subsequent preparatory service (second phase of teacher education). Subsequently, religious education teachers act largely autonomously and apply their knowledge and skills according to the situation (cf. Riegel 2021, 135). The third phase of teacher education serves to further develop competencies that have already been acquired and to train new ones, making it clear that professionalisation is a lifelong process (cf. Heil 2006, 79-92). Particularly with regard to questions about religious education in the context of digitality, advanced training and continuing training take on a high priority. Depending on the quality of the training, it has an important influence on the convictions about a subject area and can influence the professional actions of (religious education) teachers (cf. Lipowsky 2010, 65-70).

3. The professionalisation platform "relilab"

The "relilab" as an agile training format offers religious education teachers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland the opportunity to engage with religious education and religious didactic content under the aspect of digitisation. It, therefore, serves as the ideal place to research religious education teachers with regard to their professionalisation in

the field of digitisation. Supported by the two cooperation partners, the Religious Education Institute at the University of Lucerne and the Comenius Institute in Münster, as well as many other institutions, the "relilab" is organised by a trinational and cross-denominational planning team of religious educators working in different fields. They lead the regional groups, through which official registration for "relilab" is possible. While certified participation in "relilab" is possible within the framework of the regional groups offered by the various institutions, it is not a prerequisite for utilising the learning environment.

The "relilab" took place for the first time in September 2021 and officially ended in May 2022. This special training format includes various elements and can be described in more detail by the three terms: advanced training, network and laboratory. Some components of the "relilab" have already been tested and will be continued after the "relilab" officialy ends. The participating teachers can freely use all elements of the "relilab", engage in self-directed learning, and set individual priorities within it. To present all the freely selectable elements, the "relilab" commenced in early September 2021 with a kick-off event for all officially registered teachers.

One element of the "relilab" is the "relilabCafé", which takes place weekly via the Zoom video conferencing platform. The format was launched during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 as an openly accessible collegial exchange platform and has been continuously developed. As an integrative element of the "relilab", it enables, on the one hand, a networking of religion teachers throughout the German-speaking area, and on the other hand, it offers the religious education teachers the possibility of continuing education every first Thursday of the month. Participants can choose from a variety of advanced training courses. Since some of the courses take place simultaneously, they are recorded, prepared interactively and then made available to everyone under an open (Open Educational Resources) license (https://blogs.rpi-virtuell.de/foertbildung/2020/08/10/sitzungen-und-inhalt/ Stand: 29.05.2021). Within the framework of "relilab", the advanced training content is designed to help participants individually and collectively develop competencies to "plan, implement, and reflect on teaching-learning processes that take digital media into account" (ReliLab_Flyer). Participants can view the advanced trainings synchronously during the "relilabCafé" or asynchronously after the advanced training. They can also refer back to the contents of the advanced training at a later time. Participants receive support, questions about subject-specific topics,and guidance in planning their teaching projects, among other things, from the advanced train-

ing instructors within the framework of the "relilabTalks", which take place once a month. The teaching projects developed within the "relilab" framework were presented at the final events at the end of May (cf. ReliLab_Flyer). Through practical development and, if necessary, direct testing in the classroom, the "relilab" takes on a laboratory-like quality, allowing participants to become actively involved. Great importance is attached to The exchange among the teachers is of great importance, which is why the network character of the "relilab" is highlighted. In addition to networking via the regional groups and the "relilabCafés", the monthly structured "relichat"[1] on Twitter also offers networking opportunities on topics and contents related to religious education.

Overall, the "relilab" offers religious education teachers a shared space for testing, observing, and developing religious education in the context of digitality.

4. State of research

Religious education teachers have already been the subject of several empirical studies in the past, some of which have, for example, focused on questions of self-assessment or the goals of religious education (Gramzow 2015). To date, the opinions of religious education teachers on the contribution of religious education in relation to cross-curricular educational goals, such as the promotion of media literacy, have not been extensively researched. Therefore, exploring questions in this area can provide new insights. Qualitative research that provides in-depth insights into the professionalisation of religious education teachers has not yet been widely conducted. Thus, professionalisation processes in the digital space, in particular, remain unexplored.

The professionalisation process of religious education teachers, initiated by participation in "relilab", will be examined, above all, at the level of job-related convictions.

"[U]nder beliefs of teachers [are] affectively charged ideas, containing an evaluation component, about the nature and essence of teaching-learning processes, learning content, the identity and role of learners and teachers (themselves), and institutional and societal context of education,

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[1] Während der Schulzeit findet der #relichat jeden Mittwochabend von 20:00 – 21:00 Uhr auf Twitter statt und ermöglicht es ReligionspädagogInnen und an Religionspädagogik Interessierten sich informell zu einem Thema entlang von fünf Fragen auszutauschen. Peböck, K.: #relichat - informelles Lernen mit Twitter: Religionslehrer*innenfortbildung durch sozial-konstruktivistische Vernetzung in Communities of Practice. Doctoralthesis.

which are held to be true and valuable and which provide structure, support, security, and orientation to their job-related thinking and actions [understood]" (Reusser 2014, 642).

In the international literature, the term "teacher beliefs" is used for this purpose. Despite the fact that beliefs are important for teachers' actions, there is still hardly a clear definition of the term (cf. Reusser 2014, 643). Beliefs always refer to an object and "express what a teacher believes, what he or she trusts, what he or she subjectively considers to be correct, and with which professional pedagogical ideas, views, world views, and value orientations – with which professional ideal – he or she identifies" (Reusser 2014, 644). Beliefs can change through participation in professional development.

To explore the beliefs of teachers, it is necessary to pursue a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research has the "claim to describe life worlds 'from the inside out' from the perspective of the acting people. In doing so, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of social reality(ies) and to draw attention to processes, patterns of interpretation and structural features. These remain closed to non-members, but are also usually not conscious to the actors themselves, who are caught up in the self-evidence of everyday life" (Flick 2019, 14).

Interviews are often chosen as a survey method for the reconstruction of beliefs (cf. Reusser 2014, 642). The teachers were contacted through the use of a closed online questionnaire, in which they were inquired about, among other things, motivations for participating in "relilab" and their previous training experience and learning behaviour. Subsequently, 22 religious education teachers were interviewed through narrative interviews via the Zoom videoconferencing tool. The transcripts are currently under evaluation, and the evaluation method is being concretised and controlled in qualitative-empirical research workshops.

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Pupils with Non-denomination and Bible Didactics: The Living Environment of Young People

Manuel HARTMANN

Abstract

In Germany, there has been a noticeable "breaking with traditions" of Christianity, impacting the relationship with the Church and the institutionalised religion (cf. Meyer-Blanck 2014, 215). Does this departure from the tradition indicate a crisis in religion?

Particulary, young people are distancing themselves from the traditional Christianity. This raises questions of the living environment of young pupils, specifically those without a denominational affiliation. What drives young non-denominational individuals and what are they thinking about? Despite lacking a specific religious affiliation, many young people express a belief in a higher authority, (cf. Dietsch 2019, 13), indicating that they are not atheists (cf. Barth 2013, 232).

To understand the views of young people, especially those without a denominational affiliation, it is essential to firstly explain their values and concerns. Subsequently, their relationship to religion and the Church is discussed.

In various settings, individual young people hold diverse and nuanced perspectives. Therefore, it is imperative to design a template based on averages without delving into the details of each individual variation. Otherwise, there is a risk of giving the impression that all young people share the same thought and beliefs, which is not the case (cf. Rebenstorf 2017, 53). Therefore, an attempt is made to strike a balance between provide information on general overview of averages and details. This cross-section is necessary for gaining insight into an overview of the overall context without getting lost in details.

It can also help teachers to familiarise themselves with types of attitudes they might encounter in religious education.

1. Values of young people

Before analysing the religiosity and the relationship to the Church of the contemporary youth, especially of those young people who have distanced themselves from the Church, and can therefore be considered as non-denominational, it is necessary to examine the values and norms that young people find relevant to their lives, when religious values are not involved. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the mindset of unaffiliated youth, it is crucial to also explore the concerns, fears, and questions to which young people seek answers. The attitudes of young people are no longer religious but have been replaced by profane and pagan ideas (cf. Schröder 2017, 225). Neither their world of ideas nor their social context takes place in a Christian religious or even church context. What matters to young people is what is useful to them. They have a very "pragmatic" view of the world (Hohensee 2017, 105).

But what answers do young people give when asked what is important in their lives? Family is the top priority, but health, partnership, fun and friends also hold significance (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 16). However, Gerhard Wegner and Ulf Endewardt perceive a "very narrow" world of thought in this relevance (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 18), which is aessentially just an extension of what is really important in life, namely their own ego. According to Wegner and Endewardt, everything significant in life exist only for the benefit of their ego (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 37). How can this thesis be interpreted?

The interpretation of the theory does not only concern the world of young people on a secular level, but also the attitudes of the religious dimension in the subsequent text.

The highest maxim that young people follow, providing their lives with meaning, is self-determination (cf. Schröder 2017, 230). This principle is so dominant and has such a priority that adolescents see themselves as the most important thing in their own lives. This results in an ego-centric society where the ego is no longer "embedded in a We", but stands on its own, still surrounded by a narrow circle of a "social network" of friends and close family, essentially limited to the parents (Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 37). Wegner sees the diminishing inclination towards solidarity as a negative outcome. In fact, according to young people, social commitment is not important. Furthermore, young people no longer want to be members of clubs or other organisations, as these

would restrict them in the development of their own ego and impede their pursuit of personal needs and hedonistic goals (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 38).

This leads to a process that Gerhard Wegner calls "singularisation". While individualisation implies the integration of an individual into a community, singularisation, on the contrary, suggests that each individual stands alone (Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 39).

These "singularisation" tendencies show their extent in the understanding of the personal relationship with God. Due to their self-centeredness, young people are convinced that they can achieve anything they want, and that they can do it on their own because they decide for themselves and not for divine power (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 34). In doing so, they elevate their own self to the divine, according to Wegner. This belief is an expression of the desire to be in control of one's own life. This idea is promoted by targeted economic advertising, which makes young people believe that they can redeem themselves through consumption. Paradise is only a purchase of a new mobile phone away, to put it bluntly. As a result, the traditional Christian image of God has become obsolete. God exists in young people's imaginations, but divinity exists to help young people achieve their desires. This idea of the relationship between God and oneself is a mixture of the "archaic" Old Testament idea that God calls a person and the modern individualisation (Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 38).

The reason for the primacy of individuality can be found in the social context of young people. Fred-Ole Sandt and Detlef Pollack find the causes in the breaking up of traditional milieus and functional differentiation. In the past, a young person was born into a given social context. Usually, a child took up its father's job and remained in the social milieu of its parents. This led to a predetermined identity from which a deviation seemed almost impossible. Young people today are not embedded in an innate social context, nor in a prescribed milieu. Nowadays, to the contrary, the child can, even has to, choose between many different possibilities and can also switch between different milieus, because the rigidity of the milieus has ceased to exist (cf. Pollack 2018, 315). Rather, they have the opportunity and the choice to change their habitus at any time and to switch between many identities because traditional guidelines are no longer relevant. After all, nobody takes up his father's job as a social duty. This means that there is no identity that is fixed from birth. Due to the withdrawal of the Church from all areas of public space, the young people are hardly aware of the possibility of a religious identity. The possibility of developing their own identity from different patterns

makes religious identity implausible for young people because they do not want to be dictated by hegemonic structures or social constraints. The consequence of this choice is that young people find the meaning of life in their own ego (cf. Sandt 1996, 260), which consists of different identities depending on the habitus in which the person is currently moving. Joachim Theiß puts it this way: young people develop a "patchwork identity", in which religion is not the only giver of individual identity, because it is just one of many ways to find a meaning in life, which could also be a secular one only (Theiß 2017, 9).

2. Fears and worries

Not only are the important values of young people centered on a narrow circle of people, But their fears and worries are also focused on a limited area of the young people's world — namely, on their own ego and on the immediate environment, the closest family and friends.

The main concerns and fears correlate with the aim that young people have for autonomy, self-determination, and self-control. Adolescents are afraid of losing control by contracting illnesses themselves or within their narrow circle. That is why cancer and AIDS are at the top of young people's list of concerns.[1]

Furthermore, young people worry about the financial sector, because a lack of money means a significant loss of control over their own lives (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 15). However, these fears are not as pronounced as those about illnesses because young people are under the impression that good education and diligence can influence their financial income. Therefore, poverty in old age and unemployment only play a marginal role in the fears, but are nevertheless significant and should therefore be mentioned. Before 2018, climate change, war and environmental destruction did not affect young people's minds to a significant extent. Instead, young people worried about not being able to gather enough time, knowledge, courage and success for themselves.

It seems that health is one of the most important assets that young people think they possess. Wegner expresses the assumption that health is perceived as a "finite resource" that, at some point, can no longer be replenished by one's own strength. Loss of health is inevitable for young people and is therefore their greatest concern (Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 23).

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[1] Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 15: About 60% of all young people who were interviewed worry about his issue.

This assumption of Ulf Endewardt and Gerhard Wegner can be aligned with the above explanations on the most important values of young people.

3. Religious socialisation

After exploring the values and fears, the attitudes of young people towards the subjects of religious socialisation and towards the Church need to be addressed.

First, we will shift the focus on socialisation. In Germany, only a few youngsters enjoy a religious socialisation. Furthermore, they no longer receive religious education in detail (cf. Pickel 2014b, 67) and are not acquainted with the Bible, which is why they are not familiar with biblical language and religious vocabulary (cf. Schori 2015, 74). One reason for the absence of religious socialisation is that their parents[2] are not believers (cf. Wolfert/Quenzel 2019, 154). Consequently, the youth only receive marginal religious instruction. As a result, today´s young people are less likely to educate their own children about religion, further deepening the distancing from the religion and contributing to the trend of secularisation (cf. Szymankowski/Jürgens/Sellmann 2018, 85). In addition, religion no longer has any influence on their identity development (cf. Schröder 2017, 215f).

3.1. Religious self-assessment

The lack of religious socialisation affects the self-assessment of whether someone feels religious. Young pupils tend to have a low religious self-assessment (cf. Schröder 2017, 216). Approximately 21% of Catholic youth claim to be religious. As a result, identification with faith is diminishing, with 51% of the Catholic youth stating they are not religious (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 9). Rather, uncertainty is increasing compared to previous generations (cf. Kubik 2018, 56). Consequently, young people are hesitant to define themselves (cf. Schneider, Nikolaus/Bedford-Strohm, Heinrich/Jung, Volker 2014, 17). The self-attribution of non-religiosity does not exclude the belief in a divinity. The thesis suggests that young people no longer describe themselves as religious because religion

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[2] Szymankowski, Björn/Jürgens, Benedikt/Sellmann, Matthias (2018), 2018, S. 8: When referring to parents, we are talking about the generation whose parents were born in the 1970s or 1980s. Therefore, only the grandparents of the young individuals mentioned here had more significant interaction with religion, with the level of contact decreasing from generation to generation.

plays only a marginal role in their everyday life or in their thinking (cf. Pollack 2017, 205). Therefore, it is not quite clear whether young adults define religiousness as a combination of faith, everyday relevance, and practice. This might explain their image of God, which still exists (cf. Biewald/Obermann 2014, 9).

3.2. Image of God

What form does religiousness take if it still exists? Which image do young people have of God?

It can be perceived that young people have a depersonalized image of God. They describe an "unspecific [but] individualized divinity" (Murken 2008, 251). A quarter of Catholic youth cannot describe a personalised God, and this trend is rising, as observed in studies such the Shell-studies carried out over several years.[3] However, the youth are not entirely disinterested in God. In everyday life, non-denominational pupils are not interested in God, however; at school, they want to learn about God, Frank Lütze says (cf. Lütze 2017, 170f). Concerning the image of God, the growing uncertainty is evident. Albrecht Schöll cites a pupil who says that he does not believe in not believing. Rather, the existence of God is a possibility for them, not a firm belief. This signals significant indifference among young people. God becomes someone indefinable because young people do not want to commit themselves to God. Instead, God is a "higher [being or] power" (Kessler 2015, 41), as a quarter of Catholic youth believe (cf. Gensicke 2015, 254). As shown above, a decline in Christian ideas is evident.

3.3. Reasons for this indifferent image of God

Individuality and Autonomy – "Everybody decides for himself" (Kubik 2018, 56). But why do young people think about God in this way? They do not want to be dictated by a traditional Christian image of God, especially not by the Catholic Church (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 35). For young people, individuality is crucial, not only in their idea of the image of God, but also in the organisation of their own lives. The importance of individuality is related to their own autonomy. To be autonomous, for them, means to use their own rationality. Their own rationality is the highest guiding principle of faith. They want to decide for themselves who God is. God is what their own reason dictates. From their per-

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[3] Cf. Gensicke 2010, 207; Gensicke 2015, 254.

spective, the Catholic Church, with its hierarchical structure, portrays a God who is a personalised dictator. This is not compatible with their reason because a personalised God would suppress their individuality and autonomy, which are the highest values in the modern world (cf. Sandt 1996, 258). Consequently, a personal God is considered antiquated and implausible for non-denominational pupils[4] because he is "out of time".[5]

3.4. Plausibility

Furthermore, the concept of a personal God seems illogical to young people. They are not very open to other viewpoints than those offered by the natural sciences, which they consider to be the only perspective for perceiving and interpreting the world (cf. Riegel 2021, 46). It is important to mention that in Germany, there isn't a substanital number of young people who hold views similar to the Creationists elsewhere. The difference between denominational and non-denominational youth is the interpretative perspective of the world. Denominational individuals interpret their everyday life transcendentally. Sandt expresses concern that secular young people struggle to understand a religious interpretation of their own life. They fail to see how anyone can interpret the world and life in relation with a personal God (cf. Sandt 1996, 258f).

3.5. Syncretism

Are young people creating a syncretic deity out of different elements? It could be assumed that young people are piecing together a god or even crafting their own egocentric religion by blending different religious ideas (cf. Tyrell 2014, 60). This could resemble a kind of "patchwork" religion (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2005, 14f), which, according to the German bishops, displaces and replaces Christianity and is made up of various Christian, secular and non-Christian ideas (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2005, 14f). This "patchwork or bricolage religiosity" is adapted to their own needs (cf. Pickel 2016, 184), making it profoundly subjective (cf. Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2005, 14f).

However, according to Detlef Pollack, these assumptions are wrong. Namely, there is no "alternative" and composite religiosity that substitutes Christianity (Pollack/Gergely 2005, 145). Young people critically

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[4] Non-denominational may have been baptized, but religion and God hold no relevance for them, although the possibility of the existence of God remains an option.
[5] Wiederhold/Böhning 2008, 217; Pickel 2016, 205.

view every form of religion, whether it be Christianity or a "patchwork" religion, or they are indifferent to it. In addition, they are not familiar enough with Christianity or other religions and interpretations to have sources for an alternative concocted religiosity. That means syncretism is doomed, much like Christianity (Pollack 2013, 12). However, it can be stated that Christianity continues to provide a framework within which the religious ideas of young schoolchildren evolve. Young people take set pieces from known material from the Christian religion, sometimes blending them with other ideas such as karma (cf. Schröder 2017, 231). If nevertheless syncretism occurs, these ideas are not sustainable and are not passed on to the next generation, says Gert Pickel (cf. Pickel 2013, 26). In West Germany, at least 29% of all people, not only young people, claim to incorporate the ideas of other religions into their faith (cf. Pollack 2013, 12). Therefore, we should be careful in expecting that religiousness will only change its form (cf. Pickel 2013, 26).

4. Attitudes towards the Church

The abovementioned considerations now lead to an exploration of young people's attitudes towards the Catholic Church. In the area of the image of God and religiosity, a shift in the life attitudes of young people is evident. There is also a downward trend in religious socialisation. It is therefore not surprising that the relationship with the Church may also deteriorate. Indeed, on the one hand, an increasing number of young people are distancing themselves from the institution of the Church. On the other hand, the imaginary world of students increasingly diverges from that of the Church (cf. Pollack 2015, 120). However, for the majority of young people, this distance does not stem from conscious rejection, or even dislike or hostility, but rather from indifference (cf. Pickel 2014a, 80). While there are also those who categorically reject the Church, engaging with them in discussion is futile as they cannot be swayed from their point of view. It is therefore useless to insist on further interaction, as religious education would likely be ineffective. It can even be assumed that they would not participate in a religious education due to a lack of engagement.

Young people without a formal denomination, meaning those who haven't been baptised and are not members, regard the Church as antiquated and unfashionable, much like their views on religion and God Himself. The majority of youth do not agree with the "tenets" of the Church (Pfeffer 2018, 12). They believe that the Church does resonate with their time because it fails to answer the questions of young people (cf. Wolfert/Quenzel 2019, 157).

These opinions aren't exclusive to young people without church membership; even Catholic schoolchildren, in particular, are disappointed by the Church. They see no future and no prospects within the Church. Three quarters of young Catholics in Germany perceive a lack of forward-looking prospects of the Church, which rigidly holds on to old convictions without evolving (cf. Wolfert/Quenzel 2019, 157). In addition, there is a negative impression that the Church functions solely as a hierarchical apparatus of power. The ongoing crisis within the Church confirms young people's impression (cf. Pfeffer 2018, 12).

Young people no longer agree with the tenets and moral standards of the Church. In particular, the stance on sexual morality pushes the young people away (cf. Pfeffer 2018, 12). The values the Church represents for young people seem inconsistent with the actions that the Church shows to the outside world. According to the youth, the Church does not practice what it preaches (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 32). To the contrary, Bernd Schröder believes that there is a "lack of communication" between the Church and the young people. The Church can no longer adapt its values to resonate with the language of young people (Schröder 2017, 230).

It is not only the outdated ethical standards of the Catholic Church that young people deem unacceptable. The contents of the faith are also no longer appealing to them. They perceive Jesus as a role model that is unattainable for emulation. They also have the impression that God and the Church expect superhuman feats from them. This leads to youth feeling uncomfortable about following Jesus. For them, it is clear that they would rather stay far away than emulate a role model they believe is unattainable (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 32).

In addition to antiquatedness and the superambitious role model, a third point is the welcoming culture of the Church. Young people do not feel welcome in the community and, consequently, do not feel at home. Youth who have tried to gain a foothold in the community say they feel ignored and abandoned (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 32).

Another factor is the young people's belief that neither the Church nor religion has any influence on the development of individual personality and identity. They feel that self-discovery is possible without the support of the Church, which is why it makes no sense for them to approach the institution (cf. Schröder 2017, 230).

Still, young people's view of the Church is not entirely as negative as it may appear. The Church is generally accepted, as 70% of all people in Germany believes that the existence of the Church is beneficial. At least 45% of the non-members think that the Church has a right to exist (cf. Wolfert/Quenzel 2019, 156). But why it that the case? Young people

appreciate that the Church, as a welfare organisation, is socially committed. They perceive the social benefits as positive.

The fact that the Church supports socially disadvantaged, elderly and sick individuals is as appreciated as the opportunity to celebrate casual and occasional events. Support in times of crisis and at turning points in life is met with goodwill among young people (cf. Pollack/Gergely 2015, 127). However, these positive aspects are present a drawback, as young people do not perceive themselves as a target group for the Church's social commitment, and consequently. fail to identify any points of contact between their living environment and the Church (cf. Endewardt/Wegner 2018, 32). Therefore, contact between young people and the Church only occurs during public holidays and "initiation rites" (Sajak 2018, 121).

Conclusion

It is evident that religion and the Church in Germany are undergoing a crisis. Young people, baptised or unbaptised, are distancing themselves not only from the Church, but also from traditional Christian ideas. The image of God among youth is changing from a personal to an unspecific, undefinable higher power, which only exists to enable their own ego to achieve life goals, reachable only through individual effort and control over their own lives. Young individuals perceive the traditional Christian image of God as representative of an absolutist and imposed system, evident in the Church due to its hierarchical structure. Since the highest maxims of the young people include self-determination and autonomy, they find it challenging to reconcile with the Christian God or with what they see as a hierarchical Church, because, for them, such ideas are implausible and outdated.

Nevertheless, the crisis can be viewed with optimism. Young non-denominational people are interested in Church and religious topics in class and are open and receptive to their content and vocabulary. Their characteristics may include a sense of detachment from religion, religious speechlessness, indifference and a perception of religion as irrelevant in their everyday life. These traits may even apply to those who have been baptised.

Furthermore, they also consider the Church and Christianity to be important in terms of social justice and engagement. This opportunity can be used in religious education and holds promise for the future.

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Biography

Manuel Hartmann is a doctoral student at the Department of Religious Education and Catechetics, Faculty of Catholic Theology, Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Main areas of his work and research include non-denominationalism and religious education, biblical learning, cineastic learning; and sustainability in religious education.

Nearby Foreignness – Interreligious Education between Claim and Reality in Times of Crisis

Miriam KUNNA

Abstract

The relevance of interreligious education is almost uncontested in research, and it continues to increase in the face of growing religious pluralization. But what about the effectiveness of interreligious education in religious education? It is a place of learning that – despite being anchored in constitutional law – finds its legitimacy increasingly challenged by plural and heterogeneous post-secular societies such as Germany. Can the goals of interreligious education be achieved in practice, given the changing contextual conditions?

The article delves into the complex research field of interreligious education, focusing on its effectiveness by exploring the limits and possibilities of interreligious education within the domain of religious education in a theoretical way. With this in mind, the concept of Enlightened Heterogeneity (Bernhard Grümme) will open up a further perspective for interreligious education processes in religious education.

Keywords: interreligious education, enlightened heterogeneity, religious pluralisation, religious education

Introduction

"A Christian pupil from the Ruhr area answers the question of what experiences he has had with members of other religions: 'I've had a lot of negative experiences with the Muslim religion. I almost don't even have the courage to go on the subway anymore, because I'm immediately (usually) accosted like a fool. My friend has already had his nose beaten bloody. But Muslims only do that when there are three or more of them.' – And a Christian pupil, also from the Ruhr area: 'I have had

good experiences because I have already been to a mosque! It was open day there. I was very surprised how you were received there. It was very cordial there and you were shown around well!'" (Willems 2011a, 202)

Due to globalisation and the ongoing migration and refugee movements worldwide, people no longer solely rely eon mass media to "transport into their living rooms" other cultures and religions that are foreign to them, as well as conflicts between religions (Schambeck 2013, 19). Instead, people now encounter members of different religions as their neighbours, work colleagues, classmates, and even friends. Thus, "discoveries of the plural, of the other, of diversity and difference, of foreignness" (Grümme 2017a, 26) are a common mode of exploring the world in the 21st century. Positive as well as negative experiences in encounters with members of other religions, such as those cited at the beginning, are part of the contemporary living environment(s). However, a closer look at the pupil's statement reveals (discriminatory) attributions, categorisations and demarcations that are highly problematic and (can) lead to stigmatisation, stereotyping and, in serious cases, to Islamophobia. In contrast to these negative aspects are the positive experiences of the pupil during her visit to a mosque.

"The fact that Germany has developed from a confessionally divided Protestant and Catholic country [...] into a multicultural and multireligious society" (Sajak 2018, 13), in which members of different religions and non-confessional people gather,[1] presents a challenge for society in general, and for theology and religious education in particular. In the course of these developments, the dialogue between religions and interreligious learning, or interreligious education, gain considerable relevance in shaping a harmonious coexistence in a multireligious and multicultural society. Moreover, it equips students to become mature and constructively deal with religious plurality, helping them to find their position within such a world.

However, is a dialogue between religions on an equal footing, while preserving the principles of one's own religion, possible at all? What influence has the connection between violence and religion, which has been in the public eye since the devastating events of 9/11 and seems to be solidified by the increase in religiously motivated terrorist attacks, had on interreligious dialogue? Furthermore, as much as interreligious learning and education is desired, what should, and can they achieve? Are the associated claims implemented in school settings, and is that

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[1] The non-denominationally bound are by no means a homogeneous group; on the contrary, they can be further differentiated. For further details, see Pickel 2017.

even possible? A series of questions prompts an examination of the immediate proximity of foreign religions, their handling, consequences, and significance for individual subjects. The focus will be on the "prominent place of religious education", namely religious learning and education, which "discursively [introduce] the universal claim of the Christian message into the school public sphere", since this reaches most children and adolescents and, for a large part of adolescents, represents the exclusive place of encounter with faith.[2]

The examination of this subject matter unfolds in five steps. Firstly, the contextual circumstances that shape religious education in the midst of crisis-ridden times are outlined. Secondly, the concept, concern, and the current state of research on interreligious education are briefly presented. Thirdly, the possibilities and limits of interreligious education in school are explored. Fourthly, the concept of enlightened heterogeneity (Bernhard Grümme) opens up a further perspective, critically taking up the previously highlighted challenges. Finally, the results are bundled and an outlook on subsequent research is given.

1. Contextual frame conditions in times of crisis

"Religious education stands in social, political as well as economic transformation processes" (Grümme 2021a, 51). Not taking into account the specific contextual conditions of a plural and heterogeneous society and, against this background, failing to reflect on religious education within its network of interdependencies would be to run counter to the "religious pedagogical punctuality" (Englert 1988, 159) formulated and demanded by Rudolf Englert.

This context is currently characterised by multiple crisis-related events and developments of a very different nature, some of which affect the entire world: for example, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2020, the war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine since February 24, 2022, the current energy crisis, which has far-reaching consequences for everyone's lives and, at the same time, raises questions about social justice and disadvantage in view of socioeconomic conditions, or the sexual abuse scandal, which massively calls into question the credibility of the Catholic Church, the growing number of people leaving the Church and the dwindling proportion of children and young people socialised in Church and religion, as well as diagnosed deficit of language and speechlessness within the Christian religion. In view of the latter as-

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[2] Grümme 2018, 206. Cf. Sekretariat der deutschen Bischofskonferenz 2005.

pects, the question arises: is religion still something that absolutely concerns people in the 21st century?

Contrary to the view of the disappearance of religion associated with the secularisation thesis, its vitality is instead evident in its diverse forms, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, in the public sphere (cf. Habermas/Ratzinger 2005). Thus, "in the post-secular society […] religion is (again) an issue, especially among young people", particularly in its "identity-forming power" (Freise 2007, 369). "[T]he question of what a person's heart is set on, what concerns him absolutely, and what he places his hope on" is thus, by no means, losing its importance, but rather poses itself anew "with unexpected vehemence" (Secretariat of the Joint Synod of the Dioceses in the Federal Republic of Germany 1974, 128). In view of the multitude of different ideological and religious interpretations available to adolescents and the accompanying "compulsion to heresy"[3], especially amidst migration and globalisation, and the challenges this poses in coexistence and mutual encounters, there is an urgent need for interreligious education in schools. Against the backdrop of religious pluralism, young people grapple with existential questions about the meaning of life, truth, and the right way to lead their lives arise in young people (cf. Unser 2021, 281f.). Thus, it is the primary task of religious education to provide space for these existential questions, if it wants to contribute to the pupils' reflection and development of their own religiosity (cf. ibid., 282). In view of this, it becomes clear that "[f]or the development of identity […] the question of the 'own' and the 'foreign' [arises] with particular sharpness" (Ziebertz 2010a, 83).

2. On the concept, concern and state of research of interreligious education

In recent decades, there has been a shift from the so-called pedagogy of foreigners to a pedagogy of assimilation, and subsequently to intercultural learning and interreligious learning and education (cf. Leimgruber/Ziebertz 2010). Given the constantly changing society and the increasing heterogeneity coupled with growing religious plurality, evident not only in broader living environment, but also within classroom settings, religious education is challenged to act. This is apparent due to the observed "boom in this field of research in religious pedagogy".[4] Conse-

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[3] Berger 1980. By heresy, Peter Berger does not mean deviation from the dogma of the Church, but the term "selection" deriving from the Greek.

[4] Grümme 2017a, 177. The large number of publications on this research field demonstrates this in detail. Notable recent contributions include Khorchide et al. 2022; Sch-

quently, a variety of diverse and sometimes divergent claims with different emphases have emerged, resulting in the term interreligious learning, which began gaining prominence in the 1990s, progressively evolving into a "blanket term" (Langenhorst 2016, 17). According to Friedrich Schweitzer (2014, 132), interreligious education is defined as "a dimension of education that refers to the perception of one's own and other religions and their relationship to one another, which strives for dialogical attitudes based on mutual understanding and enables social coexistence in the sense of peace and tolerance, recognition of the other and respect".

The primary goal of interreligious education is to promote the ability for plurality with a view to the self-development and identity formation of the subjects in the social context (cf. ibid., 133). Thus, this concept succeeds in emphasising the educational claim more strongly than that of interreligious learning and in contouring it more specifically with regard to its objectives (cf. Schweitzer 2014; Grümme 2017a). Drawing on the work of Joachim Willems (2011b, 113-115) and Alexander Unser (2021, 286), "five general learning goals", widely recognised in the discourse on didactics of religion, can be formulated as objectives that are to be achieved through interreligious education. Pupils should:

1. acquire "basic knowledge about non-Christian religions and be enabled to understand concepts of foreign religions",
2. "acquire the ability to view (inter)religious issues both from their own perspective and from the perspective of members of a foreign religion",
3. "be enabled to behave appropriately toward members of another religion",
4. "develop and consolidate their own religious or ideological standpoint" in the confrontation with divergent claims to truth, and
5. interreligious education should "reduce prejudices against members of other religions and increase tolerance and openness towards foreigners".

In order to be able to achieve these goals, a multitude of different approaches and concepts have been developed within the didactics of religion in recent decades – significantly influenced by intercultural pedagogy[5] – with various methods of initiating interreligious learning and educational processes, which can only be briefly mentioned at this point. For example, gaining knowledge about other religions in the sense of re-

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weitzer 2020; Meyer 2019; Sejdini/Kraml 2018; Sajak 2018. For older publications, consider the overview in Langenhorst 2016, 14f.

[5] On the Discourse of Culture and Religion Eckholt 2012.

ligious knowledge (cf. Halbfas 1976; Halbfas 1984), learning to engage with members of different religions (cf. Lähnemann 1998; Leimgruber 2007), or the exploring distinctive features such as gifts (cf. Hull 2000; Sajak 2005) or 'testimonies' (cf. Meyer 1999) which are characteristic for the respective religions. Can these approaches, with their respective didactic and methodological emphases, demonstrate their effectiveness in religious education practice and develop their potential? Or does it rather reveal a dialectic interplay between theory and practice?

Despite numerous didactic approaches and concepts that have been developed, empirical studies on the effectiveness and processes of interreligious education are relatively rare.[6] Bernd Schröder (2014, 299) speaks of a kind of "patchwork quilt" that does not make it possible to "determine the didactic concepts on the basis of which teaching takes place, nor [the] yield of interreligious learning in the context of school [...] approximately precisely". The effectiveness of interreligious education has so far been investigated in four intervention studies focusing on individual learning goals of interreligious education (cf. Sterkens 2001; Ziebertz 2010b; Merkt/Schweitzer/Biesinger 2014; Schweitzer/Bräuer/Boschki 2017), two classroom observations with regard to dialogical learning processes and religiosity (cf. Asbrand 2000; Schihalejev 2009) and a student survey on their attitudes (cf. Unser 2018), which differ in their design and sample as well as in the explored characteristics of interreligious education.[7] Two of the intervention studies successfully demonstrate the acquisition of basic knowledge about non-Christian religions and the understanding of concepts of foreign religions. However, with regard to the targeted changes in perspective, attitudes and the ability to behave appropriately toward members of other religions, divergent and inconclusive findings of the studies can be identified. While Barbara Asbrand (2000) does not observe any classroom situation that can be interpreted as interreligious dialogue, Olga Schihalejev (2009) identifies three conditions influencing the dialogical learning process: seating arrangement, classroom atmosphere and social form. Alexander Unser (2021, 289) was able to show that pupils with religious experience participate more actively in lessons and recognise a greater relevance of the learning content to their living environment compared to those with less religious experience. If further studies confirm these findings, it would be more urgent than ever to determine an appropriate approach to inter-

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[6] Cf. Unser 2021. Recently in primarily theoretical discussion Schweitzer 2022.

[7] At this point, it is not possible to go into details of the studies; for this, one is referred to the overview by Alexander Unser (2021, 273).

religious education. Thus, empirical research on interreligious education processes, especially with regard to their effectiveness and depending on the respective didactic approach and methodological design, continues to be a research desideratum (cf. Schweitzer 2022, 13).

3. Interreligious education on trial

The necessity and importance of interreligious education in the face of changing contextual and societal conditions cannot be disputed in principle, but a closer look at its practical implementation reveals central challenges. Both perspectives are to be exemplified in the following discussion. The possibilities and limits of interreligious education in religious education at school will be explored by differentiating between three domains that cannot be clearly separated from each other as they overlap: 1. subjects and contextual conditions, 2. methodology and didactics, 3. the idea of interreligious education.

3.1. Subjects and contextual conditions

The growing religious, cultural and ideological diversity as well as the increasingly less presupposed experiences with lived faith on the part of the students represent one, if not the central challenge for (inter)religious learning and educational processes. "The more life in society is (co)determined by experiences of religious-ideological plurality, the more important becomes the ability to deal constructively with this plurality." (Schweitzer 2015, 11) In a study conducted by Friedrich Schweitzer et al. (2018, 24), young people also emphasise the importance of "tolerance, openness and dialogical relations" with regard to their own religion and toward other religions. However, it also shows that approximately a quarter of the young people surveyed believe "that there are too many Muslims in Germany" and almost 60 percent state "that some Muslim groups scare them" (ibid.). Furthermore, milieu studies and youth sociological studies have impressively demonstrated that the religiosity of children and young people is extremely pluralistic and that, in addition, "a considerable alienation of the Church from the lifeworld of many people" (Ziebertz 2010a, 95) can be identified.

Against this background, the demand of being at home in one's own religion becomes particularly problematic. "Christian students should [...] play in the Christian faith, Jewish students the Jewish faith, Muslim students the Muslim faith." (Grümme 2017a, 189) Young people should thus encounter other religions from a participant perspective, even if, in

many cases, their own religion has become a foreign religion (cf. Dressler 2003). It is worth discussing whether this claim leads to an excessive demand on learners with regard to developmental psychological findings.[8] This is because interreligious learning requires abilities and skills from adolescents, which they acquire only in interaction, in relationship with the Other: "The claim of the Other, by making me responsible for him, makes me a subject in the first place." (Peukert 1994, 6) For example, the ability to change perspectives and to empathise with the viewpoint of other individuals, "identification and self-reflection processes […] are only possible in adolescence at the earliest" and is considered a lifelong task (Grümme 2017a, 191). In contrast, Jan Woppowa (2013, 296) sees interreligious education precisely as facilitating the acquisition of a change of perspective, since here "it [can] be learned what it means to really acknowledge the otherness of the other and to creatively process cultural difference, also for one's own perspective in each case".

3.2. Methodology and didactics

The diverse approaches provide possible viable paths for the initiation of interreligious learning and educational processes in the practice of religious education. The confrontation with the truth claims of the religions envisaged in many approaches to interreligious learning (e.g. Schambeck 2013; Schweitzer 2014), "which are expressed in their teachings, symbols and customs" and function as learning objects in the classroom, is intended to prevent a relapse into an exclusively religious knowledge mode of encountering other religions (Unser 2021, 285). In view of the widespread relativism of religion and the fact that young people are no longer fully rooted in their own religious tradition, however, this becomes a challenge for both learners and teachers. Mirjam Schambeck (2013, 109) points to the necessity of developing a "thinking of difference", "which allows both a determination of the relationship between Christianity and other religions and also includes the question of truth".

Some approaches to interreligious learning have so far failed to take sufficient account of the specific learning environment of schools with their network of socio-cultural, socio-economic and systemic conditions and the challenges associated with them. Claudia Gärtner (2015a, 216) in particular, points out this desideratum when she says that interreligious learning presupposes a "dialogue free of domination between equal interlocutors who communicate openly and truthfully with one another".

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[8] Cf. Selman 1984. Recently to this Unser 2022.

Not enough thought is given to the fact that such a dialogue is often not possible, or at least influenced in a particular way, because of different ways of communicating faith and dealing with religious tradition, culturally and religiously charged gender stereotypes, or because of prevailing power structures. Not paying attention to these interdependencies of social status, gender, culture, and religion "lets interreligious education fall into the trap of culturalism, which fixes interreligious education on the field of culture and differences, but thus overlooks the mechanisms of its immanent fixations" (Grümme 2017a, 191f.).

A look at selected textbooks for Protestant and Catholic religious education also shows that the renunciation of the negative image of Islam, which has been carried out within theology (for a long time), persists in school materials to this day. For example, in a religious book for elementary school from 1976, Islam is presented in a particularly impressive way as a foreign religion, even as something threatening, with pictures of "fully veiled women as a demonstration of oppression, [of] fully bearded men as a symbol of intolerance and violence" (Sarikaya 2020, 136). This observation is confirmed by the Georg Eckert Institute for Textbook Research in its large-scale study comparing textbooks from European countries, wherein Islam is predominantly presented in these textbooks in a generalising way as foreign and dangerous, and contrasted with "a modern Europe" (Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research et al. 2011, 3).

3.3. The idea of interreligious education

The analysis of the final domain aims to address both terminological difficulties and the lack of authoritative reflection on the surrounding and formative variables in the discussion of what is encompassed by the term interreligious learning in religious pedagogy discourse and the demands placed on it. as far back as eleven years ago, Clauß Peter Sajak came to the following conclusion: "Religious education today is inconceivable without the dimension of interreligious learning." (Sajak 2010, 12) If one seriously considers the contextual conditions in which religious education in schools exists and takes place, then this statement remains particularly pertinent and relevant today. In view of the multitude of developed approaches to interreligious learning, the term has been enriched with various basic theoretical, didactical and methodological emphases. Some define interreligious learning as interaction between different members of religions, others as "enabling people to live together in an interreligious way", and others again – focusing on the media –

as an examination of religious "testimonies" (Porzelt/Stögbauer-Elsner 2021, 216). If interreligious learning in the school context is understood exclusively as direct encounters between members of religions, three difficulties arise. Firstly, according to religious statistics, Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu pupils are rather rarely represented in religious education classes in this country, and even if the proportion of Muslim pupils is definitely larger, it is not possible to speak of a balanced distribution. Secondly, those who are identified as belonging to a religion, merely because they formally belong to it, are seen in the role of an expert for their particular religion, which becomes problematic due to a religious socialisation that can no longer be assumed and due to the individual religiosity on the part of the young people. Thirdly, the students who do not consider themselves to belong to any religion are marginalised (cf. Porzelt/Stögbauer-Elsner 2021, 215f.). In view of these remarks, it becomes evidently clear why interreligious learning has mutated into a blanket term. Whether the terms interreligious learning, interreligious education, interreligious competence or dialogical learning are used, establishing some kind of minimum consensus in this conglomerate of terms would be beneficial to guarantee (terminological) transparency in dealing with the associated concerns in professional didactic discourses.

Furthermore, attention should be drawn to the heterogeneity of school as a place of learning, which is reflected in manifold dimensions and which requires incresased consideration, especially in interreligious education: "There is a lack of self-reflexive examination of the discourse of interreligious learning respectively interreligious education with regard to its discourse-immanent mechanisms of identification, misrecognition, exclusion, power" (Grümme 2017a, 196f.).

4. Enlightened heterogeneity as a broader perspective

Considering the highlighted considerations of interreligious education — specifically its interdependent and partly intensifying weaknesses concerning the insufficiently addressed socioeconomic,, intra-religious plurality and developmental-psychological preconditions, as well as the fixations and exclusion mechanisms taking place in specific instructional design and practice, it becomes apparent that the actual intention of appreciating heterogeneity has the opposite effect when it is "first produced, made, constructed as a pedagogical quantity in thinking and analyzing" (Grümme 2021b, 22).

In light of these issues, the approach of Enlightened Heterogeneity profiled by Bernhard Grümme is able to "self-reflexively illuminate the

mechanisms of one's own conceptual constructions [...] and then relate them to the normative objectives and orientations through the Christian tradition" (Grümme 2017b, 221). An alterity-theoretical reason that grasps "multiplicity and unity, subject and subject, subject and object in each case as themselves" and in their "communicability" can prevent "the 'unfamiliar foreign (whether in text, symbol, ritual, etc.),' the irritating, the irreconcilable, the other that remains from God and from man from being aligned with what is already familiar to us" (Grümme 2019, 140). Starting from an asymmetrical dialogic, which is only "opened by alterity", the perception of alterity and the release of its "critical-liberating power" is made possible (ibid., 141). Thus, ultimately, "a difference theorem and thus a difference competence [can be] substantiated, which allows a justified attitude toward other religions" (Grümme 2017a, 198). Interreligious education can thus be described as capable of heterogeneity, "if it normatively targets the subjects' religious ability to perceive, speak, judge, and act in the light of a contextually rooted, alterity-theoretical form of thinking and thereby takes a self-reflexive critical look at its own construction mechanisms in their dialectic" (Grümme 2017b, 221).

This implies that, in the realm of interreligious education, among other things, its methodological and didactic designs within religious education have to be critically scrutinised with regard to the realisation of educational justice, especially (but not only) in view of inclusion and the immigration of refugees, as well as in view of the impact of school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic.[9] With regard to the design of teaching-learning arrangements, it has to be kept in mind "that not every interreligious encounter succeeds and not every learning setting initiates effective interreligious learning processes" (Gärtner 2015b, 281). At the same time, the specific form of interreligious education in the school settings remains somewhat unexplained, as it requires "a participatory inner perspective of the subjects, an experiential, practical, differentiated approach to religions" (Grümme 2017a, 205). Thus, in the field of interreligious education, the "aporetics of a paradoxical effect of the respective practice" becomes evident, requiring critical and constructive examination and reflection with the help of a praxeology of enlightened heterogeneity in religious education (Grümme 2021c, 411).

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[9] Cf. Grümme 2017a, 201-205. On the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on schools, youth, and religion, see Dohmen/Hurrelmann 2021; Pezzoli-Olgiati/Höpflinger 2021.

5. On the untapped potential of interreligious education

Close foreignness poses a challenge both for society in general and for theology and religious education in particular. It also presents a personal challenge for the individual subject, who is exhibits curiosity and fascination towards the foreign or experiences fear and rejection, as reflected in the attitudes of the pupils quoted at the beginning of the paper.

In this heterogeneous and religiously plural context, interreligious education holds significant importance in shaping the coexistence of members of different, foreign religions, cultures and world views, who encounter each other with their divergent ideas and attitudes, as well as promoting the recognition of the other in a respectful and tolerant interaction. Additionaly, it empowers individuals to mature, to engage in dialogue, make judgments, and to take on perspectives and develop their own point of view in the face of religious and cultural plurality.

Another perspective emerges with the category of enlightened heterogeneity, which – to put it briefly – allows to self-reflexively uncover the aporias of misrecognising recognition, identifying, and excluding constructions, and power that are already inherent in the concerns of interreligious education.

For further debates, it is necessary to take recourse to a systematic view of religions, which particularly takes into account their commonalities and differences, to elicit certain viable paths for teaching-learning arrangements and to reflect on these with a view to further quantitative and qualitative research, which provide information about the learning effects of interreligious education and are thus profitable for the professionalisation of teachers and the didactic theory formation of religions, as well as a religious pedagogical praxeology of enlightened heterogeneity. After all, "the future of religious education will ultimately be determined by whether and to what extent it contributes to pluralistic and heterogeneous education in public schools" (Simojoki 2019, 54).

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Interpretation of the Decalogue as a Path to Freedom in the Catechesis of Adolescents

Ana JURATOVIĆ

Abstract

This paper starts with an explanation of the Decalogue, its construction and purpose in the life of every Christian. It explains the decrease of moral values among young people and the influence of that phenomenon has had and will continue to have on the society of today and tomorrow. At the same time, the paper elaborates how and why young people are becoming less sensitive to sin and more prone to ignoring the rules people lived by for centuries. The second part of the article explains the youth's perspective on the world in general, and their view of the commandments as restrictive tools from the past. The paper aims to find ways to help young people perceive those rules as a path to freedom, with Youth Pastoral serving as the bridge.

Keywords: Decalogue, adolescents, freedom, moral slavery responsibility

Introduction

The object of my research is the meaning of the Decalogue for adolescents. For young people, adolescence is a time of searching for one's place in society and developing a personality. It is also a time when rules are perceived as restrictions on freedom.

The first part of this paper focuses on the Decalogue: its purpose and why people feel that the Decalogue prohibits so much.

The second part will focus on young people and their views of life, rules and themselves. We will also try to figure out how to help them understand the rules as a path to freedom, and not as something that imprisons them. The Decalogue is there to help us grow into responsible people.

1. The Decalogue

The word *Decalogue* literally means ten words. Marijan Vugdelija wrote in his article „Decalogue: a Signpost of Authentic Human Life Today" the following: "From the context and content of this biblical passage, it is best to understand the name as the 'Ten Commandments' or 'Ten Instructions' given by God through Moses to the Jewish people and to all mankind to show them how to arrange their relationship with God and with each another. In other words, it shows them the path they need to take if they want to live a happy and blessed life, a life in accordance with human dignity." (Vugdelija 1987, 191)

The Decalogue is divided into two important parts, the first encompassing the description of three religious duties, and the seconds focusing on seven moral obligations. Moral and religious commandments are interrelated and we cannot respect one if we do not respect the other. Love for God is manifested exclusively in the love for humans. The three main features of the Decalogue are (cf. Vugdelija 1987, 196-198):

1. The YOU-form of commandments, which means that they apply to every human being and as such are enshrined in the constitutions of many modern secularized states;
2. The religious and moral message of the Bible is summed up in the Decalogue, which Jesus summarizes in the Two Commandments of Love to show his profound intention;
3. The Decalogue is as valid today as it was when it was created, it is timeless.

Today's religious, cultural, and social existence is inconceivable without the influence of the Decalogue. It touches a person's conscience. It is the conscience that reacts if we break the natural law that God has imprinted in our hearts as a guide through life.

If we look at how the commandments were pronounced, we can conclude at first glance that it is a multitude of prohibitions that restrict human freedom and forbid us to enjoy the benefits of life. Namely, eight out of the ten commandments impose a prohibition. Only two commandments are written as positive notions: the second one, where the Lord's Day is mentioned, and the fourth one, on honoring one's parents.

These prohibitions are not there to hold us back but to help us become and remain good people.

2. The Decalogue in the life of young people

Children who start to mature, confused and lost, enter the world of adults. This confusion, insecurity, the need for belonging brings them to various temptations. It is difficult to escape the influences of the media that put in front of them a disturbed scale of values, dictating trends that glorify superficiality, external beauty, promiscuity and immorality. In this way, true life values are declared backwards. In the struggle for belonging and acceptance in society, young people become divided within themselves, they fight, on the one hand, with an inner voice that tells them what is offered to them is not good, and on the other hand, with a society in which they want to fit-in at all costs. Young people, in fact, by their own behavior reflect the moral image of the contemporary society.

For them, this is a time of seeking and forming their own identity, building moral attitudes and adopting values. This happens in the interaction with society as a whole on several levels:

1. seeking personal freedom - a young person wants to fit into society as it is, in its originality;
2. distancing oneself from previous institutions, such as the family, school, the Church, and seeking new friendships and connections with peers;
3. sexual and affective maturation that strives for the integration of sexuality into affectivity and the formation of sexual identity;
4. revision of one's own, infantile and pre-adolescent religiosity in order to accept a new personal religiosity or simply abandon everything;
5. the maturation of a moral autonomous consciousness that allows for an internalized scale of values and personal choices for which one wants to bear responsibility (cf. Mandarić 2001, 421).

While in childhood children are taught the rules in order to form moral consciousness, in youth they move to the morality of conscience, they develop a personal sense of what is good and what is not.

In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation "Christus vivit", Pope Francis (2019) said that the media and the virtual world can positively, but increasingly also negatively influence young people. They encourage them to alienate themselves, which brings about loneliness. Since they feel protected because no one sees them, they are not even aware of the dangers that exist. Here, they can be very easily manipulated and used for someone's evil intentions. Often in this way, through the virtual world, young people are persuaded to commit sins. They realize too late that they were deceived because evil does not show itself in full light immediately, but

whispers a little in the ear and persuades in small steps, but as soon as a person agrees to a little, he or she slowly agrees to everything. When people realize the magnitude of evil and sin, they are further quitely instructed that it is too late now and that there is no way out of the vicious circle. Unfortunately, many young people take their own lives because they are afraid of the condemning society and do not see a way out. For when we commit a sin, we are left alone, to ourselves.

3. Young people´s sensitivity to sin

Today, adolescents and young people are less sensitive to sin. As a result, there is less and less response to the sacrament of confession. Sensitivity to sin decreases due to the misconception of freedom, where it is explained that freedom is limited because we see sin in everything. That is why the conclusion among young people is that everything is allowed. Evil is declared as something that is good or at least useful. Thus, moral relativism develops, which then further diminishes the sense of sin. They want a world and a society without responsibility.

In 2001, a symposium on the topic "Personal and social dimension of sin" was held at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Split.. At the symposium, Blaženka Valentina Mandarić (2001) presented research data that showed how much the young people's sense of sin is disturbed. In the economic field, about one third of respondents considered it justified to take public transport without a ticket or to go on sick leave without being ill. A quarter of them thought that it was okay to report less taxes than they had actually earned. Also, 6% of the respondents believed they were allowed to steal something from the store.

As far as sexual and family relationships are concerned, the results were devastating. Over 80% of respondents considered it normal to live together, in a relationship forbidden by the Church and have sex before marriage. Three-quarters of them considered divorce to be a normal occurrence. About half of the respondents thought it was okay to have homosexual experiences, to have sex with a married person and to have an abortion.

The area of protecting human life is also in a difficult situation. For about 85% of respondents, smoking was okay, over half of them considered it normal to get drunk. Just over a third of respondents though it was okay to smoke marijuana. However, taking heavy drugs was not considered acceptable, so only 8% of respondents were in favour of it.

When asked if they would allow or forbid any moral behavior, the results varied. What most would ban is: homosexual relationships, ani-

mal cloning, and human embryo trafficking. But on the other hand, most would allow: contraceptives, masturbation, the spread of pornography, divorce, premarital relations, artificial insemination, euthanasia.

From all this we can conclude that the boundaries of sinfulness have shifted dangerously and that moral relativism really does prevail. Given the state in which today's young people live, the Church seems like an outdated institution that is slowly dying, together with its rules. But we must not lose hope, there are still those who respect moral principles despite the pressures of society and do not allow themselves to be defeated.

4. The Decalogue and freedom

The struggle of young people against all rules is in fact their expression of longing for freedom. Under the term "freedom", young people most often imagine life without rules, hedonistically coloured, where everyone can do what they want, when they want, with whom they want and how they want. Only personal well-being is important, the well-being of others is neglected. But a society without rules cannot survive. If you live without them, chaos will very quickly fester. What we often forget is that others have a right to their freedom as have we. My freedom ends where the freedom of the other begins.

In order to know how to determine the limits of freedom, God gave us the Decalogue - ten rules that help us organize our lives so that we could live and act normally in society. Marijan Vugdelija wrote in his article: "Without a doubt, these Ten Commandments of God were the most important and powerful factor in the long process of humanizing the human race." (Vugdelija 1987, 190) If we abide by them just to fulfill the word of the law, then they lose their true meaning. Young people observe the commandments like a burden and do not want to commit to them. That is why Jesus in the New Testament brings back the lost, as he sums them up in the Two Commandments of love. This way, he wants to draw our attention to the love that is the guiding thought behind all the commandments. If we love, we never wish to harm the ones we love. Love drives the good and the positive inside of us.

From all this we can only draw the Golden Rule as a conclusion, which states that we must not do to others what we do not want others to do to us. Everything is said in this one sentence. If we just stick to this, we do a lot. Freedom goes hand in hand with responsibility. A responsible person has a clear goal, which he or she strives for, and lives firmly in the present, turned to the future. When everything is in order, responsibility and freedom bring peace. But there is also a sense of guilt when

we break the harmony of our relationships with our guilt. Then the feeling arises that we need to make up for something and fix it.

5. How to help the youth of today?

In his exhortation "Christus vivit", Pope Francis (2019) calls for every person to be seen as an individual, and not to be generalized. It is necessary to first get to know the person, look at their background, the problems they struggle with in life, the family they come from, their jobs, the condition they are in, not only physically but also mentally and spiritually. Every young person needs to be fully committed in order to gain trust. Only then will they accept help and advice. It is also good to look at who the leaders in the youth societies are and work with them the most, because through them, we can easily reach other young people. If we persevere in all this, young people will slowly realize that life without rules cannot persist. But for some, it is a long process and that is why it takes a lot of sacrifice and patience, a lot of love and trust. It is hard to raise and guide someone who struggles with themselves and then with everyone around them. But it is not impossible, either.

For example, Pope Francis (2029) lists many biblical characters that were called upon by God as examples to young people, and entrusts them with great and responsible tasks. He chose them precisely because they had served the Law and recognized its deeper meaning. In the Law, they recognized their freedom given to them out of love by God. Also, the Pope offers examples of young saints. All this is aimed at young people so that whey would see how much freedom is enjoyed by living the rules.

6. Youth Pastoral

The pastoral care of young people should be constantly adjusted to their interests and needs. While older people are more oriented towards everything being carefully planned, young people prefer flexibility and diversity of content and ways. That is why the latter need to be followed and understood in order to understand their way of thinking, so that they could be approached as easily as possible. We have to be aware that the whole community must be involved in the evangelization of young people and the urgent role that they must play in order to uphold a greater role in pastoral proposals.

Two main lines of action in youth pastoral care are as follows:
1. Seeking, calling, call - young people need to be given confidence and freedom so that they can evangelize other young people in a

way that is close to them. Young people need to be approached in their own way in order to better understand the proclamation and thus follow the path of faith. Sometimes a spiritual song, a message, or a video is enough. Young people should be approached with the language of love, not proselytism.

2. Growth - sometimes it happens that after the first encounter with God, young people are no longer offered anything. When that happens, the people who experienced that encounter begin to lose themselves and give up the path of following Christ. That is why it is important to be with them in everything, not to just bombard them with moral topics that they get bored with over time and they give up. Growth has two main goals: deepening the kerygma, the initial experience of meeting God through Christ's death and res- urrection, and growth in brotherly love, life, and service.

Young people often feel like failures. That is why we need to make them feel at home in the Church. There should be a place for them to socialize, where they will come and go, meet other young people, share experiences - a place where they will feel at home. In this way, they can carry out the apostolate among themselves.

More and more young people love to meet the Lord in silence, in ad- oration. They are also open to helping others and should be engaged in that domain. It is good to give them a chance to express themselves in an artistic way. Sport is also a good link for pastoral care.

The folk pastoral care of young people is important, too. It is very im- portant to teach them to listen and accompany them. All those who may not be believers or belong to another religion should be included in the pastoral care.

Most importantly, young people need the guidance of an adult. When discussing what this person should be like, young people have stated the following criteria:

1. to be a faithful Christian pledged in the Church and in the world;
2. to constantly strive for holiness;
3. to be a person of trust who does not condemn;
4. to actively listen to the needs of young people and give appropri- ate answers;
5. to be a loving and self-confident person;
6. to be able to recognize the limitations and to know well the joys and sufferings of the spiritual life.

This companion should not lead the young people, but walk with them and allow them to actively participate in the walk. Well-educated priests, consecrated persons, lay believers and professionals, as well as

qualified young people, should help young people to differentiate their vocations. In order to be able to truly accompany young people on the path of discernment, the most important thing is to learn to listen.

Therefore, Pope Francis (2019) emphasizes three different and complementary types of sensitivity:

a) the first sensitivity is directed at the other person. You need to be willing to take time for others and listen to what they have to say. Because that way, the other can open up and gain trust, speak without fear of offending the companion. This creates the trust between the speaker and the listener.

b) the second sensitivity is resolution. The companion must be able to discern from all that has been said about what the true vocation is, what God is calling the person to do, and be careful that the young person does not fall into the trap of temptation. It takes courage to guide someone in life choices, it is a great responsibility.

c) the third sensitivity is listening to the stimuli that are already triggered by the other person. Here we must exclude ourselves and truly indulge in another person so that our help would not be the fulfillment of one of our plans, but truly the fulfillment of God's plan with another person. We must not forget that a person must decide, in his or her freedom, what and how to proceed, and we are here only to help with our experience and love.

Conclusion

At the end of this paper, it should be emphasized that young people are not lost; only a common language should be found with them. The rules are not foreign to them, even though it seems so from the outside. In fact, young people are eager for order, but they do not recognize it and therefore lose confidence in society. Eventually they become part of that society and adapt to it in order to live the path of least resistance.

The role of the Church, as the Pope himself emphasizes in the above-mentioned exhortation, is to be there for young people, to show them understanding. It is necessary to invest in relationships with them. Above all, it is important to create a network of trust, to restore their trust in the good. To give them back the thought that everything makes sense only with God. Because when God comes first, everything else falls into place.

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Biography

Ana Juratović, Sr. Marija Tea, was born on April 13, 1983, in Zagreb, Croatia. She finished Elementary School in Klinča Sela in 1997, and then enrolled in Women's Gymnasium of the Sisters of Charity in Zagreb. At the age of 18, she entered the Sisters of Charity Convent in Zagreb. On March 25, 2004, she took her first vows. In the summer of that same year, she started the study of Theology at the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb.

Between her 4th and 5th year of study, she took a gap year to focus on pastoral work at the parish of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Sisak. After completing her studies and taking lifelong vows on August 14, 2009, she worked for 5 years as a religious education teacher in an elementary school in Požega. In 2015, she moved to the Spiritual and Educational Center "Mary's court", Lužnica, where she worked as the director. In January 2018, she returned to the convent in Zagreb and continued to work in Zaprešić as an elementary school religious education teacher. In 2020, she enrolled in the Licentiate and Doctoral Study Programme in Theology at the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb, module: Contemporary Pastoral Challenges Between Theory and Practice. The main focus of her research is how to bring the faith closer to those who have been confirmed and interest them in remaining active members of the Church even after receiving the sacrament of Holy Confirmation.

In the summer of 2021, she was moved to Varaždin, where she still lives and works as a religious education teacher in an elementary school and a pastoral assistant in the parish of St. Fabian and Sebastian (Church of the Good Shepherd).

Crisis Communication of the Church on the Example of Bishop Carević

Luka SLIJEPČEVIĆ

Abstract

This presentation will begin with a brief outline of the character and pastoral work of the retired Bishop of Dubrovnik, Josip Marija Carević (1883 – 1945).

The aim of the presentation is to reflect on the Church crisis communication based on two epistles of the Yugoslav Catholic Episcopate: the Epistle of the Catholic Bishops to the Faithful of 4th May 1938, and the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic bishops of Yugoslavia of 20th September 1945. The aim of the presentation is to explore the Church communication based on the disappearance of Bishop Carević.

The main research question is why was Bishop Carević, as the only Croatian bishop killed during the Second World War, erased from the modern Church history, and why the reasons for his resignation, his disappearance, his murder and his final resting place still remain unknown 77 years later.

Key words: crisis, communication, Church, war, Bishop Carević

1. Bishop Carević

Josip Marija Carević[1] was born in Metković on 16 February 1883, to Antun and Stanislava n é e Jeramaz. He started primary education in Vrgorac and completed it in Metković. He attended the classical gymnasium in Split as a cadet of the Episcopal Seminary. Upon graduation, he entered the Theological Seminary, and the Bishop of Split and Makarska, Filip Frane Nakić, sent him to study at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He graduated in 1908 with a double doctorate in philosophy and theology. He was ordained a priest in Rome on 28 October 1908.

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[1] Cf. Ostojić, I. (1977): *Splitski kaptol u splitsko-makarskoj biskupiji*, Split, 160-162.

During his student days, in addition to philosophy and theology, he was also interested in sociology. He was fluent in Italian, German and French.

From 1909 to 1917 he was an educator and confessor at a trade school and a religious education teacher at a lower gymnasium. He served four years as a clerk, assisting the parish priest, and he edited Pučke novine (*People's Gazzette*) for three years. He was appointed a religious education teacher at the Split gymnasium in 1917, and he also served as the Seminary confessor. He briefly acted as the parish administrator of Kaštel-Sućurac and Donja Brela parishes. In 1917, during the First World War, he was drafted as a military chaplain. After the end of the First World War, he continued to work at the gymnasium until 1924, and he was also re-appointed as the Seminary confessor. He also served on the board of Hrvatska štedionica (*Croatian Savings Association*) and became president of the Priestly Association of the Split and Makarska Diocese.

Josip Carević was invited to apply for a position of a professor of theology twice, in Zadar in 1913 and Zagreb in 1920, however, he politely declined both offers.

He was also active in the Croatian Catholic Movement, and in 1924 Bishop Bonefačić appointed him canon of the Cathedral of Split and pastor of the cathedral parish. He was confessor of the Diocesan Catholic Action, and the spiritual leader of various Catholic organizations. He participated in the organization of Christian labour and was active in religious and charitable fields. In Split, Josip Carević was renowned as the saviour of the underprivileged and the father of the poor.

Josip Carević was appointed Bishop of Dubrovnik on 13 April 1929. He was ordained a bishop in Zagreb on 4 August. He took over the administration of the Diocese of Dubrovnik on 8 September 1929, the feast of Mary's Nativity. During the ten years of his service, he spiritually and materially renewed the Diocese of Dubrovnik. On White Sunday, 14 April 1940, Bishop Carević left Dubrovnik for early retirement. He then went to Zagreb and put himself at the disposal of the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac.

In December 1943, Bishop Carević left Zagreb to provide pastoral assistance to parish priest Matija Horvat and to take over the pastoral care for the faithful that congregated at the Church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary in Strmec, which belonged to the parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Veliko Trgovišće.[2]

He disappeared in March 1945. There is a popular legend among the people regarding his torture and murder. Up to now, no documents have been discovered to shed light on what exactly happened to the bishop.

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[2] Cf. Horvat, M. (1944): *Kronika*, Veliko Trgovišće.

The aim of this paper is to position the case of Bishop Carević in the broader context of crisis communication of the Catholic bishops based on their statements from 1938 and 1945.

2. Concordat crisis[3]

On 4 May 1938, the Catholic bishops of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia issued two documents: the Declaration and the Epistle to the Faithful. The documents were prompted by the withdrawal of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from a concordat with the Holy See, which was signed in Rome in 1935. This case is known as the Concordat Crisis. The Kingdom of Serbia concluded a concordat with the Holy See in 1914. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918, new state formations emerged and quickly changed their forms and names. That created the need for the conclusion of a new concordat. The first draft of the treaty was drawn up in 1922, and negotiations were concluded in 1935, when the treaty was signed in Rome. As the treaty was ready for ratification, the Serbian Orthodox Church launched a major two-year campaign against the concordat. Although Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović defended the concordat adopted by the National Assembly in 1937, the government dropped the concordat in February 1938 due to the enormous pressure from the Serbian Orthodox Church and its belief that the concordat violated the Constitution and granted the Catholic Church extensive privileges.

The Catholic bishops responded three months later, in early May. The opening of the Declaration is rather interesting, as the bishops point out that significant events had taken place in the state affecting the Catholic Church, but "without us and past us" (cf. Mužić 1978, 228).

The communication of the Catholic Church in this time of crisis was marked by the following quote: "We were silent then. We did not wish to pour oil on fire. But today, in our apostolic duty, we shall speak… We shall be clear in our word. We shall speak calmly and systematically… We shall not be tempted to be seduced by the feelings of resentment or anger. The strength of the Catholic Church is in the truth, and the truth is always enduring and long-lasting.... Thus far, in the twenty years since our unification, no one could accuse the Catholic Church of being anything but patient and prudent." (cf. Mužić 1978, 228).

The bishops proceed to state that they had never reacted to violations of their rights in a manner that could be interpreted as hostility or ruthless-

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[3] Cf. Mužić, I. (1978): *Katolička crkva u kraljevini Jugoslaviji, politički i pravni aspekti konkordata između Svete Stolice i kraljevine Jugoslavije,* Split.

ness towards the state or towards civil peace, and that they had not previously publicly express their stances among the Catholic public. In difficulties and disputes, they sought to enter into dialogue with competent representatives of the government. The bishops emphasized that they had never interfered in a distrustful or hostile manner in state relations with other religious communities, noting that all other religious communities had received their legal frameworks in the form of state acts, except for the Catholic Church, which neither objected nor protested.

The bishops of the Catholic Church sought, as is the tradition, to be conciliatory and loyal to secular authorities, respecting state sovereignty in the civil sphere.

After the bishops presented the events which followed the signing ceremony of the concordat in Rome, they protested about the censorship that prevented any expression of the Catholic position, and continued: "Even today, we do not call on anyone to rebel. We are too aware of the delicate nature of the situation and the impossible position in which the state would find itself politically, if the Catholic Church was to use the same means that others have used in defence of their rights, without considering the consequences. In addition to the difficult national and constitutional struggles which have shaken us, we would have a religious war in the state." (cf. Mužić 1978, 230).

The six conclusions stated by the bishops in the Declaration, in terms of communication, express regret over the actions of the Serbian Orthodox Church and national political leaders. They also express regret over encroachment into the internal affairs of the Catholic Church, attempted by certain entities that were not included in the conclusion of the relevant treaties. The bishops engaged in a protest against the actions of the royal government, which had withdrawn from the concordat, and they outlined the difficulties that the Catholic Church was facing.

On the same day, the bishops also issued an Epistle addressed to the faithful. In the introduction, they noted that they had been contemplated for a long time whether to issue an epistle. They provided an answer that they must break the silence over the withdrawal of the concordat and that they "were raining their voices before the state authorities in protest against any violation of the Catholic Church and its faithful." (cf. Mužić 1978, 230).

The Epistle clearly and polemically states the areas in which bishops felt injustice. These issues encompassed primarily education, in terms of raising children in accordance with the Catholic doctrine, the issue of religious education in schools and the appointment of religious education teachers. Secondly, they emphasized the issues with organized youth education; thirdly, they listed material issues arising from the confiscation of

property and uneven contribution of the state to the needs of the Catholic Church. They also addressed difficulties experienced by hospitals run by Catholic religious orders and they advocated for a divorce law that would be fairer to women. They then noted cases of Catholic state employees who converted to Orthodoxy in order to qualify for promotions. They also discussed difficulties in approving textbooks for the Catholic youth; the act on additional taxation; censorship; immoral upbringing of the youth; Sunday school for the youth, as well as the deterioration of religious and moral life.

In their note to the faithful, the bishops pointed out: "We solemnly protest against the injustices inflicted, we solemnly protest against the insults inflicted on the supreme head of the Catholic Church, the Holy Father. We protest and resent the unprecedented attempt to interfere in our inner circumstances by those who do not belong. Finally, we protest against the offensive action of the royal government, whose resolution of the Catholic issues is guided and influenced by the evident and deliberate foundations we have set out above. With this protest, we declare immediately that we shall defend the rights of the Catholic Church and the Catholic faithful to the end." (cf. Mužić 1978, 237).

3. The disappearance of Bishop Carević

One of the signatories of the Declaration and the Epistle was the Bishop of Dubrovnik, Josip Carević, who in 1940, at the age of 57, resigned from the office of Bishop of Dubrovnik and retired. The official reason of his resignation from the episcopal service was impaired health. We were able to find several letters in the archives of the Diocese of Dubrovnik, which the priests of the Diocese had sent to Bishop Carević in 1939, regretting his announcement of resignation and referring to the "inappropriate campaign"[4] against Bishop Carević.

In the aftermath of unclear events surrounding the disappearance of Bishop Carević, the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dubrovnik, Pavao Butorac, wrote to the Archdiocese of Zagreb on 28 July 1945, inquiring whether Bishop Carević was alive or dead.[5] Similarly, on 25 July 1945, the Bishop of Split, Kvirin Klemet Bonefačić, wrote to the Archdiocese of Zagreb informing them that he had heard that Bishop Carević had been murdered: "Therefore, I would be grateful if the Reverend Title informed

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[4] Cf. ABD, Sig 2, ser. 20, ptser 1
[5] NAZg, NDS, 6039-1945

us of the known facts about the case, when he was probably murdered and whether he was buried somewhere."[6]

Two similar answers came from the Archdiocese of Zagreb. The reply dated 12 August 1945 from Zagreb to Dubrovnik and Split reads: "… regarding the fate of the retired J. Carević, nothing is known for certain about the Bishop of Dubrovnik, but it is said that he was taken away and probably murdered. There is no conclusive news."[7]

The question arises: how it is possible that the Archdiocese of Zagreb had no information about the only murdered bishop, five months after that event.

On 2 May 1945, the Ministry of the Armed Forces sent a report on the fate of Bishop Carević to the General Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference. That document was entered in the registry record, but cannot be found in the archives today.

The Ustasha authorities had a leaflet printed in which they reported on what had happened to Bishop Carević. The leaflet, which was distributed in Veliko Trgovišće, listed the leaders of the partisan movement.

If the state authorities had already reported to the Bishops' Conference in May and if a leaflet was being distributed in the parish where the bishop had been active, why was there no information in the Archdiocese?

It is important to reflect on the historical context of that period. On 3 May, the government of the Independent State of Croatia made a decision to withdraw, organizing a mass rally with more than a hundred thousand soldiers and civilians. The Partisans entered Zagreb on 8 May 1945. After the death marches (known as the Way of the Cross), soldiers of the Independent State of Croatia surrendered in Bleiburg on 15 May, when the massacre of soldiers and civilians began, with an estimated 45,000 to 200,000 victims.

In these circumstances of general confusion and chaos, changes of government and retaliations against those who supported the Independent State of Croatia, we may understand the fear of providing information about the fate of Bishop Carević within the Archdiocese of Zagreb.

4. Pastoral Letter[8]

On 20 September 1945, Catholic bishops published the Pastoral Letter *After the End of the Second World War*. Listing the consequences of

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[6] NAZg, NDS, 6038-1945

[7] Cf. NAZg, NDS, 6039-1945

[8] https://hr.wikisource.org/wiki/Pastirsko_pismo_katoli%C4%8Dkih_biskupa_Jugo-slavije_20._rujna_1945.

the war, the bishops pointed out: "This world war hit our country twice as hard. Bloody battles were fought, to our great sorrow, between brothers by blood. The internecine struggle, which drew members of the same family apart, had particularly bloody consequences." (Pastoral Letter 1945)

Among other things, the bishops in the Epistle felt obliged "to openly present all the difficulties and troubles in which the Catholic Church finds itself." (Pastoral Letter 1945)

The bishops first addressed the fact that 243 priests had been killed, 169 imprisoned and 89 missing. Most were killed without having the opportunity to defend themselves in court and were withheld the right to receive the holy sacraments before death. "In the name of that eternal justice, we raise our voice before all of you, dear believers, in defence of unfairly condemned priests. Not only them, but also thousands and thousands of others, your sons and your brothers, who, like them, were sentenced to death without being able to defend themselves, as every cultured state allows." (Pastoral Letter 1945)

In their Epistle, the bishops explicitly addressed the case of Bishop Carević: "Many priests are lying in various camps, sentenced to long years of forced labour. In fact, to this day, Greek Catholic Bishop Dr. Janko Šimrak has been deprived of his liberty, while the fate of Bishop Carević remains unknown to us ..." (Pastoral Letter 1945)

The bishops spoke of the difficult living conditions of priests detained in camps, whose main crime was holding different political opinions from those who condemned them. Nothing was known about the many priests who had been taken away, and every trace of them was lost. They pointed out that it was permitted to attack priests in the press, though they did not have the opportunity to defend themselves. The shortage of priests was greatly felt, and there were many parishes without appointed parish priests.

Another sore point that the bishops touched upon was the Catholic press. Before the war, there were about a hundred Catholic magazines, and "not a single one is published today." The Church was deprived of the Seminary that it had built, bearing great material sacrifices. Religious education in schools was declared optional, and the subject of religious education was positioned at the end of certificates. Religious education was reduced from two classes per week to one class, and in the upper grades of secondary school it was completely abolished. Civil marriage was introduced, and the civil government dissolved marriages that had been previously concluded in the Church. The agrarian reform had deprived the Church of land, without any compensation, and the minimal part of the land left was not enough for the regular practice of church life. The bishops also indicated the issue of church hospitals, which were at risk of being

taken away from the Church. The bishops stated the fact that in some places crosses were removed from the graves of Ustasha and German soldiers, and the graves were levelled to the ground so that it was impossible to tell where someone had been buried. They additionally claimed that they were advocating on behalf of the many who were in need, without prejudice to their political preferences, religion or nationality, and they were particularly critical of the ungodly materialistic spirit. "The current state of the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia differs, in our opinion, only in name from the state of open persecution of the Church." (Pastoral Letter 1945)

The bishops asserted that by listing all the issues, they did not wish to cause conflict with the new government. "Our thoughts have always been directed towards peace and public order. We are all in need of that peace today." (Pastoral Letter 1945). The bishops concluded by requesting full freedom of the Catholic press, schools, religious education, religious association, charitable activities, respect for Christian marriage, and the return of confiscated institutions, as well as the freedom of every human being and respect for human rights.

5. Conclusion

From the three aforementioned documents, which the bishops used to communicate during the crises of 1928 and 1945, we can get the impression that they were reluctant to release a joint public statement, that they almost apologized for speaking up in public, but the rights of the Church were so endangered that they had nothing to lose with their public addresses. It is as if they did not believe that the symbiosis between the state and the Church had disappeared. They refered to the tradition of the Catholic Church characterized by loyalty to the state. In the documents, we can observe that the announcements were carefully prepared, every word was thought out and brought after a long time of patient waiting in the hope that the issues would be resolved. Once all other means of communication were exhausted, the bishops shared their tribulations with the general public. Regardless of the difficulties manifested in the violation of the fundamental rights, the bishops presented their views in a reasoned, calm, unprovocative, prudent, courageous and determined manner, they did not breed hostility, but they were aware that their speech would be perceived as an attack.

As for the case of Bishop Carević, the silence on the part of the Church could not be justified in 1945, nor can it be today. This silence and the lack of transparency seems to encourage the opinion that Bishop Carević was guilty of something, and thus it may be best to leave his character and work to oblivion. On the one hand, we recognize the great contribution

of Bishop Carević on the pastoral and social level, on the other hand, we get the impression that his character hides an unpleasant secret. In recent decades, we have witnessed the terrible consequences that the Catholic Church has borne for covering up the crime of child abuse. We can hope that these severe consequences can nurture a transparent Church community that will be able to distinguish between a person and his or her sin, both in the past and in the present, and which will be able to help both the victim and the culprit, in hope that we create a Church community that would be able to face its past, regardless of what it was.

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Biography

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Crisis as an Incentive to Live Steadfast Love: Activities of the Bishop of Križevci Dionisije Njaradi (1915-1940)

Myroslava MOSTEPANIUK

Abstract

The goal of this presentation is to show the wholehearted commitment of the Greek Catholic bishop of Križevci Dionisije Njaradi (1915-1940) to the well-being of humanity in concrete sociological and political circumstances as well as his effort to prophetically live the vision of the Kingdom of God in a given time, based on his understanding of the role and responsibility of a bishop. First, the complex socio-historical circumstances of bishop Njaradi's activities are presented. Then, his activities are analyzed: the efforts to restore the Križevci Eparchy through priestly formation, the renewal of existing parishes and the establishment of new ones; the expansion of religious communities; the missionary work in the Eparchy of Prešov and the Eparchy of Mukachevo; his devotion to the education of young people, establishing cultural societies, supporting folk schools, his publishing and literary activities as well as struggles for the protection of the national language and culture. Finally, based on bishop Njaradi's correspondence with Lviv Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky and a series of Njaradi's publications, his understanding of his own responsibilities as a Christian and a bishop is shown. His vision of the Christian faith as an incentive to active action and participation in God's plan of salvation, where crisis is understood not as an obstacle but as an additional motivation to actively live effective love, is explored.

Keywords: *times of crisis, Greek Catholics, Diocese of Križevci, Dionisije Njaradi*

1. Socio-historical circumstances surrounding bishop Njaradi's activities (1915 -1940)

Jürgen Moltmann stated: "Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it" (Moltmann 1993, 21). This kind of holy restlessness can be seen in the life and work of the Greek Catholic bishop of Križevci Dionisije Njaradi (1915-1940) who lived and worked in the turbulent period between two world wars and many changes in political systems and state borders. The Eparchy of Križevci is a Byzantine Catholic Diocese, founded in 1777, which presently includes the Catholics of Byzantine rite in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. Bishop Njaradi's activities belong to the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1915-1918), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1918-1940, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1921). In addition, he served as the apostolic administrator of the Slovak Catholic Eparchy of Prešov, and the apostolic administrator of the Eparchy of Mukachevo, then part of Carpathian Ukraine (cf. Maliatsko 1995, 175).

Njaradi was appointed as an apostolic administrator of the Eparchy of Križevci on June 3, 1914, and ordained a bishop on November 29, 1915 in Rome. At that time, the Eparchy was under investigation by the Holy See: the bishop at that time, Julije Drohobeczki, was accused of inappropriate financial management (cf. Maliatsko 1995, 152). Njaradi was the bishop of Križevci until his death on April 14, 1940. He started his ministry in the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, a multi-confessional and multinational state. The Eparchy of Križevci, founded in 1777, united the faithful of four nationalities and five church unions. Staying within one monarchy, Dionisije Njaradi was able to develop close relations with Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyckyi, the head of the Greek Catholics in Ukraine. Njaradi sent seminarians and religious candidates of the Eparchy of Križevci to study in Ukrainian monasteries and schools. He also brought priests and men and women religious from Ukraine to his Eparchy. It should be mentioned that most of the faithful of the Križevci Eparchy at that time were immigrants from Ukraine.

After the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, the Eparchy of Križevci went through difficult times. In the Kingdom of SCS, where Orthodoxy was favoured, "the Greek Catholics were treated as a certain provocation and betrayal of Orthodoxy"[1] (Patafta 2015, 157). Activities of religious officials of foreign citizenship were also

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[1] "Grkokatolici su za pravoslavce predstavljali određenu provokaciju i izdaju pravoslavlja".

disabled (cf. Matijević 1985, 66-67). These circumstances had an impact on the activities of bishop Njaradi: on the one hand, as a bishop, he worked wholeheartedly in the fields of education and social protection, yet on the other hand, at the same time, he experienced numerous obstacles and difficulties, threats of confiscation of property, denial of state support for institutions that he founded (cf. Maliatsko 1995, 147-193).

In addition to managing the Eparchy of Križevci, during 1922-1927, Njaradi served as the apostolic administrator of the Eparchy of Prešov in Czechoslovakia, a state that had a rather complex relationship with the Vatican[2] (cf. Šmid 2017, 58-74). In addition, the pressure of Orthodoxy made the position of Greek Catholics in that country difficult[3] (cf. Pekar 1967, 122). From 1938 to 1939 Njaradi held the position of the apostolic administrator of the Eparchy of Mukachevo. The faithful of that Eparchy found themselves hostages of the political situation: as a result of the first Vienna arbitration on October 10, 1938, the westernmost part of today's Ukraine, Transcarpathia, was divided between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Because of that, the seat of the Mukachevo Greek Catholic bishop ended up in Hungary. That is why D. Njaradi was appointed as an apostolic visitator for the 400,000 faithful who were left without a bishop in the autonomous republic of Carpathian Ukraine, which became a part of Czechoslovakia (cf. Maliatsko 1995, 167-168).

Thus, bishop Njaradi's activities took place in rather complex circumstances of changing political regimes and new arrangements of state borders. Because of this, the bishop was often not only a Church leader for his faithful, but also their only representative at the state level, the protector of their religious and national interests.

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[2] The president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš G. Masaryk (1918 – 1935) left the Catholic Church. Although as president he avoided public statements regarding religious issues, he still had a reserved attitude towards the Catholic Church. His participation in the 1925 celebration of Jan Hus resulted in a break of diplomatic relations with the Vatican for several years.

[3] Orthodox agitators were active in the Diocese, this movement was supported by Senator Juraj Lažo (representative in the parliament), at whose instigation the Russian Archimandrite Vitaly Maksimenko came to the diocese. It is important to emphasize here that the conversion to Orthodoxy for Ukrainian believers implied the loss of their national and religious identity. That way, their complete assimilation took place. Also, by falling under the influence of Russian Orthodox agitators who operated not only in Czechoslovakia, but also in other places of Ukrainian immigration in Bosnia, the USA, Argentina, they would become a tool in the hands of political manipulation. Thanks to the efforts of Njaradi, the transition of the Greek Catholics of the Prešov eparchy to Orthodoxy was stopped.

2. The activities of bishop Njaradi

In his activities, the bishop paid great attention to the education of young people, especially to the formation of priests, men and women religious. In an interview from 1926, Njaradi stated that the seminarians of the Eparchy of Križevci (Ukrainians and Ruthenians) studied in Zagreb, Rome, Innsbruck, and Lviv. He emphasized that "the culture of our Ruthenian intelligence was nurtured in the Catholic seminary in Zagreb, founded after the Council of Trent; that seminar protected the Diocese from death"[4] (Holos 1926, 7). According to his understanding, appropriate education and training should help a person preserve his or her own national and religious identity, and win that person over to the Church and the nation. For the needs of the faithful, Njaradi founded new parishes in Syrmia (region between Croatia and Serbia), Bosnia, Macedonia, building 12 churches and chapels (cf. Maliatsko 1995, 158). He sent female and male candidates for education to the monasteries of the Sisters the Servants, the Basilian Sisters, and the Basilian Fathers in Ukraine; he founded women's monasteries in the Eparchy, and in 1924 he entrusted the management of the Greek Catholic seminary in Zagreb to the Basilian fathers. That is how Njaradi worked on the quality of church officials who, in the midst of political changes and pressure, should be a support for the faithful.

The bishop acted not only as an administrator, but as a missionary: "Already in the first year of his ministry (1915), he visited all the parishes of his Eparchy [...]. The bishop turned canonical visitations into pastoral and apostolic activities among the people. This is how he began with the 'missions', which, from that point on, took place continuously in all the parishes of the entire Eparchy [...]. The bishop is always the first preacher and confessor, the priests only help him"[5] (Maliatsko 1995, 161). This missionary zeal was especially important for the faithful of the Prešov Eparchy in Czechoslovakia, where Njaradi served as the apostolic administrator from 1922 to 1927. After the First World War, the Greek-Catholic Ruthenians of Eastern Slovakia and Transcarpathian Ukraine were

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[4] "Культура нашої руської інтелігенції плекана в католицькім семинари в Загребі, основанім ще по Тридентськім Соборі. Той семинар охоронив Епархію від смерти".

[5] "Вже першого року свого єпископства (1915) відвідує всі парафії своєї єпархії […]. Канонічні візитації владика перетворює в пасторальну й апостольську діяльність між народом. В такий спосіб кладе основи «народним місіям», які відбувалися з того часу безнастанно по всіх парафіях цілої єпархії […]. Владика є першим проповідником, сповідником, якому отці тільки помагають".

left without church leadership. The priests, who at that time fell under the influence of Hungary, lost their authority and trust in the eyes of the people (cf. Maliatsko 1995, 164). The consequences of Njaradi'sactions of Njaradi, who organized meetings and spiritual exercises for priests, tried to have priests participate in the cultural, scientific, social lives of their faithful, encouraged the activities of the catechetical societyin the midst of the pressure of mistrust, the actions of agitators and accusations before Rome, , can be seen in the wording of an article published in a local newspaper dated February 20, 1930: "Bishop Dionisije Njaradi was considered a stranger, but he became one of our own because of his great loyalty to the Eparchy and the faithful"[6] (Ruske slovo 1930, 4). No less important was Njaradi's service as the apostolic administrator of the Eparchy of Mukachevo from November 1938 to March 1939. At that time, the greater part of the Eparchy was part of the newly founded autonomous Carpathian Ukraine, part of Czechoslovakia, while Mukachevo bishop Oleksandr Stoika remained in the territory that belonged to Hungary. Therefore, the Holy See appointed Njaradi to be the administrator for the faithful who were left without a bishop. Most of the priests in that area spoke Hungarian, there were no religious textbooks, prayer books, or catechisms in their native language. Njaradi testified: "For my part, I invested as much as I could to arrange the church life as well as possible. I managed to convince and win over many priests so that they would understand who they are: that they are not Hungarians, but real Ukrainians [...]. I distributed prayer books and other books, which I had, but it was too little"[7] (Ruski novyny 1939, 2).

Njaradi believed that nurturing the native Ukrainian language for his faithful is the key to preserving the rites, the faith, and the identity: "I see a solution in the systematic proclamation of God's Word, in the catechizing of our children in their schools in their native language, as well as the youth. Every family must have a catechism at home in their native language in Cyrillic and Latin [...]. Publish the best catechisms, Bibles and folk songs with sheet music for children and young people"[8] (Holos 1926, 13-14).

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[6] "Владика Діонізій Нярадї уважався чужим, однак він став одним із наших через свою велику посвяту для єпархії і вірних".

[7] "Я з мого боку вложив найбільше, скільки міг, щоб чимкраще упорядкувати вірські обставини. Вдалось мені переконати і придбати багатьох священиків, так що зрозуміли, ким вони є: що вони не мадяри, а дійсні українці [...]. Поділив я по селах молитовники і інші книжки, що мав, але це було замало".

[8] "Ратунок бачу в систематичнім проповіданю Слова Божого в націон. мові, як також підростаючої молоді. Кожда фамілія повинна мати вдома катехізм у

3. Njaradi's reflections of bishop's responsibilities

What was the bishop's personal motivation for such activities, we can guess to some extent on the basis of his correspondence and writings. One of the examples is bishop Njaradi's correspondence with Lviv Metropolitan Andrei Sheptycki, the head of the Greek Catholics in Ukraine. In his letters to Sheptitskyi (Correspondence 1914-1938), Njaradi touched on current political and ecclesiastical circumstances, the education of priests and the formation of monks, the activities of priests and nuns from Ukraine in the Eparchy of Križevci, the work on the Code of Canon Law of the Eastern Churches, ecumenical efforts, relations with Rome, pastoral care for the Ukrainian immigrants in Bosnia, the printing and sharing of catechisms, prayer book in the Ukrainian language, preservation of the religious and national identity of the faithful of the Križevci Eparchy. Njaradi addressed Šeptitskyi as a collaborator and like-minded person. Njaradi wrote to him about his experiences as the administrator of the Prešov Eparchy under the Czechoslovak government, which supported the Orthodox (cf. Correspondence 1925, 49-50), about the current political situation in Yugoslavia: "There is a big fight going on in Yugoslavia. There are parliamentary elections this week. The future of Bosnia and perhaps of our Eparchy will depend a lot on them."[9] (Correspondence 1915, 43-44) They also discussed the position of Ukrainian Greek Catholic settlers in Bosnia who, since 1924, were under the administration of the Eparchy of Križevci. Metropolitan Sheptitskyi founded a monastery of Studite Monks in Bosnia in 1908, who were the first to come under attack during the persecution of Greek Catholics by the political authorities. Njaradi wrote to Sheptitskyi about his efforts to defend the monks: "Yesterday I was in Banja Luka with the prefect, who expelled them. As I saw, these are people without faith and against God. They will do everything they can against us. I cannot let the Studites go back to Galicia, because if they get it, tomorrow they will do it to all the priests."[10] (Correspondence 1925, 46)

рідній мові кирилицею і латинкою […]. Видати найкращі катехизми, біблії та з нотами національні пісні й забави для дітей і молоді".

[9] "В Югославії велика борба. Днесь тиждень вибори за парламент. Від них буде дуже много залежати будучність Босні а може і нашої епархії".

[10] "Вчера був єм в Банялуки у жупана, котрий їх вигнав. Як бачив єм, то суть люди без віри і проти Богу. Вони всьо зроблят, що лишь будут могли проти нас. Я не можу пустити Студитів назад до Галичині, бо єсли би то осягнули, завтра то зроблят зі всіми священиками".

Njaradi strived that the Ukrainian priests from Galicia (at that time Polish citizens), sent by Sheptitskyi to Bosnia, must receive the citizenship of Yugoslavia according to the state requirements in order to be able to stay in parishes - for the benefit of the faithful: "The salvation of the souls of thousands of people comes first, and then the human view"[11] (Correspondence 1935, 141).

Dionisije Njaradi was also known for his literary and theological work. He published a prayer book for Greek Catholics, a religious textbook (1913, 1919), "The Life of St. Josaphat" (1912), "The Lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodius" (1924), initiated the publication of an Eparchial bulletin (1915). He wrote many articles for the newspapers "Katolički list" and "Vrhbosna". Among other things, Njaradi published a series of articles under the joint title *Church* in the Greek Catholic Calendar "Spomenica". His thoughts testify to how he understood his role as a Christian and a bishop. Notably, he wrote about the need for the active commitment of the faithful: "Jesus Christ made the entire work of salvation so dependent on people, so the entire benefit of salvation depends on their good or bad will"[12] (Njaradi 1932, 12). According to the understanding of bishop Njaradi, "Lord Jesus Christ left it to people to govern his holy Church in this world in his place and in his name"[13] (Njaradi 1932, 133). Regarding the role of the bishop, Njaradi wrote: "The bishop is the center which binds the Eparchy in the unity of supernatural enlightenment and love for God"[14] (Njaradi 1932, 10). From these lines it becomes evident how seriously Njaradi took his Christian and episcopal duty; here we can see his strong motivation for such a various activities.

Responsibility, work on oneself, investment in the education of young people were all characteristics of bishop Njaradi, with which he marked the history of the Eparchy of Križevci in the coming years.

Conclusion

Dionisije Njaradi lived the turbulent circumstances of his time, viewing them as the history of salvation. Taking care of his faithful under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Kingdom of SCS,

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[11] "На першім місці спасення душ тисяч осіб, аж потім взгляд людскій".

[12] "Isus Hrist [je] čitavo djelo spasenja učinio tako ovisnim od ljudi, te od njihove dobre ili zle volje ovisi čitava korist spasenja".

[13] "Gospod Isus Hrist prepustio je ljudima, da oni mjesto Njega i u ime Njegovo upravljaju njegovom svetom Crkvom na ovome svijetu".

[14] "Biskup je središte, koje veže Biskupiju u jedinstvu natprirodnog prosvjetljenja i ljubavi prema Bogu".

Czechoslovakia, he tried to preserve their religious and national interests as well as human rights. Njaradi worked on the renewal of the Eparchy of Križevci, primarily spiritual and intellectual, taking care of the appropriate education of priests, women religious, and the intellectuals, advocating for the development of folk schools, striving to provide his faithful with spiritual and religious literature in their own language. In addition, he showed great sensitivity for the social position of his faithful, showing them support, establishing social and educational institutions. Njaradi often represented the civil and political interests of his faithful who at a certain moment found themselves without a representative, trying to prevent them from becoming the object of various manipulations during the time of changes related to state borders and political structures. From the correspondence and writings, it is clear that Njaradi had a sincere commitment to the well-being of his faithful, showcasing openness to cooperation in order to achieve the best possible results, resistance to external pressures and orientation towards a goal that he clearly envisioned despite the turbulent times, which also shows an understanding of the Christian faith as an incentive for active action and participation in God's plan of salvation. In the times of crisis, he really lived steadfast love. Citing the words of bishop Dionisije Njaradi himself, we can conclude: "A true convinced Catholic Christian is not afraid to say that he already sees the sun of eternity in this world"[15] (Njaradi 1936, 201).

The role of bishop Njaradi cannot be overestimated at the current moment in the development of the Church, especially when so much emphasis is placed on synodality and service (Francis 2021). Through his life and actions, Njaradi showed his openness to the voice of the Holy Spirit and to the needs of his faithful. His emphasis on the education of the clergy, so that church officials could truly be at the service of their people, is of great importance. No less valuable is his cooperation with neighboring dioceses, which bore rich fruit for the Diocese of Križevci.

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Biography

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Biblical Motifs in the Movie Indiana Jones – Raider of the Lost Ark

Manuel HARTMANN

Abstract

This article explores the world of biblical motifs in the film Indiana Jones - Raider of the Lost Ark - in the horizon of didactic use, and especially in relation to non-denominational students. Starting from basic social conditions, central motifs are analysed in detail and reflected on in terms of their potential for religious education.

Introduction

The relevance of religion for young people is going through a change, even a crisis. Therefore, ways to bring up the Holy Bible in class and to engage students with the book must be devised and demonstrated. One possibility is to deal with biblical motifs in movies in order to offer pupils an approach that they find interesting and that encourages them to delve into biblical stories and motifs as well as to penetrate into deeper realms of meaning. Therefore, the following text examines to what extent the movies about the adventurer Indiana Jones, especially the first movie „*Raiders of the Lost Ark"*, offer an opportunity to get to know the Holy Bible better.

1. The crisis

A kind of crisis can be perceived in terms of religious education. Not only the Church, but also Christianity is in a phase of greater change (cf. Sajak 2018, 38). In the 21st century, young people hardly receive any religious socialization. Not only is the quality of individual religious education declining, but its quantity in society, as more and more children and young people have little or no contact with religious contents, questions and values in their families. As a consequence, religious language competence has also been lost (cf. Pirner 2013, 289).

As a result, contact with biblical stories and their motifs is not self-evident. Gennerich and Zimmermann noted in 2020 that they witness a decline in the importance of the Holy Bible for young people who see the Holy Scripture as no orientation for their own lives, whereas this strong distance was not the case 18 years earlier (cf. Gennerich/Zimmermann 2020, 90 ff). According to Theiß, this development was anticipated in the 1970s. He refers to a study of Horst Klaus Berg, who proved in 1993 that interest in the Holy Bible is slowly but steadily declining, with Theiß objecting that there has never been much interest in the Holy Bible among young people (cf. Theiß 2017, 1 f).

It is a fact that there the image of God has changed. A relationship with a personal, biblical Christian God is not at all important for young people. God has no relevance in their lives (cf. Gensicke 2010, 204). Young people live a life remote from the "premises" that God exists (EKD 2020, 68).

2. Movies

2.1. Narration

Media, especially movies, convey "meaningful orientations, existential questions, ethical norms and cultural symbols" (Pirner 2013, 286), because since the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, the "history of the impact of Christianity" is no longer perceived as the responsibility of the Churches (Pirner 2013, 288). When it comes to movie narratives, it should therefore be noted that movies describe and interpret the past and the future, but also religions and their dimensions from the perspective of the present time (cf. Pirner 2013, 285; Erl 2005, 15). Therefore, movies are neither real presentations, nor "historiographies", but constructions (Erl 2005, 15). This means that Indiana Jones neither presents religion in its entirety nor teaches the recipient about religious practice. However, Indiana Jones tells a story that is an interpretation of artifacts related to religion in this specific case. The story about the Ark of the Covenant is therefore a "narrative" or narrativity, i.e. an interpreted story (Schreiber 2008, 123). Barricelli describes this "narrativity" as an interest in telling and reporting facts and knowledge in a certain structure. The recipient must know that the movie's narrative is not a source (Barricelli 2008, 110 f).

2.2. Impact of movies

It must be clarified whether cineastic mediation has any influence on young viewers. In fact, the breaking away from Christianity and the Holy Bible does not mean that young people do not draw their attitudes and values from other sources. One of the main sources are movies and other media. These socialize young people and give them orientation (cf. Pirner 2013, 290). It is obvious that movies and the attitudes and questions conveyed in them influence the ideas of young people and shape them (cf. Pirner 2013, 290), both in social and individual aspects of their worlds. Movies still have a particular impact on non-denominational and religiously distanced pupils (cf. Pirner 2013, 282 f). On the other hand, there is an interplay, because one's own values and norms also influence the interpretation of a movie. This means that every movie has an individual effect on every person, because every viewer or recipient associates something different with the movie and brings with it their own "space of experience" (Edel 2021, 11; 13). But a movie can also open up new "spaces of experience" by showing what exists despite the distance between the viewer and the content shown. A movie shows that things that "concern" us exist, even in a religious aspect. The movie achieves this by making content that was previously only known cognitively visually and auditive tangible (Kirsner 2020, 3 f). This means that the movie is able to offer options, as it changes the consciousness of recipients and can cause them to change their views of the world after watching the movie and to act accordingly (Kirsner 2020, 4). However, one should not make the negative assumption that pupils will take the information shown in the movie at face value (Barricelli 2008, 199).

3. Working with movies in the classroom

The effect and influence that movies, but also their depicted motifs, have on pupils should lead to watching a movie not only as a pastime for the last class before the holidays, but it should rather be included as an elementary part of the curriculum (cf. Pirner 2018, 279). The aim is that the pupils develop media competence in religious didactics. Since a number of biblical motifs can be found in the media, especially movies and notably in Indiana Jones, a religious education perspective, including the "anthropological and social basic provisions" of the movies, can help to support religious socialization (Pirner 2013, 287 ff). Movies are particularly helpful as a gateway to religious language. On the one hand, *Indiana Jones* can motivate to take a closer look at religious terms

and semantics as well as symbols because the movie offers an "opening moment" (Heger 2018, 4.1). But young people can also become "conceptually competent" by deconstructing its motives. This means that they recognize "subject-specific terms" and the related "concepts". They can also link terms from different content aspects (Schreiber 2008, 128).

However, the use of a movie requires a period of preparation and a follow-up in line with the determined criteria (cf. Barricelli 2008, 99) and therefore an "intensive development", because the movies about the adventurer Indiana Jones must not serve as facts, that would provide pupils with information about the motives such as the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Zwick 2013, 567). Indiana Jones interprets the Ark of the Covenant for its cinematic purposes (cf. Heger 2018, 4.2) and uses "manipulation" to show the audience what it expects to see (Barricelli 2008, 107). The audience wants excitement and a bit of horror.

How can you utilise the movie? Various steps of preparation and follow-up are necessary. These require a lot of time (cf. Zwick 2013, 565 f), but are quite important to acquire all the skills (cf. Schreiber 2008, 124).

Therefore, pupils must be offered the expertise in advance so that they would know how movies are directed (cf. Utz 2008, 30). It is suggested to show short scenes and have them examined for "cuts, expansions, changes and all modes of staging" (Zwick 2013, 568).

Indiana Jones – Raiders of the Lost Ark lasts several hours, which makes it too long for a lesson. It makes sense to work with short sequences highlighting the biblical motifs (Zwick 2013, 567). The longest sequence shown in the movie lasts five minutes.[1]

The next step, after watching, is to discuss the biblical motifs by giving the young people factual texts and sources from the Holy Bible that they analyse and then reflect in a discussion (Zwick 2013, 569). What is important here is the deconstructive character that is borrowed from historical sciences. The pupils should deconstruct the biblical motifs using the expertise they have acquired by first completing the "analytical steps" of "classic source criticism" in order to compare the results with their knowledge of the motifs (Menninger 2014, 406; 422). A "discourse-analytical deconstruction" is ideal for this. By this, Barricelli means that the pupils should work out the narrative, i.e., the interpretation of the biblical motifs in the movie (Barricelli 2008, 111). These steps are explained below.

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[1] Raiders of the Lost Ark: In this sequence the archaeologist Indiana Jones describes the function of the Ark.

After the movie has been analysed and interpreted through deconstruction, it can offer points of contact for the lives of young people (cf. Ostermann 2016, 2.1) by examining some motifs that at first glance appear secular, but can also evoke existential questions and experiences on their meta perspective (Gräb 2021, 5; Zwicck 2013, 569). The "(deep) structure" of the narrative can often be used to establish a correlation with the pupils' world and current social issues (Schreiber 2008, 126). It can also be asked whether the interpretations of the movies provide still have any meaning today (cf. Barricelli 2008, 109), especially since the first Indiana Jones movie was released over 40 years ago and that time raised different questions than today does.

Following the dialogic conversation, young people can create their own narratives based on the terms they have learned. Of course, it is extremely attractive for young people to make their own adventure movie. However, due to the lack of time, pupils could at least write their own script in which the "narrative logic" of the biblical text emerges (Zwick 2013, 569). This work, a "re-construction", often results in the pupils' own interpretations and narratives (Schreiber 2008, 126).

4. Biblical motifs in Indiana Jones

4.1. Who is Indiana Jones?

Who is Indiana Jones anyway? Indiana Jones, as a professor and adventure archaeologist, is the protagonist and hero of five movies. The action of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* takes place in the 1930s. Accordingly, the hero's antagonists are the National Socialists.

However, it should be noted that the first movies were released in the 1980th. Since the fifth movie was released in cinemas in the summer of 2023, the adventure theme is currently present in the lives of pupils. The Lego company has also created sets to match the movie. It can therefore be assumed that young people may show interest in the first movie and thus come into contact with its biblical motifs.

4.2. Biblical motifs in Indiana Jones

Several biblical motifs come into play in the first and the third movie. Although they are McGuffins with the purpose of moving the plot forward, they are still omnipresent.

In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Indiana Jones must find the Israelites' lost Ark of the Covenant on behalf of the American government, as the Nazis

have begun excavations, with the assumption that they are getting close to the Ark of the Covenant.

In *The Last Crusade* the Holy Grail is sought. Although the Grail is not mentioned in the Holy Bible, it is still a Christian motif and plays a role in the deconstruction and acquisition of media skills and religious language, as pupils analyse the reception history of the crucifixion, of which the Grail is a part, and are then able to reconstruct. At the end of the movie, the hero must unravel three life-threatening mysteries to save his wounded father. The mysteries are all biblically inspired and offer a good opportunity to define certain terms of religious communication so that the pupils could develop a common religious language. The tasks revolve around repentance and atonement, the name of God and piety.

But it's not just the obvious motifs in the form of artifacts and concepts that are interesting. Some meta perspectives can also be found. In this way, the abuse of power can be addressed in relation to the Ark of the Covenant. Repression with religious legitimacy can also be discussed. The name of God can serve excellently to turn erroneous or one-sided images of God into conversation. Furthermore, the reception of the Holy Bible in the Third Reich can be discussed.

In the third installment of the series, the following sentence is said: "The search for the Grail is the search for oneself." This can be used as an opportunity to deal with individuality, freedom and the search for identity. The motif of finding oneself can be seen in many movies (cf. Ostermann 2016, 2.2).

Thomas Schlag points out that the Holy Bible is "identity-forming". It can help pupils formulate targets in life, explore and strengthen their own "self-worth" and become aware of who has control over their lives (Schlag 2015, 17).

Furthermore, the idea of sacrifice and atonement can be discussed. Indiana Jones has to sacrifice himself in the third part to save his friends. Of course, the adventurer does not die, but he has to face life-threatening dangers. Such a sacrifice motif is often found in movies and is part of the "hero's journey" (Ostermann 2016, 2.1; 2.2). The pupils could further develop the idea of Jesus' death on the cross by identifying differences and similarities in order to recognize and understand what is special and devotional in Jesus' sacrificial act. It is relevant not to want to proselytize pupils (cf. Theißen 2003, 22), but it is important that young people understand what the death on the cross means for Christians.

4.3. Presentation of the Ark of the Covenant in the movie

The story

The Ark of the Covenant, one of the most striking biblical motifs in the movie, is given a specific depiction in the first part of the series, which is outlined.

At the beginning of the plot, government officials meet with Indiana Jones and ask the academic for advice because the Nazis are conducting excavations in Egypt. Indiana Jones immediately recognizes the background: The Nazis have discovered Tanis, one of the possible locations where the Ark of the Covenant is hidden. Indiana Jones explains the function of the box to the officials. It is the chest in which the "Hebrews" carried the "broken tablets of stone" with the Ten Commandments through the desert after Moses brought the "tablets of stone" from Mount Sinai and then smashed them. At some point, according to Indiana Jones, the Hebrews stored the Ark of the Covenant in Solomon's Temple. The subsequent whereabouts of the ark are unknown; it suddenly disappeared from history. It is uncertain when this happened, but research suggests that it came to Egypt after Pharaoh Shishak devastated Jerusalem in 980 BC. The Ark was hidden in the city of Tanis, in a secret chamber called the "Fountain of Souls". The following year, Tanis was destroyed by a year-long sandstorm. Indiana Jones and Marcus Brody immediately provide an interpretation. The wrath of God fell upon the city and visited it. The Ark has immense power. The Holy Bible says that the Ark of the Covenant can level mountains and devastate entire areas. Therefore, an army possessing the Ark would be unbeatable.

When the officials ask what the Ark looks like, Indiana Jones shows a picture from an old tome. The Ark cannot be seen in the picture, but it is carried by a few men in the background, while in the foreground, people are dead or falling down in awe. This concludes Indiana Jones's explanation of the Ark.

At the end of the movie, the Nazis perform a Jewish ritual to open the Ark. In doing so, they unleash the wrath of God and are killed in a cruel way. Indiana Jones, who closes his eyes during the ritual and turns away from the Ark in awe, survives.

Staging

The Ark of the Covenant is depicted as mythical and mysterious, but also as a strong threat that always hovers subliminally over the protagonists like a sword of Damocles. This mystery and the imminent threat are underlined on the one hand by the picture that Indiana Jones shows

the officers, in which the Ark cannot be seen at all. On the other hand, the music works. The theme of the Ark of the Covenant is the same. It is not scary; it is uncanny and mystical, and it creates tension and a slight chill in the viewer, because the music suggests an underlying, very effective anger and a power that cannot be controlled.

The fact that the Ark of the Covenant is supposed to represent a divine symbol becomes clear as it appears. Instead of looking like a 3000-year-old artifact, it looks brand new and made of bright, shiny gold. The craftsmanship of the surfaces and the angles on the lid are perfect, expressing the power and glory of God. This is underlined by the exposure. The sun's rays fall on the Ark, making the gold look very impressive.

5. Historical facts

The information Indiana Jones provides seem to be a historical fact, especially because Indiana Jones backs up his sketches with the Holy Bible. However, he does not mention any Holy Bible passages. Upon closer inspection, the explanations are by no means facts. They are a mixture of historical facts, biblical descriptions and legends, accompanied by cinematic fiction. The mix makes the mystery surrounding the Ark of the Covenant and its menace appear even more effective in the movie. It is essential for its deconstruction to know the real facts, in order to be able to reflect on the depictions in the movie (cf. Schreiber 2008, 121; 124).

But how to discern the factual information from cinematic fiction? The following explains what is historically known about the Ark of the Covenant, Pharaoh Shishak and the city of Tanis.

The following description of history is an incentive for pupils and teachers to realize that the Holy Bible is a treasure chest full of exciting stories with very deep backgrounds.

5.1. Ark of the Covenant

The Hebrew term for the ark, "Aaron", originally referred to a chest and a "collection box". The Ark of the Covenant measured 1.25 by 0.75 by 0.75 meters and was clad in gold on its inner and outer sides. Rings were attached to its sides so that it could be carried using poles. There were two cherubs on its lid. The appearance of the Ark in the movie corresponds exactly to its biblical description, but the question arises as to how the biblical authors came up with the descriptions and whether they correspond to reality (Kreuzer 2007, 1).

The descriptions can be found in the priestly writings. Since they generally do not hold back with magnificent descriptions, it is unclear whether their description corresponds to the real appearance of the ark, because the priestly writings originally wanted to explain why certain objects are in the temple (cf. Kreuzer 2007, 1). They also idealize the Ark of the Covenant to express the presence of God (Kreuzer 2007, 2). In addition to the Ark, the artifacts in the temple also include two huge cherubs, who were supposed to stand on the lid, „kapporet", although this is unknown (Kreuzer 2007, 4). The description is also influenced by Egyptian and nomadic models. Nomads carried the type of box that contained sacred stones or women who cheered the men in battles. The chest was kept in a tent.

The Egyptians and other peoples of the East knew this type of chest for processions as associated with a "great sanctuary". It was believed that the throne of a god stood on their lids, symbolizing his presence (Kreuzer 2007, 2).

It can be stated that Indiana Jones describes the biblical appearance, but not the real one, which would have been much less magnificent. This is because both the Holy Bible and the movie have similar intentions. Both want to display the magnificence of the Ark to demonstrate the power of God. The movie of course does it to create suspense and thrill in the viewer.

Other aspects include the function and whereabouts of the drawer. The Ark of the Covenant contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. However, not the broken pieces, as Indiana Jones explains, but intact stone tablets, since Moses broke the first tablets[2] and wrote new ones.[3]

Originally it was a war device that was supposed to symbolize the presence of God in battle and thereby motivate the warriors (cf. Kreuzer 2007, 3). Though the threat it poses is not only evident in times of war. This is what is reported about Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6:3-8. He wants to support the Ark that falls from the ox-cart and dies when he touches it because he has provoked God's wrath (cf. Sals 2013, 202).

At the time of the Kings, it demonstrated their power. In particular, King David's transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem and Solomon's subsequent construction of the Temple consolidated the power of the Kings and the city. There it was probably used for processions, as it was also common with the Egyptian models (Kreuzer 2007, 3).

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[2] Cf. Exodus 32,19.

[3] Cf. Exodus 34,4.

Over time, time new cultural beliefs arose. The Ark implies the contract of the covenant between God's chosen people and God himself. The designation of the Ark as a witness to this covenant in Exodus 31:18 shows the obligation of the Israelites (Kreuzer 2007, 5).

As a result, Indiana Jones' explanation is correct, but omits important elements of the Ark's function, such as the covenant idea and God's promise to stand up for his people. Instead, the wrath of God becomes the main narrative of the Ark of the Covenant in the movie.

5.2. Whereabouts of the Ark in Tanis

According to historical facts, the Ark of the Covenant suddenly disappeared from biblical texts and sources after the end of the royal era, as if it had never existed. There is no report of its whereabouts nor destruction. It certainly seems that it was in the temple throughout the Kings time. But not even the sources about Babylon's conquest of Jerusalem mention any clues related to the location of the Ark of the Covenant. This led to hopes that Jeremiah had hidden it in a cave or that it was "in the heavenly sanctuary" (Kreuzer 2007, 6).

However, it is obvious to Indiana Jones that the Ark was stolen by the Pharaoh Shishak and brought to the Egyptian capital of Tanis.

In fact, the Pharaoh who was called Shishak in Hebrew and Sheshonk in Libya did exist (cf. Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 1). He was the founder of the 22nd Dynasty, but can his "genealogy" can be traced back to the 20th Dynasty, as his ancestors from Libya had already ruled Egypt (Mertz 2012, 281). He was pharaoh from 945 to 924 and pursued an "active foreign policy" for the first time in order to increase his influence (Bommas 2012, 117). He was also a busy builder in Tanis and other cities (cf. Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 4). Despite the history of his ancestors' rule, he has been referred to as the founder of a new dynasty because he moved the capital from Tanis to Bubastis (cf. Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 4). His foreign policy included a campaign to Palestine. According to the Holy Bible, he conquered the southern kingdom and "sacked Jerusalem." It can be assumed that this happened a year before his death (Lang 2013, 151). However, the only source of information regardingthe conquest of Jerusalem is the Holy Bible (Mertz 2012, 281). There are other Egyptian sources that mention the campaign in this region, but it is unlikely that he actually attacked Jerusalem. It is more likely that it only raged in southern Canaan (cf. Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 4). Barbara Mertz concludes that it is almost impossible that the Ark was brought close to Tanis, even though the idea is "quite funny" (Mertz 2012, 281).

Tanis was extremely important at this time and served as the cemetery of many pharaohs (cf. Bommas 2012, 117) and the "residence" of the kings (Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 4). Shishak's tomb, however, is not located here, as the city's influence waned in favour of Bubastis (cf. Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 4).

5.3. Ritual

At the end of the movie, Indiana Jones' antagonists perform a ritual to open the Ark. The ritual itself, though, is never named. Therefore, it is unclear which one it is. However, it brings to mind "the ritual of the Day of Atonement" (Kreuzer 2007, 7). The ritual is described in detail in Leviticus 16 and has nothing in common with the ritual shown in the movie. On the Day of Atonement, sacrifices are made and the Ark is sprinkled with blood. Clothing is also prescribed - the person performing the ritual must wear robes made of linen.[4]

When comparing it with the movie, it becomes clear that the movie represents only pure imagination.

Conclusion

As a result, the movie only seems to rely on the biblical source, ignoring other research. The movie also fabricates the taking of the Ark to Egypt. Tanis is significant here. But the movie mixes Shishak's death a year after the campaign with the destruction of Tanis, which did not take place.

This brief outline has shown that the facts of the movie are a strong mix of historical facts, biblical stories and director's additions as well as his own interpretations.

Uncovering this is a part of deconstruction using "classical source criticism" (Menninger 2014, 406). Young pupils need to familiarize themselves with the historical facts presented here in order to get the most accurate picture of what really happened, so that they would understand that the movie represents an interpretation of history and does not seek to represent facts.

Movies carry the risk of misunderstanding or singular interpretations. Nevertheless, the movies about Indiana Jones in particular offer an opportunity to make the Holy Bible and its motifs a good topic that can be used to learn biblical language and to start a conversation about the

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[4] Leviticus 16,4.

stories. The movie can also be used to start a dialogue about existential questions, hopes and concerns of young people. The movie demonstrates the importance of biblical motifs in popular culture.

It should be noted that the *Indiana Jones* movies are almost 40 years old. But they can still assist in the acquisition of religious skills. They can motivate pupils to perceive the Holy Bible as an exciting book and awaken their desire for more.

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Biography

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How to Get in Contact with God in Times of Crisis. Franz Rosenzweig's Prayerful Thinking Read in Religious Education

Bernhard GRÜMME

We could not believe our eyes when we entered the cathedral of Rochester in England during our last summer holiday: In the middle of the church, in a central position in the nave, there was a large miniature golf course. Where the faithful otherwise gather for prayer and worship, children, young people and adults played miniature golf. What some saw as a profanation of the Church, and others saw as a sacrilege, those responsible saw as a way of catechesis, social care, and at the same time an education in prayer. In a region in the East of England, marked by poverty and precarious living conditions, the Anglican Church, under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury, started this project during the summer holidays, in order to enable young people living in delicate circumstances to organise their holidays, simultaneously familiarising them with faith and prayer practices. The miniature golf game was interrupted at noon each day. Texts from the Psalms were read out and impulses for prayers were given. It was obvious to the children and young people that they had not probably had much to do with such practices. As a person responsible for the project explained to me, it was precisely about removing inhibitions that always occur when it is a matter of religious practices or even when visiting a church. In short: it was about connecting faith with life, no matter how covert it is, to open up faith out of life, and vice versa, to make faith itself fruitful for life – and this under the conditions of a highly secularized and, at the same time, precarious life.

As a religious pedagogue, I felt reminded of what my colleague Michael Domsgen had worked out for the highly secularized new federal states in the east of the Federal Republic of Germany, where more than 80 percent of people no longer affiliate themselves with any religion: that

non-denominational young people, even non-religious or even atheistic young people pray, that they find meaning, significance and orientation in the performance of spoken prayers, which of course do not need a counterpart conceived as a subject or even a divine "you" (cf. Käbisch 2021).

But how can this practice itself become a place of religious education and learning processes? How can – still more fundamentally asked – such a secular prayer be philosophically or also theologically devised and put into relation with that dialogical execution of language between man and God, which we commonly call a prayer? (cf. Fuchs/Janowski 2019) For the Jewish philosopher of religion, Franz Rosenzweig, there is an even further distinction in this regard. Rosenzweig, who to this day probably stands in the shadow of Emmanuel Lévinas, even though he considers him to be one of the most important factors for his own thought development and one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century (cf. Grümme 1996, 262-307), distinguishes the prayer of the believer from the "prayer of unbelief", the prayer of the pagan, as he formulates it in his language, which is occasionally hardly accessible to us today (Rosenzweig 1990, 315). Could one follow up here, if it is about the difficult question of an initiation of prayer under secularized conditions? The approach of Rosenzweig himself shows traces of that, since he locates his theory of truth as well as his philosophy of prayer in life and "into life", as he phrases it in the famous postface of his central work "The Star of Redemption" (Rosenzweig 1990, 472).

Since Rosenzweig's teachings on prayer can only be understood within the framework of his philosophy, the discussion of this complex problem area must proceed in three steps: First Rosenzweig's approach must be briefly presented, then Rosenzweig's theory of prayer must be reconstructed, and finally, conclusions must be drawn with regard to religious education.

1. Rosenzweig's New Thinking

Rosenzweig's prayerful thinking can only be understood within the context of his New Thinking. This thinking was particularly articulated in 'The Star of Redemption', originally written on the field service postcards from the First World War and published in 1921, which can be interpreted as a total settlement with as well as a radical counter-draft to the entire substance-metaphysical-idealistic tradition from "Jonia to Jena" (Rosenzweig 1990, 13).

Confirmed once again by his own war experiences, Rosenzweig was completely absorbed by Hegel's teleological historical universalism, the untruth, even the ideological delusional character of his conception of rationality and metaphysics, which, due to its basic principle of the identity of knowledge and being, claimed to recognize the whole reality without preconditions. In order to achieve this, however, this metaphysics had to pass over the factuality of death, which could no longer be reconcilably classified as a generality, a fragile contingency, but also a subjective freedom of finite individuals, as well as the infinite transcendence of God and his unthinkable historical revelation. According to the brilliant opening passage of the 'Star of Redemption', this philosophy is nothing other than a desperate attempt, concealing this desperation, to "cast off the fear of the earthly, to take away the poisonous sting of death, the breath of plague from Hades" (Rosenzweig 1990, 3).

With death, Rosenzweig shatters the illusion of the intentional self-manipulation of subjective reason, which reflexively incorporates any kind of positivity. But unlike Kant's transcendental dialectic, totality is not disproved on the basis of a formal argument – namely its fundamental inexperience and consequently its inner contradiction – but on the basis of a concrete content. That is to say: in death, a pre-reflexive reality, a reality that precedes the subject, an otherness, an "alterity" (Lévinas), appears, of which the subject is no longer master, but to which the subject is initially passive. Therefore, not everything that exists can be thought; not everything functions according to the standards of reason. Consequently, the whole – in Hegel's case: history – evenutally does not end well. That is how Lévinas' résumé understands that Rosenzweig makes us familiar with "thinking the non-synthesizable, the difference" (Levinas 1985, 15).

But what remains for Rosenzweig after the destruction of totality, which was intimated in the experience of autonomous freedom and became an event in the death of the individual that can no longer be generalized? Suddenly "man discovers that he, who has long since philosophically digested, is still here (...). I, quite a common private subject, I first and last name, I dust and ashes. I'm still here. And philosophize, that is, I have the effrontery to philosophize the almighty philosophy" (Rosenzweig 1917, 127).

The emergence of finite subjectivity from the system is accompanied both by its destruction and the release of God and the world, the other two great "objects" of philosophy. Man, God, World: from now on, the three cannot be traced back to each other, cannot be added, cannot be subsumed, as that presupposes a higher unity behind it; they are separate, transcendent realities of their own, because they can only relate to

each other in this way; they are not even *a priori* conceivable, but only – experiencable. Exactly at this point, where the old thinking, for Rosenzweig, only gets into contradictions when searching for ultimate principles and beings, Rosenzweig lets his "experiential philosophy" begin (Rosenzweig 1984, 144). Its trust in experience is only conceivable if its reality has been experienced historically and in the world. For "experience knows nothing about objects; it remembers, it experiences, it hopes and fears" (Rosenzweig 1984, 147).

If one considers the basic structure of this approach, there are essentially two steps with which Rosenzweig considers creatureliness, individuality, responsibility, history, time, and last but not least, the messianic expectation of the coming God in a fundamentally transformed rationality that is at least thinkable (but not deducible).

Firstly, with recourse to Kant's postulate of regulative ideas, he breaks up the "All of Thinking and Being" (Rosenzweig 1990, 21), the last, thinking-presupposed unity of everything, into three substances that cannot be traced back to each other, absolutely isolated from each other, God, world, man, into the "elements of the logical pre-world". He is interested in reflecting on those elements that are non-representational, with pre-reflexively given in the experience of historical reality, but which can only be conceived in the abstraction from this experience. Rosenzweig thus arrives at a hypothetical thinking on the historical experience (including the divine revelation that occurred in history) in the interest of its reflexive identifiability (cf. Rosenzweig 1990, 3-90).

Secondly, this deconstruction of the idealistic system enables him to reconstruct reality as an eventful, temporal relationship between these substances, in short: to think of it as history. He sees in reality the freely endowed, dialogical event of relationship (the "path") dynamized in time by the pressing expectation of the Kingdom of God, bursting in today between God, world, man, which he calls creation, revelation, redemption, and which can no longer be classified into a more comprehensive horizon of justification or understanding (cf. Rosenzweig 1990, 103). The path, the living reality between the elements, cannot be anticipated in thought.

Thus, Rosenzweig no longer focuses on a self-founding, self-thinking reason. Rather, he characterizes it as conscious thinking from within the Jewish faith, as he groups his design around the unexpectedly giving experience of a radical, in this way history establishing otherness, which in its unconditional, liberating claim and its unconditional orientation he dubs revelation. The point of his New Thinking is its constitutive, dialogical dependence on this event of alterity, that is, "in the need of the other, and, what is the same, in taking time seriously" (Rosenzweig 1984,

151-153). He therefore understands his theory as responding thinking, as thinking about an experience that cannot be grasped conceptually, but of which a thinker who is himself unconditionally tackled and responsibly involved in its events can only tell.

This approach, fed by revelation, wants to be a dialogical linguistic consideration that takes place in language and has its starting point in the "subjective point of view" of historical existence (Rosenzweig 1990, 57). There is an eschatological tension in this linguistic thinking. As the "morning gift of the Creator to humanity", language exists from the beginning. Man "became man when he spoke; and yet, to this day, there is still no language of mankind, but it will only be at the end". Only there will the tension between the moments of separation and encounter, distance and closeness, which are tangible in language, be released (Rosenzweig 1990, 123).

This has ontological consequences. Reality is thought of as an eventful reality, as an eventthat takes place 'between' God, world, man, in which the subject is already involved by experience before its possible mental construction. Experience is thus not located in a transcendental-a priori horizon, but means "the experience of the horizon event itself", insofar as human existence finds itself already called to responsibility in this divine-worldly-historical event (Casper/Rosenzweig 1983, 292).

At the same time, this encounter conveys an unconditional feeling that is articulated for Rosenzweig in the biblical commandment of love as unconditional encouragement and demand. Only a lover can command love, because a commandment is "nothing but the voice of love itself" (Rosenzweig 1990, 197). Thus, in the 'in-between' of God, man, and the world, an unassailable unconditionality of love resounds. In this alone the practical-ethical Logos of New Thinking becomes clear as philosophy "for" and "to" someone, which always arises from "biographical denomination" (Rosenzweig 1979, 410). "To need time means: not being able to anticipate anything, having to wait for everything, being dependent on others with one's own. All this is completely unthinkable to the thinking thinker, whereas it is only possible for the linguistic thinker" (Rosenzweig 1984, 151). Rosenzweig's concept of a Revelation founded in the ethical-practical horizon of the messianic expectation and in the "listening reason" (Rosenzweig 1990, 424) views it "from the situation of the opposite, i.e. responding" (Casper 1979, 77). For this listening reason, which abstains from any anticipation, obedience precedes understanding. Rosenzweig's "messianic epistemology" makes clear, however, in its precedence of practical, dialogical reason over theoretical reason, that

truth can ultimately only be found where it is "proved" in a practice of love (Rosenzweig 1984, 158-159).

2. Prayer as an anticipation of eternity

It is against this background that the distinction between an unbelieving and a believing prayer in terms of prayer theory can now be understood. There is no doubt that Rosenzweig, in his fascination with Goethe as a pagan and a Christian at the same time completed in his eyes, has long thought through the possibility of profane, pagan salvation. He attests to him that his prayer, in contrast to the swarmers and the "tyrants of the kingdom of heaven" (p. 305), takes place at the right time and in history, and does not remain only related to a private inwardness, as it happens with the mystics. Thus, it becomes a preform of the faithful prayer, because it guarantees that the Kingdom of God comes "in" history (p. 319). Also Goethe's prayer breathes a piety that vanishes, but it remains, as Rosenzweig says, a "creaturely faithful prayer" (p. 315). His prayer goes to the "own fate" (p. 306). As much as it vouches for the historical nature of salvation, it closes itself off from the remaining in the historical time before the dawn of God's eternity that heals everything. The prayer of the believer, on the other hand, wants to draw the farthest away into the Messianic present, it wants to accelerate time, to anticipate eternity in the very next moment, in order to make "eternity the neighbour, the present" (p. 322). For Rosenzweig, prayer is a gift from God (GS III 95), a culmination of Revelation which also encompasses the human response of love. Prayer is the opening of man to his gift-giving counterpart. As prayer illuminated by God in a courteous way, it knows about the whole of creation, revelation and redemption, simultaneously orienting love of neighbour in it. It knows about the specific configuration, about a specific time, in which, through God's work with a neighbour, a concrete object of love is present and for which, just as for the order of the Kingdom of God and the world, everything depends on whether love really finds it in its unique time. If this succeeds, eternity in time is anticipated here. This realizing anticipation of redemption in time takes place in the practical-historically situated prayer of the believer (p. 325) as well as in the liturgical prayer time of the congregation, in which the "today already" (p. 349) of eternity is present. For Rosenzweig's theory of prayer, the kingdom is "always in the future – but in the future it is always. It is always already there as well as in the future. For once and for all, it is not yet there. It comes eternally. Eternity is not a very long time, but a tomorrow that could just as well be today. Eternity is a future

that, without ceasing to be future, is still present. Eternity is a today that is aware of being more than a today. And so, when the Kingdom comes eternally, it means that although its growth is necessary, the time of this growth is not determined, or more precisely, that growth has no relation to time" (GS II 250).

In a notion of the theory of time, prayer gains its dynamic and strength through its framing by the materialistic messianism of Walter Benjamin. In his historical-philosophical theses, time and progress are seen in a very critical, dialectical way which emphasizes the importance of the instant as a kairos. Quite similar to what Benjamin Rosenzweig opened. For with this, Rosenzweig opened the historical-anticipatory dimension of prayer to a theory of messianic truth that wants to be proven in charity and is ultimately inspired by Psalm 95:7, according to which the kingdom comes "today if you hear his voice" (Casper 2004, 186).

For Rosenzweig, therefore, prayer is always co-creatively structured. By constellating creation, revelation and the hope of salvation, by instructing man in history and at the same time keeping open the coming of the Kingdom, in this sense the prayer according to Rosenzweig "founds the human world order" (p. 298). In the anticipatory tension of prayer, as well as in the tension of prayer that is stretched out towards redemption, we form "the unfinished world into a world that is in each case provisionally finished" (Casper 2004, 187).

But exactly in it, precisely this tension between present and unfinished future prayer marks at the same time the lasting difference between Jews and Christians. In the midst of the Christian proclaimed presence of salvation, Judaism imposes on the Christian hope of salvation the perspective of eschatological expectation. In a letter dated November 1916, Rosenzweig confronts the Christian friend Eugen Rosenstock in ecclesiological as well as sacrament-theological regard with the synagogue as the "eternally admonishing monument of your not yet" (GS 1 285) or elsewhere as "louse in your fur" (GS I 280). For, according to Rosenzweig, "you who live in an ecclesia triumphans need a mute servant who cries out to you every time you think you have enjoyed God in bread and wine: Lord, remember the last things" (GS 1 285).

3. On the interdependence of praying and learning. Religious Education perspectives

Even if it seems strange for the heterogeneity of religion and secularity in late modernity, primarily related to an internal religious discourse, even if much of it seems ambitious and hardly connectable to the hetero-

geneous life, worlds of our late modern present in their manifold trans-
formation processes, from the religious education point of view, the ex-
amination of Rosenzweig's prayerful thinking certainly contains further
impulses. It is precisely the location of the theory of prayer in the his-
torically highly complex and differentiated processes of experience of
the subjects that offers a starting point for this. Jan Woppowa, who has
also dealt with Franz Rosenzweig in his research on the Jewish Teach-
ing House in Frankfurt and on the baselines of Jewish adult education
with Ernst Akiba Simon, places Rosenzweig's prayer theory in princi-
ple in the constitutive connection between faith and life. The concept of
learning to believe is "essentially oriented towards the comprehensive
moment of learning to live" as well as "conversely this moment receives
its practice-relevant impulses from that moment". But what does this
mean in concrete terms? In conclusion, we can limit ourselves here only
to a few aspects:

1. Rosenzweig's prayer theory provides categories that are certainly
   capable of connection, with which, in the current religious educa-
   tion debates about non-denominational groups, their contribution
   to religious education learning can be positively appreciated and
   recognized.
2. The time-theoretical foundation of the theory of prayer in its ten-
   sion of anticipation and autonomy enables a conceptual approach
   to that peculiar tension which also characterizes learning and ed-
   ucational processes. "What Rosenzweig said about prayer, that it
   always holds some anticipation of the future, applies to education
   as well," formulates Ernst Simon. That which is worked out in the
   education theory as a pedagogical paradox could receive its tem-
   poral theoretical clarification from Rosenzweig.
3. In his prayer, the theoretically founded theory of the liturgy, as it
   occupies a large space in the third part of Star, gestures and perfor-
   mative practices play an important role. For its part, performative
   religious education theory sharpens the indispensable importance
   of physicality, of ritual, of play for religious learning as well as for
   religious transmission processes. This could be further developed
   from Rosenzweig.

One does not necessarily have to play miniature golf, as in the cathe-
dral of Rochester, but nevertheless, a potential for religious education in
post-traditional times is evident here, which can also be discovered with
the help of Rosenzweig's prayer theory.

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Biography

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Extracts from the Reviews

The topic "Religion, Church and Theology in Times of Crisis" is indeed - as formulated by the editors in the foreword - rather broad. The choice of the topic reflects both the diversity of theological disciplines and the fields of research of the participating doctoral students from Zagreb and Bochum. However, the common denominator of all contributions seems to be the current world, which is perceived as threatened by various events and phenomena. After the coronavirus crisis, these primarily refer to the war in Ukraine and currently in the Middle East, but also the climate and economic crises. I find it positive that the individual contributions offer detailed analyses of these crises and their impact on society, on young people, and on religious education. In this time of crisis, many of the individual crises are interlinked, reinforcing each other. The Christian religion is inextricably linked to these crises. (...)

A fundamental aspect of these proceedings of the international postgraduate research seminars is answering these questions in order to find points of contact, to literally build "bridges" that connect religion, the church, and theology itself with today's youth and the contemporary world. At the same time, the contributions of individual authors bring about very original ideas as to what these bridges could look like and how religious education in particular can contribute to a critical and emancipatory reflection on its own contribution to the crises as well as to a constructive identification of possible solutions and ways of overcoming them.

Asst. Prof. Tibor REIMER, Ph.D.

The authors bring attention to various significant aspects in their papers, including the translation of the Gospel into a language that resonates with the contemporary culture (de Byl), revitalizing theology's relevance through a return to *kerygma* (Grčević), adopting new methodologies for religious education in the digital age (Termin), exploring the emerging trend of non-denominational Christianity among young individuals (Hartmann), adapting religious education to cater to religiously and ideologically diverse and pluralistic societies (Kunna), providing accurate interpretations of the Scripture for young people (Juratović), addressing communication challenges between the Church and civil authorities during difficult times (Slijepčević), acknowledging pastors who courageously confront contemporary challenges (Mostepaniuk), reaching out to young individuals unfamiliar with biblical symbolism through popular media platforms (Hartmann) and the importance of creative possibilities for approaching young people in religious education using means that are rooted in their concrete life reality (Grümme).

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