Religion and Pluralism in Education

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Comparative Approaches in the Western Balkans

Edited by Zorica Kuburić and Christian Moe

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Preface and acknowledgments

The present collection of papers by the Kotor Network aims to provide new comparative knowledge about the the role and representation of religion in the school systems of several Western Balkan countries, to bring out common concerns and shed light on the underlying ideas.

The Kotor Network on Religion in Plural Societies is an international academic exchange in the field of Balkans-based religious studies (http://kotor-network.info). It was formed in 2004 on an initiative from the Religion and Nationalism in the Western Balkans Project at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo. The international research project on religious education was launched at the network's second conference in Kotor (Montenegro) on April 22–24, 2005.

The papers are written by researchers from the region, who live in the countries studied. They cover the republics of the former Yugoslavia—from northwest to southeast: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonia. (A planned paper on Albania unfortunately did not arrive in time for inclusion into the present volume.) As originally planned, one researcher per country would contribute a paper. In the final event, however, we are fortunate to have had teams of authors collaborating within each country.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, via the above-mentioned University of Oslo project. This allowed us to hold the conference, provide research grants for contributors, and co-ordinate the effort. The opinions expressed are of course those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions mentioned.

Abbreviations

AP	Autonomous Province
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEIR	Center for Empirical Researches of Religion
CIREL	Center for Religious Studies
DPA	Democratic Party of Albanians
DUI	Democratic Union for Integration
EU	European Union
EVS	European Value Survey
HBK	Croat Conference of Bishops
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Community
IMIC	International Multireligious and Intercultural Centre
IRC	Islamic Religious Community
ISSR	International Society for the Sociology of Religion
ISORECEA	International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association
JLA	Yugoslav People's Army
JUNIR	Yugoslav Association for the Scientific Study of Religion
LDS	Liberal Democracy of Slovenia
MOC	Macedonian Orthodox Church
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OFEA	Organisation and Financing of Education Act
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RS	Variously: Republika Srpska/Republic of Srpska; Republic of Serbia; Republic of Slovenia
SDSM	Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia
SOC, SPC	Serbian Orthodox Church
SPOS	Slovenian Public Opinion Survey
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
VMRO-DPMNE	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

A note on terminology and style

It has not been feasible to impose a common terminology on the authors. Some terms relating to education, church-state relations and so forth are common to the former Yugoslavia, others vary in meaning between countries. For instance, the notion of an "optional-compulsory" subject in Slovenia means a subject that schools are obliged to offer but pupils are free to choose or not, whereas in the other countries it means a subject that becomes compulsory for a set duration once pupils have chosen it. Nor have we sought to impose the use of either British English or American English, except to seek consistency within individual chapters. Accordingly, some authors will speak of "grammar school pupils," others of "junior high school students," etc.

Terms such as Religious Education, History, or Culture of Religion have been capitalised where they refer to a specific school subject or scientific discipline, and not otherwise.

The full names of countries have been abbreviated. We write Bosnia for Bosnia and Herzegovina; Macedonia for (Former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia; etc. These usages are sometimes politically sensitive. However, we make these abbreviations for no political reason, but only based on editorial considerations of style and space.

Reflecting the geographical focus of the Kotor Network, we have retained the original "Western Balkans" in the title for institutional reasons, even though "former Yugoslavia" would have been a more accurate description of a book that has come to include Slovenia, but not Albania. Again, there is no political agenda behind this choice.

A glossary may be found at the back.

1. Introduction

Zorica Kuburić and Christian Moe

How should public schools teach religion? This is one important and contested problem of religious pluralism in the public sphere. School is the chief arena of socialisation besides the family (Kuburić, 1996; 2005). It is crucial to a community's cultural reproduction. Hence both states and religious communities pay great attention to the school's communication of identities, values and norms.

After socialism, religious school subjects have been introduced in many Balkan countries, on a variety of models. Religious education was first introduced in Croatia (1991), followed by Bosnia (1994) and more recently Serbia (2001). In these countries, the alignment of political forces has favoured the entry of organised religion into public schools in the form of confessional religious instruction. In Slovenia, confessional religious education remains strictly barred from the public secular space of the school building; instead, there is a non-confessional elective subject covering different religions as well as ethics (1997). After an abortive experiment with confessional instruction (2001–2003), Macedonia is planning to reintroduce a religious education subject, the form of which is still debated. Montenegro, following its own separate course within a loose state union with Serbia, has not introduced religious education, nor has Kosovo, which is currently under UN administration.

These subjects have been the subject of heated debate and raise many questions: Is there a place in public schools for religious instruction based on normative theology, or only for a neutrally informative subject on religions based on secular scholarship? Should children of different religions be taught jointly or separately, and should the subject be compulsory? What should be the curriculum, who should write the textbooks, who should teach and how should

they be trained? If the subject should communicate moral values, how are these values defined, and to what tradition are they ascribed?

The region has recently been torn by armed ethnic conflicts, with a more or less pronounced religious component. Aside from these well-known tensions between the major Catholic, Orthodox, and Islamic confessions, there are also considerable problems of intolerance towards small and new religious minorities, referred to as "sects" (Kuburić, 1997; 2002). An important concern is to eliminate stereotypes, biases, and propaganda against other religions from textbooks. This applies not only to religious education as such, but to all school subjects. It is however a particularly sensitive issue how the state organises the teaching of religion, and as such, the subject could easily become a focus of social conflict.

In parts of the former Yugoslavia, a major concern has been whether a dominant church or religious community is seeking too much privilege and power to shape children's minds through the school system. This should be seen in the context of important political divides in the region, in some countries understood primarily as clerical versus anti-clerical, in others also as "civic" versus "national(ist)." The contest is over the power to draw up and revise curricula and textbooks: What role are religious minorities allowed to play, and what should be the role of scholars committed to the scientific study of religion? The contest is also over where religious education is held, and not least, over the required qualifications of teachers.

As students of religion in its social aspects, we are naturally interested in all these questions, and as concerned citizens, we hold various views. We may perhaps claim the scientific authority to answer some of them, in which case we ourselves become part of our field of study. In this project, namely, we have also considered questions of agency, interest, and rhetoric: Who are the actors driving the public debate on these issues, what are their arguments and what are their agendas? What, in the end, are the *aims* of teaching religion in schools? Is the motivation rational, i. e., can research tell us whether religious education achieves the posited aims?

Furthermore, what can the formulation of those aims tell us about the role and perception of religion in society today—or, at least, about how certain groups wish us to understand religion? For instance, is religion defined as part of a national cultural heritage or as something that transcends national borders? Are different religions claimed to share the same ethical values? What is the underlying philosophy behind the introduction of religious subjects: the liberal position on religion as a matter of private personal conviction and choice, the multiculturalist view that the state should help foster particular cultural identities, or the communitarian notion that a functioning society requires an extensive value consensus? When religious communities appeal to public reason, using non-religious arguments to argue for confessional education in schools, what are the implications? Do these developments point to processes of secularisation (as variously defined), *de*secularisation, or of a search for a functional replacement for religion as "social glue"? The sensitive question of whether and how public schools should teach religion may serve as an indicator of these broader issues.

Approaches to religious education

Different countries have different models for religion in schools. These models vary along several dimensions, such as: aim, content, arena, target group, and organisation (Schreiner, 2002; Plesner, 2004).

One key divide is that between confessional and non-confessional approaches. Confessional religious education aims to form the religious identity of believers; teaches content specific to one religious tradition, often with a significant component of normative theology; is held sometimes inside public schools, sometimes outside them; is usually voluntary; usually targets only those children who belong to the religious community in question; and tends to be organised by the religious community. Non-confessional religious education usually aims primarily to transmit knowledge, but also values; includes material about several religions, as well as non-religious ethics; is usually compulsory for all children, without regard to confession; and is organised by state authorities. In-between there is a collabor-

ative model in which religious communities and school authorities share responsibility for the subject.

A concurrent divide is that between separation and integration: the view that children of different convictions should be taught separately (as is usually the case in confessional religious education) or together, respectively. Each approach has its drawbacks and advantages. The integration approach may appear best suited to give children understanding and tolerance for other religions. However, it can also be perceived to subvert parental beliefs or involve subtle proselytising, especially if the subject includes or mimics elements of worship (e. g. learning prayers by heart). In any case, it is a great pedagogical challenge to find teaching methods that respect a range of religious sensibilities. For instance, asking children to draw or dramatise scenes from religious narratives is unacceptable to some traditions. There is a tension between the desiderata of teaching all religions according to the same pedagogical methods, and teaching them according to their specific nature.

Yet another classificatory scheme that to some extent subsumes the above would divide school systems by their approach to religious education into the non-denominational, which offer no form of structured religious education; the mono-denominational, which teach one particular religion from within the ethos of that religion; the multi-denominational, which teach several religions separately to the students who adhere to those religions; and the inter-denominational, which teach several religions to all students (Solberg 2005).

Confessional subjects tend to "teach religion" or "teach *for* religion." They impart religious belief, identity, and ritual participation skills from the believing insider's viewpoint. Non-confessional ones tend to "teach *about* religion," giving positive facts from the neutral outsider's viewpoint. Both may to varying degrees involve "teaching *through* religion," exploring existential or moral questions by reference to how various religious traditions deal with them.

One thing on which the contributors to this book would all agree is the importance of knowing something about other religions. Such knowledge can be imparted in a confessional subject as well as in a non-confessional one. However, it is obviously problematic to ex-

plain other religious traditions in a confessional subject that is committed to the truth claims of one religion. Claims to a monopoly on ultimate truth, and specific views and attitudes regarding religious others, are part and parcel of each of the religious traditions in question, and cannot be passed over in silence if religion is to be taught. Whether or not such claims are an obstacle to a "tolerant and humane society," as some of our contributors suggest, is debatable; many deeply religious people seem to get on well enough in spite of them. The portrayal of other religions in a confessional subject may be biased so to speak by definition, but it can be broad-minded and tolerant, and can impress the norm of tolerance on students as a religious value. It does, however, seem incongruent with the general thrust of modern education, which stresses critical reflection and exposure to different points of view according to a common curriculum.

Non-confessional subjects raise their own problems. The notion of teaching religion in a "neutral" way raises the philosophical problem of whether such a project is at all possible, as well as the ethical problem of whether it is desirable, and how an empathetic treatment should be balanced with a critical one that reflects modern liberal values. There are very concrete dilemmas to be dealt with, such as how much time and textbook space should be spent on each religion, based on what criterion or formula: the religion's numerical share of the population, its historical importance to a country, its intrinsic interest, or a mix of factors?

The international human rights system sets out binding norms, as well as guidelines, with regard to religious education and religion in schools. The child has the right to non-discrimination and freedom of religion or belief, including the right not to believe. Parents have the right to an education for their child in accordance with their convictions. States are obliged to respect these rights, but also to promote, through their education systems, tolerance and understanding for other cultures and religions as well as respect for human rights. These broad international principles are clearly in tension with each other, and they do not add up to a prescription for a specific model for religious education. This is not to say, however, that 'anything goes': Religions should either be taught neutrally, or

there should be exemptions or alternatives. The more a state deviates from these principles, the more it risks censure by human rights bodies (Moe 2005).[1]

Methodology

We allowed from the outset that project designs might vary between countries and participants, according to the particular research interests and skills of individual researchers, the differing national contexts, and the availability of relevant sources. However, participants[2] were asked to pay attention to a common core of research questions, to similar categories of sources, and to methodological guidelines that would allow the drawing of some comparative conclusions.

In the course of discussions among the contributors, the wide range of questions asked above was narrowed down to the following set of research questions:

- What models of religious education have been introduced or proposed? (What alternative subjects are there?)
- Who are the actors promoting or opposing the introduction of religious education? What are the power relations?
- What arguments and rhetoric are used to promote/oppose religious education?
- What (draft) legislation exists concerning religious education? What is the process behind it and who is included/consulted in the process?
- How are the curriculum and textbooks formed and by whom?
- How can the content and orientation of the curriculum and textbooks be summarised? (In particular, how are other religions presented in confessional subjects?)
- What are the aims of religious education according to the public arguments, the legislation and the curriculum?

1. A prime example of the "integrated" approach, the Norwegian subject, was censured by the UN Human Rights Committee as a violation of parental religious rights (*Leirvåg et al v. Norway*, 2003).

2. A list of contributors is at the end of this volume.

- How, by whom and according to what criteria are teachers trained?
- What relevant research has been done in each country, and how has it fed into the legislation, curricula and textbooks?

To differing degrees, the contributors have analysed political documents, legal and sub-legal acts, curricula/syllabi, and textbooks, media reports, and interviews with key actors. In different countries it has been natural to use different sources, starting with the relevant legislation. In Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia, there have been textbooks to analyse, though contributors were asked to make only a cursory study focusing on the representation of religious others. The Slovene curriculum has been through a long and carefully documented official process. Slovenia also constitutes a notable exception to trends elsewhere in the region, and our Slovene contributors outline a theory of the relevant factors that determine what path a country has taken. In Macedonia, where a subject is still at the planning stage and is not provided for by current legislation, our contributors have made interviews seeking out the views of key actors involved in the process. In Bosnia, where the design and implementation of the subject may differ widely between different administrative units, our contributors have sought out the experience of schools across the country. Both in Croatia and Serbia, there has been an interesting debate in the media.

We now turn to these cases, going west to east from Slovenia to Macedonia. The final chapter will summarise similarities and differences between the countries studied and draw some conclusions.

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2. Religious education in Slovenia

Marjan Smrke and Tatjana Rakar

The presence of religion and religious matters in public schools of transition countries is a part of the broader issue of the relations between the state and the churches or religious communities. If we want to sociologically describe and understand the position of religion in education in a specific transition country, it is indispensable to describe the circumstances that have lead to changing relations between the state and the churches in the post-socialist period. We will do so in the first part of our paper, before going on to describe the position of religion in Slovene schools in the second part.

Relevant factors in state-church relations

With regard to church-state relations, it would seem that attention should be paid especially to the following factors: (1) the religious structure of a (newborn) state; (2) the character of the dominant religious organization or church (if any); (3) the social (public) reflection about the nature and quality of the former secular(ist) regime; (4) the manner and the circumstances of the beginning of transition, meaning the dismantling of the former socialist or communist one-party system and its transition to democracy; (5) the relative significance, activity and "merit" of the different actors of transition, secular or religious actors; and (6) the initiatives of, and power relations between, the political forces that advocate a certain social position for the churches. Taking into consideration these interrelated determinants or factors should suffice for the analysis of the transition countries, even when we want to understand the numerous and vast differences regarding the presence of religion in

public schools that were introduced in the states of former Yugoslavia.

Religious structure

The religious structure of a society is one of the factors that cannot be avoided in the analysis of the relations between the state and the churches, or politics and religion. From the already classical theory of Martin (1978) of the so-called religio-cultural patterns of Western civilization, to the more recent publication of Jelen and Wilcox (2002), dozens of authors and books have emphasized the importance of the religious structure. A strongly pluralized (diversified) religious structure engenders significantly different relations between religious communities and the state than a structure dominated by a single church/religion or confession.

Usually this difference is illustrated on the one side by the case of the USA and on the other side by those European countries in which mono-confessionality has persisted into recent times.[1] In the first case, the inevitable consequence of plurality for general relations between the state and the churches (denominations) is their separation, and a non-confessional approach to the presence or absence of religion in public schools. In the second case we are often still dealing with the elements of a confessional state, which, in the field of public education, is evident in the more or less obviously privileged position of symbols and contents of the dominant confession. What would to many religious Europeans still seem an obvious sign of tradition and justice—for example crucifixes in public schools[2] in those states that are not yet deconfessionalised[3]—is from the sociological viewpoint a (symbolic) remnant of confessional inequality, based on a (more or less) forcibly established religious-ideological majority in the past.

1. By mono-confessionality we are referring to the distinctive dominance of a single church or confession, not the absolute absence of alternatives.

2. Among them Pope Benedict XVI, who in one of his first public appearances (August 16, 2005) advocated the "presence of God" in public, that is, he opposed the removal of crucifixes in public schools and other public buildings in Italy (http://www.cwnews.com/news/viewstory.cfm?recnum=39028).

3. Italy, Bavaria with its *Kruzifixurteil* (1995), Austria and some other countries.

Slovenia, in its basic religious structure, is traditionally predominantly Catholic as a consequence of a complete "confessionalisation"[4] in the period of the Counter-Reformation. Until the Second World War and the beginning of the socialist/communist regime, the prevalence of Catholicism in society was complemented by the privileged position of the Roman Catholic Church in state-church relations: from the Counter-Reformation until 1918 in the framework of the officially Catholic Hapsburg or Austro-Hungarian Empire, and afterwards in the framework of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Regarding religion and religious contents in public schools, this was evident in the form of obligatory confessional religious education classes and in the general Catholic nature of the school curricula (see Divjak, 1995; Kodelja, 1995)—with the obligatory nature of the subject partly abandoned in the period of the (religiously diverse) Kingdom of Yugoslavia.[5]

After the war, the secular or secularist regime of the Communist Party gradually restricted[6] and finally abolished confessional religious education in public schooling; from then[7] until today, confessional religious education has been held in parish churches. Only brief mention was made of religion in the framework of subjects such as History, as well as (Marxist) critical discussion in the (obligatory) subjects "Social and Moral Education" or "Self-Management with the Basis of Marxism." The communist regime

4. Wolfgang Reinhard defines confessionalisation (*Konfesionalisirung*) as a process of religious unification, that included a systematic dissemination of doctrine, propaganda (making counter-propaganda impossible), internalization of the new order through education, and disciplining the believers regarding their ritual participation (Reinhard, 1989).

5. It is interesting how the non-compulsory nature of confessional religious education in the pre-war school was theologically justified: Nonreligious pupils could not attend religious classes since a blasphemous "stealing of the sacraments" could occur.

6. Confessional religious education was held in state socialist schools until 1952.

7. In this way, organised confessional religious education was attended by approximately three fourths of the Slovene population in the socialist period.

favoured *civil religion*, represented in the ideology of socialism and the Yugoslav identity of coexisting "fraternal" nations.[8]

If Yugoslavia was a religiously plural state, independent Slovenia —as well as the majority of other newly formed states (Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia)—is at first glance characterised by the dominance of one church/confession. However, we need to take into account the differences between the superficial religious structure and the actual religious structure. We cannot know the actual state of religiosity from statistics about religious affiliation, if we do not take into account indicators of religious orthodoxy, religious participation etc. Slovene sociologists involved in religious studies without exception conclude that there is a considerable discrepancy between formal belonging to the Catholic Church and a more profound adherence to the Catholic faith (Roter, 1992; Kerševan, 1989; Dragoš, 2003; Toš, 1999; Flere, 1999; Potočnik, 1999; Smrke and Uhan, 1999). On the one hand, their findings show that approximately 80% of Slovenes are baptised as Catholics and 66.2% (EVS, 1999/2000), 71.6% (1991 census) or 57.8% (2002 census) of the population define themselves as Catholic. On the other hand, public opinion surveys show a much lower level of (church) religiosity. In European comparisons, this is of course nothing unusual. Thus Toš estimates that only 18% of Slovenes are church religious, 21.2% are autonomously religious and 60.1% are non-religious (Toš, 1999: 72). According to the international survey "Religion and Attitudes Toward the Church" (SPOS 1997/2, Toš et al.) only 17.5% of Slovenes define themselves as church religious or "religious according to the teachings of the church" (an additional 50.8% define themselves as religious in their own way). In this respect—and if we also consider the various religious "change" in the form of new religious movements that appeared in the last quarter of the century[9]—we may conclude that the (non)religious structure of Slovenia is relatively heterogeneous: It is strongly characterised by both secularism and Catholicism—and within

8. On the civil-religious nature of Yugoslavian socialism see Flere (2005); Smrke (1990).

9. There are 40 religious communities registered at the government Office for Religious Communities.

Catholicism by the widespread phenomenon of *belonging without believing*—as well as by other modern, more or less autonomous expressions of religious searching (see Črnič, 2003). In the post-independence period this kind of plurality intensified. In the light of the above, the interests of the Roman Catholic Church have much less social support than it would seem from a superficial first glance at the religious structure.

Dominant confession

The second factor that needs to be taken into account is the nature of the dominant church or confession (if any). In societies where one church or confession is more or less in the majority, it is not irrelevant for the social consequences which church or confession we are dealing with. Thus Martin (1978) in his comparison of two religious-cultural patterns—the Scandinavian-Lutheran and the Latin or Catholic pattern, both with a majority church—particularly emphasizes the differences in the character of the Lutheran and the Catholic Church. The integrist character of the hierarchical Roman Catholic Church, in contrast to the (more) self-limiting character of the Lutheran Church, has traditionally led to social tensions and confrontations (vicious circles) that were absent in the Protestant countries. These tensions were reflected above all in the conflicts between the pro-church ("clerical") and anticlerical social forces. In our opinion, the success of the secularist socialist regime in the former Yugoslavia can be seen also in connection with this tradition.[10] Without the pre-war clericalism the post-war regime would certainly not have been so markedly anticlerical.

The Slovenian past was characterised by the tensions inherent to the Catholic religious-cultural pattern. Although Catholic ideologists from the past to present times emphasize the integrative role of the Roman Catholic Church in the national history, a more realistic conclusion could be that the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church polarised society. With the secularisation of the post-war period and with the Second Vatican Council, in our opinion the basic Catholic

10. Martin draws attention to two possible solutions of the tensions in the Latin religious-cultural pattern—leftist secularist authoritarianism and rightist pro-church authoritarianism.

pattern evolved into the *post-Latin*, defined by the following changes: (1) changes in the structure of society in the basic Latin or Catholic religious-cultural pattern, (2) changes in the character of the Roman Catholic Church, and (3) changes in the opinions of the carriers of the anticlerical secularist ideology, that no longer generate the characteristic tensions of the classical Catholic religious-cultural pattern, as described by Martin.[11]

However, the transformation of the political regime in independent Slovenia partly reactivated some of the traditional characteristics of the Roman Catholic Church. One might even speak of the rise of the pre-conciliar spirit in the Roman Catholic Church in the post-socialist countries (Smrke, 1995, 2001: 160-161; similarly Vrcan, 2001: 250). Especially some of the church ideologues, among them especially archbishop Franc Rode,[12] criticised society in a manner reminiscent of the pre-war authoritative, integrist, triumphal Catholicism. Despite the commitment of the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church to the spirit of the Council, the impression was that the main goal of the church is the restoration of its former, pre-war, social position. Regarding the issue of the presence of religion in public schools, this was evident in the Church's demands for introducing Catholic confessional religious education "from kindergartens to the university."[13] At the beginning of the 1990s, this demand was made by Alojz Uran, who in 2004 succeeded Rode as archbishop. When such demands fell on the soil of the post-Latin pattern, they could not bear fruits. Yet, they brought back the memories of the clerical-anticlerical social tensions and partly reactivated them.

Public reflection on the former regime

As for public reflection on the nature of the former regime, one must keep in mind those characteristics of the Yugoslavian socialist regime that positioned it among the positive exceptions of the

11. Martin in his later works also discusses the "decline of antagonisms" in the Latin religious-cultural pattern (for example Martin, 1990).

12. Archbishop from 1997 till 2004.

13. More on the official proposal of the Roman Catholic Church below.

European socialist countries. In 1948, under extremely dramatic circumstances, Yugoslavia rejected socialism according to the dictatorship of the Soviet Union. Although, after this year, some of the repressive acts of the regime were extremely (and symptomatically) "Stalinist,"[14] the year 1948 for Yugoslavia marked the beginning of an independent path, which gradually led to a relatively freer type of socialist regime than in the states that were under the control of the Soviet Union. It was ideologically and communicatively more open and economically more successful. Especially economically successful (in relative terms) was Slovenia.

Likewise, as regards the position of religion or the church, Yugoslavia was more liberal than other socialist states. We might claim that the Yugoslavian version of state-church separation, in its relation to different religions or churches, was more modern than in some contemporary (semi-)confessional states or states with a (semi-)state church in Western Europe, despite its apparent restrictive nature and repression in the initial period. Many Western critics of the position of churches in former Yugoslavia might have put their own house in order first.

The memory of such a regime has to be different from the one in a country that till 1990 hosted the Soviet army. The public opinion study "Attitudes towards the past" (SPOS, 1995/3: Toš et al., 1999) showed that in the period of the intensive building of the independent state, Slovenes—despite the apparent critical attitude towards the socialist period and almost unanimous rejection of the one-party system—had a moderate attitude towards the past, without widespread attitudes of black-and-white distinctions between the dark communist past and the bright present or future times. Thus, on four out of six indicators that measured the evaluation of the quality of life, the last decade before independence (the 1980s) was evaluated as better than the 1990s (after independence). The 1980s were evaluated as worse than the nineties with regard to political rights and the freedom of religious belief. The 1930s, i.e. the period before the war in which the Roman Catholic Church played a central social role, are in general evaluated as much worse

14. Especially against the "Informbureau" sympathisers who wanted to maintain ties with the Soviet Union.

than the 1980s and 1990s. As for the general evaluation of life in Yugoslavia, 8.4% of Slovenes defined it as "very good" and 79.7% as "good." Tito—the autocratic leader of Socialist Yugoslavia—was evaluated as a predominantly positive historical figure (18% said "very positive," 65.6% "positive").[15]

These characteristics of the memory of the past need to be emphasized, since at the same time, circles of Catholic theologians and intellectuals have been demonising the past—a past when, as they variously stated, we lived in the "communist Reich" (Ocvirk, 1995), the church was "pushed into catacombs" (Stres, 1995), and the believers were "persecuted as a herd of deer and as rabbits" (the poet Alojz Ihan). As such church opinions about the past were increasingly put forward as an apology for the institutionalization of privileges for the Roman Catholic Church, the public reacted with attitudes of distrust towards the church and clergy.[16] In these circumstances, the Church's demands for entry into the public school were especially critically received, since the great majority of the public perceived them as an attack on the positive notion of "laicism" (Fr. *laïcisme*) or as an attempt to restore the conditions before the Second World War. Research has shown that the Slovene public takes a dim view of confessional education (see Table 2.1).

It appears that confessional religious education is ranked below all the other terms included in the surveys, including, inter alia, "gender equality," "the Internet," "the nation," "Europe," "globalisation," "socialism," "liberalism," "Slovene Partisans," and "abolition of the death penalty" (Kurdija, 2004: 124).

15. An interesting illustration of our thesis about the relative Catholic belonging of Slovenes is that in the above-mentioned study, the Protestant Primož Trubar (1508–1586) was considered the most important personality in Slovene history.

16. SPOS regularly measures trust in social institutions, among other institutions also the church (and clergy). The church and clergy are regularly positioned among the institutions that Slovenes trust the least (Smrke, 1999). In 1995 (SPOS 1995/1, Toš et al.) the (dis)trust was as follows: 6.5% of Slovenes completely trusted the Church and clergy, 14.6% trusted it a lot, 34.1% a little, and 42.1% not at all (2.8% answered "don't know").

Table 2.1: Attitudes of Slovenes towards confessional religious education in public schools

	Very negative	*Negative*	*Neutral*	*Positive*	*Very positive*	*Don't know N. A.*
SPOS 1994/4	17.9	26.8	24.3	18.6	4.8	7.7
SPOS 1996/1	22.2	27.2	27.5	17.3	5.5	0.3
SPOS 1998/2	22.1	32.3	23.3	18.6	3.6	0.1
SPOS 2001/2	23.3	30.8	21.7	17.9	3.3	3
SPOS 2002/1	26.6	27.3	21.4	16.2	4.4	4.1
SPOS 2003/4	22.5	29.7	25.1	17.3	3.1	2.3

Source: Toš et al., 1999, 2004. The question was: "We will list some words and terms and you should quickly according to your first impression, without too extensive thinking, evaluate whether you have towards them a very positive, positive, negative, or very negative attitude." Confessional religious education in schools was among the 16 terms listed.

Circumstances of transition

The transition of a society is one of those processes that some secularisation theorists define as a critical period, which can lead to considerable changes in the religious structure of society. In this way Bruce, who holds that secularisation is without doubt a progressive process of Western societies, mentions two phenomena that can cause a comeback of religion:[17] cultural defence and cultural transition (Bruce, 1996: 124).[18]

In this regard, the collapse of Yugoslavia led to very different circumstances in its different parts. If the Slovene transition was predominantly a cultural one, the Croatian transition (and less apparently also the Serbian one) at the same time also involved the phenomenon of cultural defence. Referring to this, Bruce explicitly mentions Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims as an example:

17. However, he adds that they can not stop the secularisation process.

18. For example, the exceptionally high religiosity in Poland is usually explained in terms of cultural defence (Martin, 1978).

> When there are two (or more) communities in conflict and they are of different religions (for example, Protestants and Catholics in Ulster, or Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims in what used to be Yugoslavia) then the religious identity of each can acquire a new significance and call forth a new loyalty as religious identity becomes a way of asserting ethnic pride and laying claim to what Max Weber called "ethnic honour": the sense of "the excellence of one's own customs and the inferiority of alien ones." Similarly when there is a people with a common religion dominated by external force (of either different religion or none at all), then religious institutions acquire an additional purpose as defenders of the culture and identity of the people. (Bruce, 1996: 96)

The processes of cultural defence were strengthened especially by the war that accompanied the collapse of Yugoslavia. A war of ten days with the Yugoslavian army (JLA) in Slovenia could not have launched a cultural defence of this kind or of such an intensity; not only because of its short duration, but also because of the relatively high level of secularisation in Slovenia and the unclear identity (in religious terms) of the enemy. In contrast, the several years of war between Croats, Serbs and Bosnians in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) and Croatia (1991–1995) strongly intensified the role of religion in all the involved nations and countries. It became strongly tied to the memory of similar conflicts in the Second World War and the rise of ethno-religious mythologies of that time. Many statistics show a steep growth in the importance of religion (Marinović-Jerolimov, 2004; Velikonja, 2003). In the state formation process in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro, the dominant churches were hence given more possibilities to realise their ambitions than the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia or the Orthodox Church in Macedonia.

Another difference is that, in the 1980s, Slovenia was the republic that most strongly encouraged the processes of "democratisation" and pluralisation in Yugoslavia. The regime change that Bebler (2002) names "smooth" transition was thus only a conclusion of processes that in Slovenia were already mature. This maturity included also the viewpoint that Slovenia should be a secular (*laična*) state.

Actors of transition

When thinking about the factors and crucial actors that led to the collapse of socialist/communist regimes, many would think first to the case of Poland: the role of the Solidarity movement, the role of the Roman Catholic Church and the pope and his visits to his homeland. In this connection, the role of John Paul II is often exaggerated, while the essentially different paths to regime change in some other countries are often forgotten.

In Yugoslavia and Slovenia, through the democratisation processes of the 1980s, the division of roles was substantially different than in Poland. In Slovenia, the social actors that rocked the foundations of the political monopoly of the Communist Party came according to Bebler (2002) "(…) from the ranks of political dissidents, critical intellectuals, writers, journalists, trade unionists, students, ecologists, and pacifists." An important role was played by some members of the Socialist Youth and by some journals (*Nova revija*) and newspapers (*Mladina*, *Teleks*). Many of the activists were former or current Party members.[19] While in Poland, the pious Lech Walesa was in the centre of the Polish resistance, in the centre of Slovene resistance against the one-party system were predominantly secular intellectuals.[20] The role of the Roman Catholic Church was—in comparison to the Polish case—distinctly marginal, or as stated by Bebler: "(…) Slovenia's Roman Catholic clergy (unlike Poland's) did not play a prominent role in the civil society movement (…)" that lead to the changes of the regime (Bebler, 2002: 135). In view of this, it is understandable that in the period after independence the Roman Catholic Church could not convincingly refer to its merits to the same extent as in some other countries. Consequently, the church could not successfully realise all its demands—especially not the ones concerning its presence in the public school.

19. For example, the then dissident and current prime minister Janez Janša, whose arrest launched the decisive mobilisation of the national conscience, was a former member of the League of Communists.

20. The main exception was Ivan Oman, the closest Slovene equivalent to the Polish type of pious rebel towards the communist regime. In 1988 he founded the first political organisation that was not part of the regime—the Slovenian Union of Peasants.

Political forces

The mode and the circumstances of the transition and the differences in the initiatives of the secular or religious actors in abolishing the one-party system are importantly connected with the formation of the political space in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Where the role of religion was intensified by the emergence of the cultural defence phenomenon, the political actors advocating a linkage between the state and the church stood a better chance. They also stood a better chance where they had a bigger role in the political changes. This was—mainly for the first reason—the most apparent in Croatia. Where these factors were absent or weak, political actors connected with religion had fewer chances. This was perhaps the most obvious in Slovenia.

In independent Slovenia, the first elections were held in December 1992.[21] The most successful were the Liberal Democrats that in different coalitions ruled until the elections in 2004.[22] Milan Kučan, a former influential member of the Communist Party, held the presidency until 2002.[23]

The LDS (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia) party, which has left a substantial stamp on the politics of the post-independence period, advocates the separation of state and church. Although it was, in the opinion of the first author, sometimes too indulgent towards the interests of the Roman Catholic Church, the party in general succeeded in defending the principle of separation. This is perhaps particularly true for the school field. Possibly, the leading role of the LDS in independent Slovenia was importantly connected precisely with its secular ideological attitude that suited the prevailing mood of the Slovenes. The defeat of the LDS in the 2004 elections, and the formation of a right-wing coalition, puts to the test the existing separation of state and churches, as well as the existing regulation of

21. The first multi-party elections were held already in April 1990—before Slovenia in the referendum on December 23, 1990 decided for independence —which led half a year later (June 25, 1991) to the announcement of independence and secession from Yugoslavia.

22. This form of government was interrupted for a few months in 2000 when a right-wing coalition came to power.

23. This is of course another illustration of a smooth Slovene transition.

the (non-)presence of religion in the public school, as described in the following.

A secular school without confessional religious education and with non-confessional teaching about religions

Legal regulation

During the first years of Slovenia's independence an important educational reform was being prepared in order to establish an educational system comparable to democratic European countries. The most important changes were introduced in the second half of the 1990s. Educational legislation was regulated anew in 1996. The conditions for educational activity, the method of administration, and the financing of education are regulated by the Organisation and financing of education act (1996). The Act on primary school (1996) and the Act on gymnasiums (1996)[24] further regulate individual areas of education. The new educational legislation implemented the proposals from the draft regulation published in the White Paper on Education (1995).

Soon after Slovenia gained independence, the question of the (non)presence of religious education in public schools came on the agenda. Actually, this was one of the central questions in the discussion of educational legislation: Should we have confessional religious education in schools or not?[25] On March 4, 1993, a joint government commission of the Roman Catholic Church and the Slovene government was established, which discussed this question on several occasions.

The proposal of the Roman Catholic Church was that confessional religious education should be introduced in public schools. It would not be a classical catechism; however, it would be under the competence of the Roman Catholic Church. One of the main arguments of the Church for introducing confessional religious education in public schools was the equation of religiosity with morality.

24. A gymnasium is the most general four-year programme of secondary education preparing students for further studies.

25. See for example Vidmar (1994).

For the Church there is no ethics without religion, hence, confessional religious education should be considered as an essential part of national education. Without this recognition Slovene schools would produce pupils "with top-heavy heads and empty hearts" (Stres, 2000: 297).

The government proposal, on the other hand, was that in accordance with the constitutional principle of state-church separation, the reasonable solution would be (1) to introduce knowledge about religions in the existing subjects; (2) to introduce private education, in which there is no obstacle to confessional subjects; and (3) to introduce a non-confessional subject about religions in public schools.

The then governing LDS and many experts argued for a secular school in a sense similar to the American and French solution: the public school should not teach either for religion or against it. Accordingly, it should be "neutral." Education for religion was held to be a matter for the religious community or for private schools that could now—in contrast with the socialist past—freely be founded.[26] The Roman Catholic Church opposed this view of the school. Kodelja (1995) listed two main arguments that were put forward by the church at that time: first, that laicism is an "exploded ideology"; and second, that a neutral school does not educate, but only teaches. According to Kodelja, the advocates of a secular school retorted, first, that the church in its arguments against *laïcité* failed to distinguish between laicistic state ideology (which should be rejected) and secularity/*laïcité* (which is the best option in a country with plurality of world views). Second, in rejecting "neutrality" the Roman Catholic Church showed its preference for reintroducing an indoctrinating school, deriving from a traditional clericalist notion, that there is no education and morality without the faith or religion. If the Roman Catholic Church were allowed to enter the public school, we would again have an ideological school, as we did in the pre-war period (Catholic schools) and in the post-war period (Marxist schools). Third, they added that neutrality does not mean the rejection of education. On the contrary, a "neutral" school educates for tolerance as well as for respect of differences regarding world views or

26. More about religious schools in Rakar (2005).

religions. The non-confessional subject about religions would be a case in point.

Consequently, the educational legislation defines the public school as a secular (*laična*) school. Article 72 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act of 1996 (hereafter OFEA) provides for "the autonomy of the school space."[27] Confessional religious education in Slovenian public schools is explicitly prohibited under Article 72, which states that in public schools and schools with concessions,[28] it is forbidden to carry out: religious education or confessional instruction with the aim of teaching religion; teaching where a particular religious community may be in a position to exercise influence over the content, teaching materials and qualifications of the teaching staff; and organisation of religious worship. The Minister of Education can only exceptionally allow confessional religious education in public schools, outside the regular curriculum, on a request by the headmaster, in specific circumstances when in the local community there is no other appropriate space for such an activity (OFEA, Art. 72).

According to the Slovene educational legislation, all rules for public schools apply also to private schools with concessions. However, following the ruling of the Constitutional Court in 2002 that the prohibition of confessional religious education in private concessionary schools is not in compliance with the constitution, Article 72 was softened. It now states that confessional religious education, though forbidden in public schools, is allowed in private concessionary schools, but not as a part of the regular curriculum, and only insofar as it does not interrupt the regular school curricula.[29]

27. Besides religious communities, the article on "autonomy of schools" also refers to political parties.

28. A concession agreement is a contract between the state (at national or local level) and a private service provider, in which the extent and type of services to be provided by the private actor and the cost to the state are agreed (Kolarič, 2002: 144).

29. Act on amendments and supplements to the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (2002), Art. 2.

Two aspects of the "autonomy of schools" should be distinguished: the autonomy of school curricula and the autonomy of school space (school buildings). Regarding public schools, the autonomy relates to both curricula and school space, since confessional religious education in the space of public schools is allowed only exceptionally in specific circumstances. Regarding private schools with concession, which belong to the public educational network, and are regulated in the same way as public schools and fully financed by the state, the autonomy only relates to curricula, but not to school space, since confessional religious education is allowed outside the school curricula. Confessional religious education as a part of school curricula is only allowed in private schools without concession, but these schools are not part of the public education network.

In Slovenia there are currently four church secondary schools; no primary church school has been established so far. All of the denominational schools in Slovenia are established by the Roman Catholic Church. It is important to note that regarding the prohibition of confessional religious education in private schools with concession, an exception was made in the case of church schools that were awarded concessions prior to the adoption of the new law. They are still financed in accordance with the concession agreements that were drawn up at that time, and they are not obliged to change their curricula according to Article 72 (OFEA, Art. 138). Hence, three of the church schools still operate on the basis of concession agreements and only one church school, which was established after the new law came into force, could not be granted a concession and therefore receives less public funding. In all church schools confessional religious education is a mandatory course, while prayers are not mandatory (Šturm, 2003: 342).

The aspect of the autonomy of the public school space in Slovenia, ensured by the prohibition of any confessional activity within public schools, should be understood as a concretisation of the principle of the separation of state and church found in Article 7 of the Slovene Constitution (see Kodelja, 2001; Kerševan, 2004). The state is committed to neutrality and tolerance; its activities may not be indoctrinating or proselytising. In practice, as we have seen, this

means that public sector schools are not allowed to hold confessional religious education, to have lessons or teachers determined by a religious community, or to organise religious services.

Currently, there is a heated discussion about the draft Law on Religious Liberties and Religious Communities, which also includes the issue of religious education in public schools. Many proposals for such a law have been made over the last decade. The current proposal, the so-called "Šturm Law,"[30] is the first to enjoy the support of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia. In the first draft of this proposal, Article 27 stated that confessional religious education carried out by the religious communities outside the school premises could be recognised as an optional subject in public schools, while the curriculum of public schools should be organised in such a way that the students could without difficulties attend this subject (Šturm, Ivanc and Prepeluh, 2004). This is also the stance of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia: "Our priorities at the moment include the replacement of one of the optional subjects with proper religious education, namely religious instruction and catechism. Such a measure should be enacted by the Church, and take place at the parish level" (Ecclesia catholica, 2002: 15). In the latest draft of the proposal, this article has been omitted.

In any case, the autonomy of public school space does not mean that no knowledge about religions is provided in public schools. Non-confessional teaching about religions is permitted, and is an important part of general education. With the reform of primary education in Slovenia, in public sector schools non-confessional education about religions is encompassed by the mandatory national curriculum. There are two ways of teaching about religions in public schools: first, as a part of some other compulsory subjects, especially Ethics and Society and other subjects such as History and Literature; and second, as the specific subject Religions and Ethics.

30. Named for the present Minister of Justice, Lovro Šturm, who prepared the proposal.

The Religions and Ethics subject

As part of the primary education reform, which extended primary school from 8 to 9 years and introduced optional school subjects, a completely new subject—Religions and Ethics—was introduced (it was enacted on February 14, 1996). This is an optional non-confessional class which pupils are free to choose in the seventh, eighth and/or ninth grade (at 13–15 years of age). The students have the possibility of choosing this subject among other optional subjects. Every public primary school must offer at least six optional subjects, and Religions and Ethics must be one of them; however, it is only taught if a sufficient number of pupils enrolls. Therefore this subject is known as a "compulsory-optional" subject, since the schools are obliged to offer it, and the students are free to choose it.

Religions and Ethics is an ordinary school subject. Everything concerning this subject (the training of the teachers as well as the preparation of the educational programmes and textbooks) is under the competence of the responsible state institutions, as in the case of all other school matters. Neither the Catholic Church, as the largest religious community in Slovenia, nor other religious communities have any exclusive competence over this subject.

The aim of the subject is to give pupils an opportunity to further expand their basic knowledge of the world religions and ethics which they obtain in other classes.

> This subject should help pupils understand the importance and meaning of religious and ethical issues; it should aspire to the formation of well-thought-out personal opinion as to these issues, and not to the taking of certain (religious) views. (…) This optional subject thus stimulates and prepares the student for mature consideration of faith and belief, as well as the ability to engage in a relaxed and respectful discussion on religion, together with the pertaining personal and social questions. (Kerševan, 2001)

The main goals of this subject, then, are: to accumulate objective specific and general knowledge about religions and ethics; to develop the capacity to understand others; to learn about the role of religion in the birth of different civilisations; to prepare pupils for a

critical and constructive entry into a pluralistic society; as well as to be critical of negative phenomena which may emanate from religion.

The subject is equally intended for pupils that have had a (Christian) religious upbringing and attend confessional religious education outside school, as for the adherents of other religions or for those without religious upbringing and no religious adherence (Ministry of Education, 1998: 4). The subject can be categorised as an integrated subject, since children of different religions or no religion are taught together from the viewpoint of a neutral approach to the world of religions and different world views. In our opinion, an integrated non-confessional approach towards different religious phenomena accustoms children to tolerance and common discussion of sensitive religious and ethical questions. Furthermore, the sensitivity of those issues calls for a differentiation of the contents and levels of discussion, which is accomplished through the distribution of religious and ethical topics between the obligatory common subjects and a specific, optional subject, in which the topics are further divided into obligatory and optional.

The subject can be taught by teachers with a university diploma in Theology,[31] Religious Studies,[32] Sociology, Philosophy, Culture Studies, Psychology, History and Slovene language. These fields of study include elements and knowledge necessary for this subject either directly in their study programmes (Theology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Philosophy, and Culture Studies) or more indirectly (Slovene language, History). Beside the required relevant degree in social and humanistic studies, as well as the teacher's necessary pedagogical, psychological and didactic knowledge, the teachers are required to complete additional training for this subject outside the faculty where they have obtained their diploma. The content of this necessary additional training is differentiated (Kerševan, 1998: 50): Theology graduates need additional training outside the Catholic (confessional) faculty because of the non-confessional nature of the subject and the demands for a secular and neutral approach toward religions. Graduates from other studies need additional training in

31. Lay theologians; ordained priests are not allowed to teach the subject.

32. When these studies are introduced.

order to get familiar with the approach to religion "from inside" in the framework of a religious university institution.

In practice, this means the only Faculty of Theology, which is that of the Catholic Church. This kind of solution is not necessarily in contrast with the pluralistic nature of the subject: Though it could be viewed as a political compromise, its rationale is the reciprocity principle, which extends legitimacy to the subject. The broader the range of different institutions involved in the process, the greater will be its legitimacy.

The syllabus of the subject was prepared by a Curriculum Commission, appointed by the National Curriculum Council, which consisted of an expert group of philosophers, sociologists, theologians (Catholic and Lutheran), as well as pedagogic experts. The representatives of other registered religious communities were also consulted in this process through meetings and seminars organised by the Government's Office for Religious Communities. At these meetings the president of the Curriculum Commission, Marko Kerševan, presented the aims and the contents of the proposed syllabus, and the representatives of religious communities expressed their views and comments.

The subject is divided into three parts according to the year of schooling. The syllabus is prepared in such a way that the students can choose to attend the subject for only one or two years, although the purpose of the subject is comprehensively achieved only over the whole three year period (Ministry of Education, 1998: 6). In each school year in which the subject is offered, the contents are divided into obligatory topics, obligatory-optional topics,[33] and optional topics from which the teachers and the pupils are free to choose. The subject embraces different world religions; however, more time and emphasis is dedicated to Christianity, as the religion of our cultural and historical tradition. The choice and arrangements of contents and thematic topics follow two complementary logics: "religiological" and "life-ethical", relevant to the age of pupils (Kerševan, 1998: 47). The subject is also divided into three categories of discussion according to the year of schooling: In the seventh year, the

33. Among these topics, one topics has to be chosen.

main category of discussion is the world; in the eighth year, the community; and in the ninth year, the individual.

The principal religious topics covered by the subject are the following (Ministry of Education, 1998):

Seventh year (35 school hours):
- Obligatory topics: world religions; Christianity; Islam; Buddhism.
- Obligatory-optional topics: ideals and idols; uniqueness and diversity.
- Optional topics: Judaism; Asian religions (Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism); traditional religions; new religious movements; solving contradictions, consultation and/or violence; man and nature.

Eighth year (35 school hours):
- Obligatory topics: people and religion—religious culture; religions: community, rites, symbols, religious experience; religions and the problem of evil, sin, death; human rights; ethical dimensions of religions; religious freedom and freedom of conscience.
- Obligatory-optional topics: family; friendship, love and sexuality; work and professions.
- Optional topics: religious communities—churches, sects and monastic communities; relations between church and state; magic and occultism; solidarity and egocentricity; dreams, wishes, goals and disappointments.

Ninth year (32 school hours):
- Obligatory topics: the Bible (Old and New Testaments); Christianity and Western civilization; religions and the meaning of life.
- Obligatory-optional topics: growth of Christianity and its divisions: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism; the Enlightenment; Christianity in Slovenia.
- Optional topics: religious (in)tolerance, religious wars; science and religious belief; atheism and humanism.

As is evident from this short thematic overview, this non-confessional subject offers the pupils the possibility of gaining new or additional knowledge about religions and especially Christianity as well as an opportunity for reflection and discussion about the chosen existential topics, with special emphasis on their connection with religious differences and traditions. A minor optional part of the subject is dedicated also to atheism. Although the subject due to its non-confessional nature introduces pupils to different religions in an objective and neutral way, this does not mean that the subject embraces all religions to an equal extent. Priority is given to Christianity as the "religion of the environment." This is accomplished through the implementation of the syllabus in different ways and on different levels (Kerševan, 1998: 48):

- In the first year of the subject, the global review of the world religions begins with Catholicism (which is a kind of "matrix" for the comprehension of other religions and later becomes relativised).
- In the second year, the "analytical" discussion of religious elements and issues takes basic examples from Christianity as the nearest but not the only source.
- The third year is specifically dedicated to the subject of Christianity and its elements, its civilisational consequences and its presence in our cultural environment.
- In the discussion of ethical and existential questions, the pupil is inevitably confronted with Christian notions.

There is currently no special textbook for pupils of this subject. Only a textbook for teachers has been issued by the National Education Institute (Kramžar Klemenčič, 2003). The book includes papers presented at seminars for the teachers of this subject. It includes contributions by philosophers, sociologists, theologians (Catholic and Lutheran) and pedagogical experts, most of whom were also involved in the preparation of the subject. The literature for pupils as well as for the teachers is chosen from available books on topics such as: world religions, ethics and society, religions and

philosophy, history of Christianity, Christianity in Slovenia, Asian philosophies, etc.[34] For the pluralistic discussion about religions in a comparative neutral perspective it is important that pupils in their study of religions besides the available literature also get familiar with the authentic religious text: the Bible, Koran, Bhagavadgita, etc. (see Kerševan, 1998: 31; Ministry of Education, 1998). In our opinion, the reasons why no special textbook has been issued so far are, first, that many suitable foreign textbooks are available in translation, and second, that due to the insecure future of this subject, no one has wanted to risk investing the time to prepare a textbook.

The subject Religions and Ethics was first experimentally introduced in the school year 1999/2000 in approximately 10 percent of public schools. In the school year 2002/2003, it became a part of the regular school curriculum and it must be offered by all public primary schools in Slovenia, but it is only taught if a sufficient number of students enrolls. In the past school year (2004/2005), this subject was taught in 71 public primary schools,[35] which is less than ten percent of all public primary schools. Therefore we can say that

34. The suggested literature for pupils is the following (Ministry of Education, 1998): David Self, *Verstva sveta* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1998); Susan Meredith, *Svetovna verstva* (Ljubljana: Tehniška založba, 1995); Andrej Rot, *Etika in družba* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 1997); Fernando Savater, *Etika za Amadorja* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1998). The suggested literature for teachers is the following: *Velika verstva sveta* (Koper: Ognjišče, 1991); Huston Smith, *Svetovne religije* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1996); Marjan Smrke, *Svetovne religije* (Ljubljana: FDV, 2000); Vida K. Klemenčič, *Verstva in etika I: gradivo za učitelje predmeta verstva in etika* (Ljubljana: Zavod republike Slovenije za šolstvo, 2003); Jean Boisselier, *Modrost Bude* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1995); Gérard Bessiere, *Jezus: nepričakovani bog* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1995); Anne-Marie Delcambre, *Mohamed: Alahov prerok* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1994); *Zgodovina Krščanstva* (Ljubljana: Ognjišče, 1995); Metod Benedik (ed.), *Zgodovina cerkve na Slovenskem* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1991); Vili Kerčmar, *Evangeličanska cerkev na Slovenskem* (Murska Sobota: Evangeličanska cerkev, 1995); Čedomil Veljačič, *Ločnice azijskih filozofij* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1992); Marko Gabrijelčič, Marjan Kokot and Igor Pribac, ed., *Happy New Age* (Ljubljana: Časopis za kritiko znanosti, 1992), as well as the scriptures of different religious traditions such as the Bible, Koran, Dhammapada, Bhagavadgita, etc.

35. Source: Ministry of Education (2005).

the subject is currently in an incubation phase and its future existence is questionable. However, what is important is the fact that it was introduced. Or as stated by Kerševan:

> As an offer in our public schools, the subject Religions and Ethics plays its symbolic role even if this offer for various reasons is not taken up by the pupils and parents. It will also play its role if for various reasons other, differently conceived (confessional) religious subjects were to join it in the school: they cannot replace it, (…) nor should they. (Kerševan, 2005: 172)

To conclude, according to the categories outlined in the introduction, the key words to describe religious education in Slovene public schools are: non-confessional, teaching about religion, integrated, compulsory-optional and non-denominational. In Kerševan's opinion, Slovenia, by introducing this subject, is implementing the recommendation of the Council of Europe on religion and democracy[36] (Kerševan, 2005: 164). The Council's Recommendation advocates teaching about religions in such a way in all member states, including the ones with confessional religious education in public schools. In this way Slovenia could be a role model in dealing with the (non)presence of religious education in public schools.

Criticism by the Catholic Church

While the attitudes of minority religious communities in Slovenia are in general favourable to current arrangements of religious education in public schools, this kind of regulation has launched repeated criticisms from the Roman Catholic Church. We will mention only the most typical ones.

The Slovene Bishops' Conference has frequently[37] portrayed the Slovene school arrangements as a violation of international conventions on human rights; the church has even appealed to the believers to oppose such a school. It should be pointed out that no international convention imposes on states the introduction of confessional religious education in public schools. If that were the

36. Council of Europe, Recommendation no. 1396 (adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly on January 27, 1999).

37. For example in the letter *About education in Slovenia* (1999).

case, the USA, France and several other states would be violators of human rights.

Archbishop Rode, who has made the biggest mark on the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia's post-independence period, has regularly accused the Slovene school system of various alleged wrongs. In one public lecture he referred to young Slovenes without the Christian upbringing that he wants the public school to provide as "the idiots" (Rode in Podgoršek, 1998). One can imagine the reactions of Slovenes to this statement, since at the same time, surveys showed that the public had a very high opinion of public schools and a considerably lower opinion of the Roman Catholic Church.[38]

There have been frequent accusations that the subject Religions and Ethics was formed without the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church (for example Stres, 2000: 297), although in the commission for the subject Religions and Ethics, Catholic doctors of theology have also been (and still are) involved,[39] and although a part of the training for this subject takes place at the Faculty of Theology. Moreover, parents were publicly advised not to encourage their children to enroll in this subject.[40]

It is further said to be inadmissible that the subject Religions and Ethics cannot be taught by theologians (for example Rode, 2001: 15). This, however, is misleading, since lay theologians (but not priests) are listed among the envisaged teachers of the subject.

The secularity (*laičnost*) of public schools is considered a "liberalist fundamentalism" (Stres, 1999), that gives "precedence to the right of atheism over the right of religiosity" (Stres, 2004: 20). In this sense, according to Bishop Stres, it also contradicts the constitution, since the Constitutional Court in its decision 101/2002 stated that confessional activity in public schools is not in

38. In 1995, 76.2% of Slovenes had little or no trust in the Roman Catholic Church, whereas only 24.6% Slovenes had little or no trust in school or educational institutions (SPOS 1995/1: Toš et al., 1999).

39. In the period when the first author Smrke was a member of the commission for the subject Religions and Ethics, other members included the catholic theologians Dr Ocvirk, Dr Šverc and Dr Gerjolj.

40. This advice came inter alia from a member of the commission for this subject, Dr Gerjolj (2004).

compliance with the constitutional principle of church and state separation (Stres, 2004: 20)—that is, if the school does not teach belief in God, it implicitly teaches atheism. Anger over the existing regulation has even led the Church to complain about the state's involvement in education in general, since as stated by bishop Stres "the field of education is not a typical competence of the state"(ibid.).

The existing regulation is obviously a source of strong frustrations for the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore, it will remain a target of Church criticism in the future. Or, as stated by Dr Rode in a combative mood: "This school will be destroyed in an democratic way, even though it could take fifty years" (Rode, 2000).

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3. Religious education in Croatia

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Introduction

Religion and religiosity form an integral and active element of culture: as one way of man's correlation with the world, as a possible answer to the crucial questions of human existence, and as a practical value orientation in life. Like other forms of human spirit, religion is also an active factor of every socio-cultural milieu, and thus a factor in the development of spiritual and material culture. There is a substantial number of practical implications for the behaviour of religious people and members of a certain religious community, as well as of those outside of it. All this suggests the importance of young people getting acquainted with the religious phenomenon through education in schools as well.

School is one of the prime movers of socialization, and it exists within, and is marked by, a concrete socio-historical context. Educational contents in school are shaped not only by the general results of the development of basic human knowledge, but also by the tradition and culture of an actual society. Each state makes sure that school passes on the values and norms that form the foundation of social life. Other institutions than the state can also influence the teaching content in schools. The Catholic Church in Croatia, for example, exercised a significant influence on the teaching content in the state primary and secondary schools and the introduction of religious instruction in kindergartens and public schools at the beginning of the 1990s.

Social and religious context in Croatia

Under communism, in Croatia (as a part of the former Yugoslavia), religion and churches carried negative connotations, were confined to the private sphere, and did not have any social impact. Although the constitution guaranteed all forms of religious rights and freedoms, the desirable conformity patterns were non-religiosity and atheism. Ideological "struggle" against religion and churches had been fought in various areas of social life (with varying intensity). Therefore, on the institutional level they were invisible—for instance in the educational system and mass media.

However, religion and the church did not disappear from people's lives. They were widely spread in traditional forms across all segments of society, being constituent of the traditional rural as well as "modern" urban environment (although less so in the latter). In the context of confessional differences Croatia was, together with Slovenia, the most religious part of the former Yugoslavia. Sociologists recognized this widespread traditional religiosity as a potential for revitalisation of religion in different social circumstances.

The transitional context in Croatia, as well as in other post-communist countries, has been marked by the transformation of the institutional, industrial, economic and cultural structures of society, followed by parallel processes of liberalisation and democratisation as preconditions of political and social changes.

Religious changes have an important place within the process of socio-cultural change in the transitional period. Shaped predominantly by the leading party (HDZ) at the beginning of the 1990s, the major framework of these changes was the openness of the political structure and society as a whole to religion and the church (especially the Catholic Church)—from institutional solutions to the change of their position and the role in society. Another important part of this framework was the activity of the churches in the pre-war, war, and post-war period, followed by national and religious homogenisation.

Crucial for our theme is the fact that religion and churches assumed a presence in public life, the media, and the educational system. The change of their position after 1990 has been followed by a

huge increase in declared religiosity, as shown by various studies (Boneta, 2000; Cifrić, 2000; Črpić and Kušar, 1998; Goja, 2000; Mandarić, 2000; Marinović Jerolimov, 2000, 2001; Zrinščak, Črpić and Kušar, 2000; Vrcan, 2001). The strong identification with religion and the church became almost complete in the population, which places Croatia among the countries with the highest level of religiosity in Europe behind Poland, Romanian Transsylvania, Malta, Portugal, Italy and Ireland (Aračić, Črpić and Nikodem, 2003; Davie, 2000; Zrinščak, Črpić and Kušar, 2000).

The revitalisation of religion and religiosity has been followed by processes of desecularisation and deprivatisation. Casanova (1994) introduced the concept of deprivatisation to describe the religious situation in modern societies after the 1980s, confirming a certain turnabout in secular trends, and emphasising the entrance of religion in the public sphere, where it would participate in defining relationships on all levels of society and in all areas. Although the religious tradition had been recognised as a part of culture and social life like in West European societies, the revitalisation of religion in Croatia followed a different path. It did not manifest a rise of the so-called *religion à la carte*, a religious *bricolage* or the processes of individualisation, de-traditionalisation and de-collectivisation. On the contrary, the revitalisation of religion in Croatia occurred more within the framework of re-traditionalisation, re-totalisation and re-collectivisation (Vrcan, 1999). Some data from the recent study "Social and religious changes in Croatia" (2004) confirm these findings.

Religiosity in Croatia: some empirical data

According to the 2001 census, 94 per cent of the population belong to some religion, and 6 per cent are agnostics, undeclared, not religious, or listed as unknown. However, the vast majority (87.83 percent) declared themselves Catholics. Adherence to different religious communities was as in Table 3.1 (overleaf).

The study "Social and religious changes in Croatia" (2004), conducted by the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb on a representative sample of the adult population of Croatia, confirmed the

Table 3.1: Confessional Structure of the Republic of Croatia

	Republic of Croatia	
	N	*%*
Roman Catholic Church	3,897,332	87.83
Orthodox Churches	195,969	4.42
Agnostics and undeclared	132,532	2.99
Not religious	98,376	2.22
Islamic Religious Community	56,777	1.28
Unknown	25,874	0.58
Greek Catholic Church	6,219	0.14
Jehovah's Witnesses	6,094	0.14
Other religions	4,764	0.11
Other protestant churches	4,068	0.09
Evangelic Church	3,339	0.08
Adventist Church	3,001	0.07
Baptist Church	1,981	0.04
Jewish Religious Community	495	0.01
Christ's Pentecostal Church	336	0.01

Source: Census 2001

same level of declared Catholics. Together with indicators of religious identification, religious socialisation, religious belief and practice, it documents a highly visible trend towards the revitalisation of religiosity after the fall of communism.

As we can see from the data in Table 3.2, there is a high incidence of elements of traditional church religiosity transferred through family socialisation, such as religious upbringing and sacramental practice. The same can be observed in basic church beliefs. However, religious beliefs are fragmented, a fact that has been documented in various research on religion in Croatia (as elsewhere) for decades. The level of regular religious practice is lower than other elements of religiosity.

Besides these basic indicators of religiosity, deeper analysis showed a significant difference, in all the dimensions explored, between firm believers and religious people who do not accept everything their religion teaches. Women, housewives, farmers, the less educated, and people from rural areas are more religious; men, the more educated, higher professionals, and urbanites are less religious. The religious and non-religious respondents differ in their ac-

ceptance of traditional and modern values—religious people being closer to traditional values, and non-religious people to modern values. There is a discrepancy between the attitudes of respondents and the attitudes of the Church concerning family and sexuality (Marinović Jerolimov, 2005).

Besides the dominant Catholic religion to which the majority of the population belongs, there are various traditional churches and smaller religious communities of Christian and non-Christian provenance in Croatia, as well as a certain percentage of agnostics, non-believers, atheists, and undecided. The list of 40 registered churches

Table 3.2: Religiosity in Croatia in 2004

Indicators of religiosity	*(%)*
Religious affiliation	
Catholics	87
Religious identification	
Religious	78
Sacramental practice	
Baptised	94
First communion	85
Confirmation	81
Religious socialisation	
Religious upbringing	81
Religious instruction in church and at school	83
Religious beliefs	
God exists	82
God created world and men	72
God is the source of morality	70
Heaven and hell exist	53
There is a life after death	52
Religious practice	
Attend church weekly	27

A six-item scale was used for measuring religious self-identification. It was constructed as a continuum from the firm believer to those opposed to religion: "I am firm believer and I accept everything my religion teaches"; "I am religious but I do not accept everything my religion teaches"; "I am not sure whether I believe or not"; "I am indifferent towards religion"; I am not religious, but I have nothing against religion"; "I am not religious and I am opposed to religion."

Table 3.3: Registered Churches and Religious Communities in Croatia

1. Roman Catholic Church	22. Protestant Reformed Christian Church
2. Serbian Orthodox Church	23. Jehovah's Witnesses
3. Jewish Communities	24. Evangelical Church Valdese [*Evanđeoska crkva Valdeze*]
4. Islamic Religious Community	25. Evangelical Methodist Church
5. Evangelical Church	26. Church of Christ's Disciples [*Crkva Kristovih učenika*]
6. Reformed Christian Church	27. Independent Baptist Church
7. Pentecostal Church	28. Union of Churches "Word of Life"
8. Christian Adventist Church	29. International United Pentecostal Church
9. Union of Baptist Churches	30. Christian Prophet's Church
10. Old Catholic Church	31. Free Catholic Church
11. Bulgarian Orthodox Church	32. Church of Happy News [*Crkva Radosna vijest*]
12. Macedonian Orthodox Church	33. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
13. Christ's Churches	34. Baha'i Community
14. Church of God	35. Hindu Religious Community
15. Union of Christ's Pentecostal Churches	36. Vaisnava Religious Community
16. Reformed Movement of Seventh-Day Adventists	37. Buddhist Religious Community Darmaloka
17. Christian Neo-Pentecostal Church	38. Church of Scientology
18. Christ's Spiritual Church	39. Universal Life
19. New Apostolic Church [*Hrvatska apostolska crkva*]	40. Evangelical Christians
20. Church of the Full Gospel [*Crkva cjelovitog evanđelja*]	
21. Reformed Christian Church of Hungarians	

Source: Government of the Republic of Croatia, Commission for Relations with Religious Communities, February 2005

in Table 3.3 partly describes this diversity. Another eighteen religious communities are in the process of registration.

Legal framework for the introduction of religious education in schools

The legal documents important for the introduction of religious education in the school system are as follows: the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (1990), the Contract between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Holy See about cooperation

in the field of education and culture (1996), the Contract between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Conference of Bishops about Catholic catechism in public schools and public preschool institutions (1999), the Law on the legal status of religious communities (2002), and Contracts between another eight religious communities and the Government of the Republic of Croatia about questions of mutual interest (2002 and 2003).

The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia defines religious freedom, religious rights and the protection of these rights in its Articles 14, 17, 39 and 40. Crucial for our theme is Article 41, as the basis for establishing other legal and official acts concerning religious communities:

> All religious communities shall be equal before the law and shall be separated from the State. Religious communities shall be free, in conformity with law, to perform religious services publicly, to open schools, educational and other institutions, social and charitable institutions and to manage them, and shall in their activity enjoy the protection and assistance of the State.

For some religious communities, Article 47 is very important because it provides that:

> Conscientious objection shall be allowed to all those who for religious or moral reasons are not willing to participate in the performance of military service in the armed forces. Such persons shall be obliged to perform other duties specified by law.

Contracts between the Republic of Croatia and the Catholic Church

The Government of the Republic of Croatia is signatory to special contracts regulating the rights of religious communities with regard to financing, pastoral care in hospitals, prisons and armed forces, return of nationalised properties, cooperation in the fields of education and culture (1996), and economic issues (1998).

a) Important in our context is the "Contract between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia about cooperation in the field of education and culture" that was signed on December 19, 1996 in order to regulate the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Republic of Croatia. Both sides agreed:

- that the contract is based on the Constitution's Articles 14, 40 and 68, on the Second Vatican Council declaration *Gravissimum educationis* and canon law;
- to take into account the irreplaceable historical and present role of the Catholic Church in Croatia in the cultural and moral upbringing of the people, and also its role in the field of culture and education;
- to take into account that the majority of citizens of the Republic of Croatia belong to the Catholic Church.

The Contract guarantees Catholic religious instruction (catechism) in all public primary schools, secondary schools and pre-school institutions as an *optional* subject (but compulsory for those who choose it).

It stresses that *choice* is guaranteed for all parents and students and that this choice will not be the basis for any form of discrimination in school activities. A possibility to withdraw from the religious instruction (catechism) is declared. Requests for withdrawal should be submitted in writing to the school principal at the beginning of the school year.

The Contract further provides that all public educational institutions shall take into account values of Christian ethics.[1]

According to the Contract, the program of Catholic religious instruction will be regulated by special contracts between the Government of Croatia and the Croatian Conference of Bishops. Both the church and the state authorities are in charge of monitoring the quality of religious instruction and its accordance with church and state laws. Religious instruction can only be taught by persons with a writ of canonic mandate (*missio canonica*) from the diocesan bishop. Programmes, the content of textbooks, and didactic materials will be made by the Croatian Conference of Bishops, who submit them to the competent authorities of the Republic of Croatia for their inclusion in the curriculum. All expenses of publishing textbooks are to be covered by the Republic of Croatia in accordance with present decisions concerning all other school textbooks.

1. This statement provoked a public reaction from professor Neven Budak, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb.

The possibility to organize additional religious activities in the school is also guaranteed. Further, the Catholic Church shall have the right to establish pre-school institutions, and schools at all levels, and to manage them under canon law and state laws. Such schools shall have the same duties and rights as state schools, also in terms of financing.[2]

b) Based on Article 2 of this contract, an additional "Contract between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Conference of Bishops about Catholic catechism in public schools and public pre-school institutions" was signed.

This contract regulates Catholic religious instruction (catechism) in public primary and secondary schools as an optional subject equal to other subjects; the number of students needed in order to organize the class (seven pupils); the obligation of church and school authorities to inform parents and pupils about the goals and the content of the subject; the number of hours per week (two); competence for drawing up the curriculum (the Croatian Conference of Bishops) and for confirming it (the Minister of Education[3]); responsibility for the training of teachers, and the level of education needed for the teachers. The Croatian Conference of Bishops is obliged to submit to the Ministry a list of teacher-training institutions. The National Catechetic Institute is responsible for all Catholic religious instruction in schools. The diocesan bishop and a counselor in the diocesan office for catechism together take care of religious instruction in pre-school institutions and in primary and secondary schools.

Articles 11 and 12 of this contract should be stressed, because they differ from the contracts that the Government has signed with other religious communities. Article 11 says that Catholic religious traditions are deeply rooted in Croatian cultural heritage, which will be taken into account in the public Croatian school system, espe-

2. There are religious pre-school institutions in the Republic of Croatia, but no religious primary schools. There are ten Catholic secondary schools, and two secondary schools of other religious communities (Islamic and Orthodox).

3. The education ministry's full name is the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports. In the early 1990s, when Religious Instruction was introduced, it was the Ministry of Education and Culture.

cially in realising appropriate religio-cultural initiatives and programmes that comprehend different fields of social and cultural life besides the school system. Although worship takes place in churches, it could be performed and celebrated in schools on special occasions with the consent of the principal and school authorities; participation of pupils and teachers is voluntary. The school will enable pupils and teachers to meet the diocesan bishop in school when he visits his parish.

Article 12 provides that parish priests, because of the nature of their service, have the right to perform Catholic religious instruction in school several times a week.

The law on religious communities

The Law on the legal position of religious communities was passed in 2002. For our purposes, Article 13 of this law is important because it defines religious instruction in pre-school, primary school and secondary school institutions. In accordance with the law and previous contracts between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Catholic Church, it states that:

- On the request of parents (or foster parents) the programme in pre-school institutions includes religious education;
- On the request of parents (or foster parents) of pupils younger than 15 years, and of both parents and pupils older than 15 years, confessional religious instruction as an optional subject is established in accordance with the curriculum of primary and secondary schools;
- Only persons who meet the legal requirements can perform confessional religious instruction;
- Religious communities propose, and the Ministry of Education confirms, the programmes for religious education in pre-school institutions, primary schools and secondary schools, together with textbooks and didactic materials;
- Religious education in pre-school institutions, primary schools and secondary schools is separate from the religious education in religious communities.

Article 18 defines the social rights of clerics and students of religious schools and faculties as equal to those of other state officials and students, respectively.

Contracts between the Government of Croatia and other religious communities

Immediately after the law entered into force, the Government of Croatia signed *Contracts about questions of mutual interest* with the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Religious Community (2002), and later with the Evangelical Church and the Reformed Christian Church, the Evangelical Pentecostal Church and its affiliates the Church of God and the Union of Pentecostal Churches, the Adventist Church and its affiliate the Reformed Movement of the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Union of Baptist Churches and its affiliate the Council of the Churches of Christ, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and the Croatian Old Catholic Church (2003). A contract has been arranged with the Jewish Community as well, but it has not been signed as yet. Jehovah's Witnesses refused to agree on a contract with the Republic of Croatia, although they were interested in settling some issues with the state, such as marriages and pastoral care in hospitals.

The Government and religious communities signed these contracts in order to:

- regulate their relationships in the fields of upbringing, education and culture and pastoral care for believers in prisons, hospitals, armed forces, police and the members of their families;
- strive to assure the material conditions for religious activities;
- create and maintain better conditions for religious activities.

The contracts are "based on international conventions and standards" and their goal is "mutual cooperation for the benefit of all citizens, regardless of their religious convictions."

These contracts include all the issues listed in the contract with the Catholic Church, except articles 11 and 12 mentioned above.

Public Discourse on the Introduction of Religious Education in Schools in the 1990s

On June 10, 1990, on the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the Educational Council of Croatia decided to give religious communities space in primary and secondary schools for their religious teaching, free of charge. This decision was followed by a recommendation of the City Secretariat for Education in Zagreb "that upon parents' request the schools have the obligation to secure space and time for confessional religious instruction organized by religious communities." On June 6, 1990, Croatian bishops made a request for introduction of religious instruction as an elective subject in primary and secondary schools. On June 12, 1990 they issued a public "Message on confessional religious instruction in the school and in the parish community." Pursuant to the decision of the Ministry of Education, as of 1991/1992 confessional religious instruction was introduced in schools as an elective subject. Religious communities were given a mandate to define the content and the manner of teaching, as well as to provide the necessary number of instructors and to train them. By the Contract on cooperation in the field of education and culture, signed by the Republic of Croatia and the Holy See in 1996, Croatia assumed the obligation to enable Catholic instruction in primary and secondary schools as well as in pre-school facilities. This contract was followed by a Contract on Catholic instruction in public schools and religious instruction in public pre-school facilities, signed by the Croatian Bishop's Conference and the Government of the Republic of Croatia, which legalized confessional religious instruction in public schools by virtue of "the principle of shared responsibility between the State and the Church."[4]

After the Law on the Legal Status of the Religious Communities in Croatia was passed (2002), other religious communities got an opportunity to enter into contracts with the state to regulate certain fields of the communities' activities, including confessional religious instruction in schools. In this way, an approach was accepted that

4. "Crkva i država podijelile su odgovornost za vjerski odgoj," *Jutarnji list*, January 31, 1999.

enables several different confessions to hold confessional religious instruction in schools. Six religious communities drew up programmes of confessional instruction, and the Ministry of Education approved the curricula for Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic and Jewish religious instruction, as well as for the Adventists and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

The first public discussions on introduction of religious instruction and/or an alternative subject, "Religious Culture," started in the mid-1990s. However, the declarations and documents issued by political and educational authorities speeded up this process, outpacing the dialogue between representatives of religious communities and the academic public. As a result, the opinion that prevailed in the public was that the hastily organised public discussions were a mere alibi and were held only because of the need for a "quasi-scientific verification of the political decision."[5] That this is true is clear from the widespread confusion over fundamental terms in the debate, Religious Culture and Confessional Religious Culture; even the theologians, and especially the journalists, did not distinguish these two notions.

On September 18–21, 1990, an interconfessional and interdisciplinary meeting on the questions on the relationship of Confessional Religious Culture, the school and the public media was organized by the Commission of the Catechetic Council of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia and the Catechetic Institute of the Faculty of Catholic Theology in Zagreb. The participants were mostly theologians and representatives of the religious communities, while scholars of non-theological religious studies were absent (except for the sociologist don Ivan Grubišić).[6] Some of them were invited but did not come, while some were not invited at all, with the explanation that "a short time limit for organizing such a meeting and … some administrative backlog might also be the cause."[7] Therefore the

5. "Vjeronauk – nova ideologizacija?", *Slobodna Dalmacija*, September 23, 1990.

6. Ivan Grubišić in *Slobodna Dalmacija*, September 23, 1990. Grubišić is a parish priest from Split and one of the leading liberal theologians in Catholic Church, with a PhD in the Sociology of Religion.

7. Josip Baričević, PhD, in "Očenaš u razredu," *Oko,* October 18, 1990. Baričević is the head of the Catechetic Institute in Zagreb and senior adviser to the

media wittily dubbed this meeting a "group portrait in black and white."[8]

Public debates have sporadically been held both in the period before the regulations were laid down and later, and the basic tone has been set by the theologians of the Catholic Church. In the debates on the two possible approaches to the religious phenomenon in the teaching process, the non-confessional Religious Culture subject was gradually marginalized, and Confessional Religious Culture was given prominence by the most of the participants and was given legal form in the Confessional (Catholic) Instruction subject.[9] Two factions have crystallized: the more "conservative" majority, which backed Religious Instruction and mostly consisted of theologians, and the "liberal" minority, which, besides some Catholic theologians, consisted of members of the minority religious communities and secular experts. The minority has pointed to the danger of instrumentalisation and politicisation of religion, and has pleaded for a secular school, giving priority to the non-confessional subject—Religious Culture.

The arguments for introducing Confessional (Catholic) Instruction came down to the following:

- Catholic religious tradition is deeply rooted in the Croatian cultural heritage.[10]
- In the past, religion has been suppressed or distorted for ideological reasons.
- It enables getting acquainted with and developing one's own cultural religious identity and respect for that of others.

The following are the most important arguments against introducing confessional religious instruction, and against the procedure

National Catechetic Office of the Croatian Bishops' Conference for confessional education.

8. "Očenaš u razredu."

9. At the end of the 1990s, the Catechetic Council of the Croatian Bishops' Conference still spoke of confessional religious culture.

10. In the Contract on Catholic religious instruction in public schools and religious education in public pre-school facilities, this wording has been supplemented to say that this "will be taken into account in the public Croatian school system."

under which confessional religious instruction has been introduced, as well as the arguments for a non-confessional Culture of Religion subject:

a) The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Croatia decided to introduce confessional Religious Instruction before having consulted public opinion:[11] the experts,[12] professors and teachers.[13]

b) School is a public institution and will cease to be so if the Church or the Mosque enters it.[14]

c) Religion cannot be the frame or philosophy of life in a public school and separation of state and church should be pursued in a consistent manner.[15]

d) Instead, the law should enable the opening of confessional schools where confessional ideas could be taught.[16]

e) The deficit of spiritual culture and knowledge should be compensated by a Religious Culture subject that would take into account the multi-confessional character of society, since spirituality should not be reduced to the confessional model.[17]

11. According to one author, 1) these contracts were prepared in great secrecy and the text was available to the public only after it passed the parliamentary procedure. 2) Public critical objections concerned only some legal and practical implications of these contracts, but the question of religious rights and freedom was only articulated by other religious communities, especially the ones traditionally present in Croatia. 3) The ratification took place in the Vatican one week before the elections in Croatia. 4) Various articles, especially in the contract about legal matters, had not been implemented in legislation, which created problems—for instance, the contract included a list of non-working days which cannot be changed by usual legal procedure, because international agreements take precedence over domestic law. (Zrinščak, 1998).

12. Peter Kuzmič, PhD, Protestant theologian from Osijek in "Očenaš u razredu."

13. Tomo Žalac, PhD, professor of pedagogy from Zagreb, in "Militantni nastup dijela klera velik problem za Crkvu", *Novi list*, November 10, 1998.

14. Mustafa Cerić, PhD, currently the Grand Mufti of Bosnia (at the time the imam of the Zagreb mosque) in "Očenaš u razredu."

15. Srđan Matić, executive vice-president of the Jewish community in Zagreb, in "Očenaš u razredu."

16. Srđan Matić in "Očenaš u razredu."

17. Peter Kuzmič in "Očenaš u razredu."

f) There is a danger of proselytism, since confessional religious education, such as carried out in churches, can become the subject of confessional non-understanding.[18]

g) Religious instruction as upbringing in belief and for belief belongs in the family and church communities.[19]

h) Religious Culture should be an educational and not indoctrinating subject, because the place of doctrine is within religious communities.[20]

i) As a mandatory subject, Confessional Religious Instruction would get a secular guise.[21]

j) Religion should not be taught, it should be a lifestyle.[22]

Discussions in the media have sporadically continued, especially after some salient dates in the legal enactment of confessional religious instruction.[23] The arguments from both sides mainly remained the same, but it was only after seven years of confessional religious instruction that the question its creators found most difficult to answer popped up: Can the classroom really replace the community of believers, and thus be an appropriate setting for the transmission of religious truths? Several participants in the debate have argued that

18. Milenko Popović, priest (*protonamesnik*) of the Serbian Ortodox Church, and Tihomir Kukolja, representative of the Christian Adventist Church in Croatia in "Očenaš u razredu."

19. Adalbert Rebić, Ph.D., professor at the Catholic Faculty University of Zagreb, in "Očenaš u razredu."

20. Mustafa Cerić in "Očenaš u razredu."

21. Luka Vincetić in "Bliski susret škole i religije!?", *Slobodna Dalmacija*, June 16, 1990. Vincetić was parish priest in Trnava near Đakovo,

22. Don Ivan Grubišić in "Vjeronauku nije mjesto u školi i vrtiću!", *Arena,* November 12, 1998.

23. As is clear from the following newspaper headlines: "Duel of religious instruction and culture of religion" (*Večernji list*, 1995), "Expulsion of God from the school grade book" (*Vjesnik*, 2000), "Close encounter of school and religion" (*Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1990), "Intolerable clericalization of school and society" (*Novi list*, 1998), "Religion as new ideology" (*Glas Slavonije*, 1998), "Religious instruction—new ideologization" (*Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1990), "The Lord's Prayer in the classroom" (*Oko*, 1990); "Croatia in the trap of a religious one-track view" (*Vjesnik*, 1994).

it cannot: The school can only be a poor surrogate for something that should really be offered by the religious communities,[24] it is "alienation from the natural context of spiritual growth— the church community."[25] Besides this, religious communities, as other non-government organizations, are limited to the circle of their members, while school is a social and state institution as well, with its educational aims and tasks at the service of all citizens, regardless of their religious, national or class affiliation.[26]

After confessional Religious Instruction was introduced as a kind of digest of parish religious instruction and Confessional Religious Culture, supported by the majority of Catholic theologians, the debates on introducing a confessionally neutral subject ("Religious Culture") more or less came to a halt, and only sporadically some isolated expressions of support could be heard and some modest initiatives emerged. Thus, different titles were used: History of Religion[27], Discipline on Religions, and even "Culturological Religious Instruction."[28] So far, no such subject has been introduced in public schools. The concept of a non-confessional Religious Culture subject was strongly criticised by the Catholic church, even by cardinal Bozanić (president of the Croatian Conference of Bishops), who ascribes to it the intention "that through some religious culture [subject] a syncretist religious message will be introduced, some kind of neutral religion as a part of the new world order."[29]

In secondary schools, Ethics was introduced as an alternative subject to religious instruction, and the whole second-year pro-

24. Dr Branko Lovrec, president of the Union of Baptist Churches, in Croatia in *Glas Slavonije*, December 12, 1998.

25. Krešimir Dujmović, "Izgon Boga iz školskog imenika," *Vjesnik*, April 15, 2000.

26. Tomo Žalac in "Militantni nastup dijela klera velik problem za Crkvu", *Novi list*, November 10, 1998.

27. Dr Ognjen Kraus, president of the Jewish Community in Croatia, in *Glas Slavonije*, December 12, 1998.

28. Ševko Omerbašić, leader of the Islamic Community in Croatia, in *Glas Slavonije,* December 12, 1990.

29. Stručni katolički kolokvij, 2000 (http://www.nku.hbk.hr/skupovi/priop%202000/kat-kol.htm).

gramme was dedicated to the history of religions and to religious changes in the contemporary world. But in 2000, the Ministry of Education introduced a new program of Ethics in which the subject matter of religion was completely left out, without any comment. This move by the Ministry was not met with any response from the media or the teaching profession.

Curriculum

Religion can be taught in schools in at least two ways—confessionally as Religious Education (Instruction)[30] or non-confessionally, whether as a separate subject[31] or within other subjects. The aim of confessional education is to promote a sense of obligation towards a certain religion, while that of Religious Culture is to give information on religion/religions, to encourage an understanding of religion in general as well as of several different religions and philosophies of life, enabling students to make their own knowledgeable choice.[32] Religious instruction as catechism is actually "an initiation and guide for the catechumens in their true growth and development in religion (cultivation of religion)" (Skledar, 2001). As such it should be conceived in terms of confession, but oriented towards ecumenism and dialogue (ibid.).

In Croatian schools, the confessional subject Religious Instruction started in 1991/1992. It was introduced gradually, depending on the number of interested students and available teachers (Peranić, 1998). At the very beginning some mistreatment of Religious Instruction was observed, especially regarding the position of the subject in the daily schedule and in schools where principals did not treat confessional religious instruction as other subjects. The

30. In European educational systems the following terms are used: Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Religion, Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education…

31. Different terms are used for non-confessional religious education: Religious Culture, Science of Religions, Ethics, Religions and Ethics, History of Religions.

32. These two approaches differ in many ways: time and place of instruction, teacher, position within a teaching programme, and the methods used in teaching and giving grades.

same author pointed to some other problems of introducing the subject to the schools: an unfinished syllabus; no textbooks or manual for the teachers; a shortage of teachers; the inadequate education of lay persons who taught at the beginning; and the lack of pedagogical education for the priests and nuns who taught it, and who were afraid of how other teachers would accept them (Peranić, 1998). Those in charge of the subject paid special attention to the personality of the teacher, who should, in order to gain the acceptance of pupils and other teachers, be simple, humane and sympathetic.[33]

Primary schools

The programme (curriculum) for primary education in the Republic of Croatia was laid down in 1999. As far as religious instruction is concerned, it is only mentioned that it is an elective course that should be held two hours per week, respectively 70 hours annually. As we have seen, the Contract between the government and the Croatian Conference of Bishops stipulates that upon the proposal of the Croatian Conference of Bishops, the programme of Catholic religious instruction will be enacted by the Minister of Education.

The first programme of Catholic religious instruction was drafted in 1991. In 1998 an amended "Plan and Programme of Catholic Religious Instruction" was published as a comprehensive document. In January 1999, the Minister approved the "Programme of Catholic Instruction in Primary School" (2nd amended and supplemented edition). This amended edition, like the first edition from 1998, explains that it is based on theological-ecclesiastic and anthropological-pedagogical principles and criteria.[34] The amend-

33. A large number of articles in the review *Kateheza* were dedicated to the desirable personal characteristics of the Religious Instruction teacher.

34. The programme follows the relevant catechetic and other documents of the Catholic Church, especially the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the General Catechetic Directorate (GCD 1997), the Croatian Bishops' document "Joyful Announcement of the Gospel and Upbringing in Belief" (1983), Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993), basic starting points of the "Plan and Programme of the Catholic Religious Instruction in Primary School" (1998) of the Croatian Bishop's Conference, and its document "The Parish Catechesis in

ments in 1998 and 1999 are said to have been made in accordance with social and ecclesiastic changes posing new challenges for religious education and inculturation.

According to the 1999 programme, Catholic Religious Instruction emphasizes the integral education and upbringing of man, having in mind the religious dimension and the promotion of both personal and social, general human and religious values. The confessional character of Religious Instruction is based on the universal educational and cultural meaning of the religious fact for the person, culture, and society as a whole. The principles of religious instruction in school are the following: devotion to God and man, ecumenical openness and openness to dialogue, correlation of religious upbringing and education according to the principle of an integral education, and an intercultural approach to religious instruction and education.

Catholic Religious Instruction in primary school connects revelation and church tradition with the worldly experience of the pupil. Its goal is a systematic, ecumenical and dialogically open introduction of the Catholic faith, on the levels of information, cognition, perception, and action, to give the pupils a mature Christian faith and wholesome human and religious education.[35]

Renewal of the Parish Community" (2000).

35. The summarised general goals relate to the following: openness towards ultimate questions (the meaning of human life and the world, relationship of the transient and the eternal); a mature human and religious personality, on both the individual and social level; human and Christian consciousness towards oneself, others, society and the world; understanding the biblical messages and connecting them to the everyday life; understanding basic doctrine on God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ (the Trinity), the sacrament of God's love, the Church as sacrament of human salvation; understanding the history of Church and its meaning (as a whole and among Croatians); a wholesome Christian morality; being acquainted with and experiencing the spiritual power and salvific worth of liturgical and church celebrations, sacraments, religiosity and religious life; acquaintance with other and different cultures, and respect for different cultures, denominations and religions (the ecumenical and dialogical dimension); getting to know the role of family and developing a sense for one's responsibility in the family and wider societal community; learning how to resist negative temptations and problems in life; developing spiritual and other

There is no alternative subject to this compulsory-elective course of religious education in primary school.[36] At the same time, religious subject matters are also taught through other subjects such as History, Geography, Literature, and Arts. In our view, not enough is taught about religion at present, and the methods are not always adequate: textbooks in general assume that children already have previous factual knowledge of religions and a historical perspective on religious events, which is not a realistic expectation. For that matter, it is not a realistic expectation that textbook authors have adequate factual knowledge of religions. There are many examples in textbooks that prove this supposition to be wrong. The current integrated approach is mostly traditional, outdated and un-inventive, with only a few elements of current interest or about other cultures. For example, the religious contents taught in third and fourth grade in the subject Nature and Society (Days of Bread, All Saints' day, Christmas and Easter) are all exclusively Christian or exclusively Catholic. The fact that Croatia is a country with a predominantly Catholic population is not an excuse for omitting basic religious customs of at least the major world religions, all the more so since these are public (secular), not Catholic schools.

Secondary schools

The Croatian Conference of Bishops in 1990 formed a special working group for religious instruction in secondary schools, which prepared a Programme of religious instruction for secondary school, approved by Croatian bishops in 1991. Then the Ministry of Education decided to introduce religious instruction in Croatian secondary schools. The difference from primary school is that secondary school has an alternative subject, Ethics. Both subjects are taught one hour per week.

Altogether, the curriculum for secondary schools teaches about religion through three subjects apart from confessional religious instruction:

creative abilities.

36. Finland and Germany in some parts offer Ethics as an alternative subject to denominational religious education.

- *Ethics* is an elective subject taught in single weekly lessons, i.e. 35 lessons per year for four years. The syllabus for the subject stresses that it does not prefer a single worldview or a single philosophy, and it aims at ensuring respect for multiculturalism and a philosophical openness to dialogue. Within each academic year, religious content can be taught through two lessons pertaining to multiculturalism, coexistence, human rights and universalism, whilst one unit is allocated in the fourth grade to the differing approaches to morality, including the religious approach.
- *Sociology* is a compulsory subject in the third grade, taught in two weekly lessons. The accompanying textbook contains a special chapter encompassing the sociological definition of religion, magic and religion, the classics of the sociology of religion, types of religious groups, secularisation, interconnectedness of religion and societal change, as well as the religious communities in Croatia. It is up to the teacher's discretion which parts of the textbooks to teach in greater depth.
- *Politics and economics* is a compulsory subject in the fourth grade of grammar school and is taught in one weekly lesson. A single lesson is dedicated to the relationship between politics and religion in relation to the rights of the individual human being and citizen.

In comparison with some European countries where religious education is only nominally confessional (Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands), and where the main goal is developing educational competence (knowledge about religion alongside knowledge about everything else), the Croatian syllabus of religious education also includes the goals of developing knowledge, skills and values that are the essence of the Catholic faith; the pastoral goal (tied to religious practice); and the evangelic goal (the spreading of the Catholic faith). Unlike some other countries (Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, England), in Croatia religious education is a subject that not only provides knowledge *about* belief but also teaches *to believe* (as in Ireland, Scotland, Austria and Germany). Therefore, it is primarily the teaching of one particular faith, and only secondarily a presentation of other religious and non-religious views of life. It is a subject that

(complementary with parish catechism) is mostly aimed at aiding the transmission of such religious knowledge (tradition) as is also received in the family and church (which were for decades the only settings for this transmission).

Textbooks

In the following we will briefly consider the contents of textbooks for religious instruction, with particular attention to their representation of other religions.

Catholic textbooks

The production of curricula and textbooks went as fast as the political and legal process that led to the introduction of religious instruction. At first the Catholic Church used already existing parish catechism textbooks as the basis for creating new ones (Peranić, 1998).

Because of a "lack of recent domestic examples of syllabi and textbooks for religious instruction and a lack of time" (Paloš, 1998), the above-mentioned Commission chose the Austrian programme for secondary schools as the basic framework and tried to accommodate it to the Croatian church and socio-cultural climate. In spring 1991, the programme was publicly proclaimed and production of religious instruction textbooks for secondary schools could start. Textbooks were published between 1992 and 1994,[37] and have since been revised several times. Textbooks mainly follow issues that have been represented in the programme. All the themes are presented "in the context of God's revelation."

Like the syllabi, the textbooks are firmly based on the doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church and its normative theology. Textbooks communicate moral values originating from Catholic ethical teaching. From the review of programmes and textbooks it is visible that they emphasise the formative nature of Christian (Catholic) values in education—helping to form a Christian (Catholic) identity. As noted above, one of the principles of school religious instruction is

37. Religious instruction manuals for kindergarten teachers and teachers who work with children with special needs have also been made.

"ecumenic and dialogical openness." Respecting this principle, textbook authors present both monotheistic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) and Oriental religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism). Non-Catholic religions have been treated systematically and tolerantly, within the limitations that are inherent to the confessional approach.

The endeavours of textbook authors to present other Christian and non-Christian religions seriously and tolerantly should be appreciated. But the confessional approach is deficient by definition. No matter how tolerant and dialogical it is and how ecumenical it seeks to be, it still validates other religions from a confessional outlook. How can a catechist present to pupils New Age spirituality without value judgments? The problem is especially visible in the textbooks. The tolerant and dialogical approach is given up in the case of new religious movements, whose authenticity and distinctiveness is denied. New religious movements are presented as a consequence of various shortcomings of society and the church. The term "sect," in the context of new religious movements, is given negative connotations ("the youth is often the victim of the sects"; "sects—alienation from their own roots"; "adolescence as a time of escape"; "making a god to one's liking (golden calf)"; "non-critical interpretation of the Bible"; etc.)

Evangelisation as a goal is emphasised in the textbooks of religious instruction. It is visible from many titles in the textbooks' tables of contents: "Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the longing present in all world religions"; "Jesus, set me free from idols—power, pleasure, dependence, different religious movements and sects"; etc.

Islamic textbooks

The Islamic Religious Community has textbooks for all grades of primary and secondary school, except, at the moment, for the second and third grade of primary school. For those grades they use an "Islamic reader" by Ševko ef. Omerbašić. All the textbooks are approved by the Ministry of Education. There are no special sections in primary and secondary school textbooks dedicated to other religious traditions, but tolerance towards other people besides

Muslims is clearly stated (for instance in the section "Islam," where basic Islamic principles are presented): the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims "has to be in accordance with humane Islamic principles," and the following quotation from the Koran is given: "If your Master wanted, everybody in the world would have believed the same. Are you going to hate people until they become believers?" (Omerbašić, 2001: 83).[38]

One section in a secondary school textbook is dedicated to secularism and laicism (in the sense of the people without religion) and their negative influence on religion in general and on the Islamic community in particular (Omerbašić, 2004: 81–82). There is also a negative attitude to paganism, magic and astrology (Omerbašić, 2004: 94–95).

Other confessions

The Serbian Ortodox Church has textbooks for the first through third grade of primary schools and for the first and second grade of secondary schools (all pending approval by the Ministry of Education). Already approved is a manual on method for teachers in primary schools. The remaining religious communities do not teach confessional education in public schools, only in their churches or communities, so they are not obliged to have textbooks.

Teacher training

Religious communities are responsible for the training of teachers, which is regulated by the Law on the legal position of religious communities and by contracts that the Government has signed with particular religious communities.

The leaders or leading bodies of religious communities issue the permissions to teach in public schools, but they can also withdraw this permission from teachers with shortcomings in teaching or in personal morality (Contracts 1999, 2002, 2003). The Ministry of Education confirms the permission, taking into account other legal documents needed for all teachers.

38. [This is a rather free translation of Sura 10 (Yunus): 99. Most translations would have "force" (or similar) instead of "hate." —Ed.]

For all teachers, level VII/I of education (university degree) is required, but level VI (college after secondary school) is also permitted. If there are not enough teachers to carry out confessional religious education in schools, other persons can do it if the religious leader or leading body gives permission. Teachers of confessional education are members of teachers' councils, and have the same rights and duties as other teachers in school. They have to pass a professional exam after a one-year training period, and under the same conditions as other teachers, to be promoted to the status of mentor-teacher or adviser-teacher (a better-paid position that involves counselling younger colleagues).

The education of Catholic religious instruction teachers is the most developed. They are educated at the Catechetic Institutes and Faculties of Theology.[39] The National Catechetic Office of the Croatian Conference of Bishops is responsible for permanent teacher training as well as for additional training organized through seminars. Many such additional seminars are organized during the year, and the permission to teach Catholic religious instruction (*missio canonica*) can be withdrawn from a teacher who fails to attend this permanent education.[40] As we mentioned before, at the beginning of the 1990s there was a lack of properly educated teachers for confessional religious instruction. Only priests and nuns started to teach, but they were mostly without methodical and didactical training. Lay-persons gradually started to teach and to reach the needed level

39. The biggest Catholic theological faculty is the one at the University of Zagreb (founded in 1669), which has a Catechetic Institute. Affiliated to this faculty are other higher theological schools in Split, Đakovo, Rijeka, the Franciscan higher theological school in Makarska and the higher theological-catechetical school in Zadar. There is also a theological school within the Diocesan Missionary Neocatechumen Preparatory in Pula. In Zagreb, the Jesuits have a Philosophical Theological Institute which is affiliated to the Pontifical University Gregoriana, Rome. A Jesuit Faculty of Philosophy is part of the Croatian Studies University of Zagreb.

40. In its letter to Catholic confessional education teachers, the National Catechetic Office of the Croatian Conference of Bishops warned them that they are obliged to attend additional and permanent education through organized seminars in order to maintain the needed professional level (http://www.nku.hbk.hr/glasnik/).

of education. A transitional five-year period (1991/1992–1995/96) was extended twice, but by 2000, time was up for the teachers who had to reach the required educational level (Kurečić, 1998).

According to data obtained from National Catechetic Office, today there are 2,454 teachers of Catholic confessional instruction in primary and secondary schools. Among them, there are more laypersons than priests and nuns. In secondary schools, there are 413 teachers. Catholic confessional religious instruction is attended by 84 per cent of all primary school pupils.[41]

Islamic confessional religious instruction is taught by 14 teachers in 46 schools in Croatia. In public schools, 690 pupils attend these classes. Teachers are educated at the Islamic faculty in Sarajevo and in various Muslim countries (like Turkey and Malaysia). There are an additional 540 pupils who also attend religious instruction in the Zagreb Mosque.[42]

In Eastern Croatia (the Eparchy of Osječko-Polje and Baranja) with the greatest presence of the Serbian ethnic minority, there are 30 teachers of Orthodox confessional religious instruction in public schools for 4,000 pupils.[43]

Empirical data on attitudes towards religious education in schools

Public attitudes towards religious instruction in public schools were explored in two studies conducted in 1989 and 1996 on representative samples of the adult population in Croatia.[44]

In the 1989 study, when asked the question: "Should a greater role in education for religious organizations be allowed?" adult citizens of Croatia responded as follows: 68% agreed, 32% disagreed.

41. *Glas koncila*, February 6, 2005.

42. Within the Zagreb Mosque, there is an Islamic center which also includes the *Medresa* or Islamic theological secondary school.

43. For other eparchies, data are not yet available.

44. The studies "Social structure and quality of life" conducted by the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb in 1989 and "Social structure and quality of life in the transitional period" conducted by the Centre for Transition and Civil Society Research" in 1996.

The data show that that a majority of the respondents at that time were tolerant of, and ready to accept, a greater role for the church in children's education.

In the 1996 study, the following question was asked: "What do you think about introduction of religious instruction in schools?" The respondents answered as follows: "It should be obligatory"—28%, "It should be optional"—65%, "It should be expelled"—7%. The majority (65%) of respondents in the 1996 survey, then, declared that religious/confessional instruction in public schools should be optional—which it already was at that time. Obviously the present situation is congenial to the majority.

Also interesting are the data from the study "Children and the media"[45] conducted on a representative sample of 1,000 primary school pupils from fifth to eighth grade. Asked the question "Should confessional religious instruction be taught in schools or not?" pupils responded as follows: 48% were for and 52% against confessional religious instruction in schools (Marinović Bobinac, 2001).

Some of the results of the study "Evaluation of the curriculum and development of the models of curriculum for primary education in Croatia" are also relevant for the topic of religious instruction.[46] According to the opinion of the school-grade and secondary school teachers, the present curriculum is too extensive and out-of-date. It is considered that the present curriculum should be re-structured and refreshed with new contents. Thirty-four per cent of the teachers deem that religious instruction should not be held in school. At the same time they support the introduction of more

45. Research was conducted in 2000 by the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb and the State Bureau for the Protection of Family, Motherhood and Youth.

46. These are the results of the empirical assessment of the opinions of primary school and secondary school teachers on the present curriculum, its implementation and amendments. The research has been carried out in 2003 on the sample of 2,134 junior-high and 1,134 grade-school teachers, 2,674 eighth-grade pupils, and 120 principals in 121 primary schools in Croatia. The research was done by the Centre for Education of the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb.

foreign languages, informatics as a mandatory subject, sexual education, human rights education, etc. They consider a major failing of the present curriculum to be a lack of balance, i. e. under-representation of "pedagogical" subjects, whose number of hours per week should be increased (arts, music, gym, health and technical culture) and over-representation of some others, which should be reduced (religious instruction is in the first place, mentioned by 51% of the teachers) (Baranović, 2005). The analysis of the curriculum points at the need for a coherent, well-balanced and integrated national curriculum. For Croatia, accession to the European Union is a key strategic target, and thus adapting to the European educational context is one of the main conditions of development in the field of education. So, besides the domestic educational and social context, development of the national curriculum must take into account the experience and the development trends in Europe as well as in the world (Baranović, 2005).

Conclusion

After the fall of communism, the position and the role of religion and churches was completely changed. Religion became present in public life, the media, and the educational system as well.

Various legal acts (the Constitution, the Law on the position of religious communities, and the contracts between religious communities and the Government of the Republic of Croatia) enabled the introduction of religious instruction in schools. This was followed by a discourse about whether religious education should be confessional or non-confessional.

The ruling political structures at that time strongly supported the confessional approach, pushed by the Catholic Church. Although confessional religious instruction in schools was not supported by other religious communities at the beginning, they finally agreed to introduce it in public schools after signing contracts of mutual interest with the Croatian government. The advocates of the non-confessional approach were intellectuals from different areas of social life, including religious communities. But the non-confessional approach has been completely marginalised in the debate.

Therefore, the situation in the Croatian schools is as follows. Religious Instruction as a confessional, optional subject in all grades of primary and secondary school has been the dominant mode of teaching religion in the last 15 years. Although it could be debated whether the public school is the right place for it, and whether it is in accordance with the principle of separation of the state and the church, it is a fact that confessional Religious Instruction already has its history in Croatian schools.

The subject is graded and treated as all other subjects in schools. Its teachers, too, are treated equally with other teachers. Religious education has been segregated and mono-denominational (with some multi-denominational elements) and general issues are taught through specific religions. The responsibility for Religious Instruction is split between the state and the church.

Catholic, Orthodox and Islamic confessional Religious Instruction is taught in public schools, while other religious communities teach it in their churches. Religious Instruction is taught by clerics as well as by lay persons educated at theological faculties, whereas Ethics is taught by philosophers and sociologists.

Tolerance towards other religions is present in all textbooks, but new religious movements, atheism, and secularism are negatively evaluated.

Finally, it should be stressed that the lack of an alternative subject means that pupils who are not religiously socialised within their families and who do not attend confessional religious instruction in schools are deprived of the opportunity to meet the world and values of different religions.

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4. Religious education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Zlatiborka Popov and Anne Mette Ofstad

Background and introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, with a separate administrative district, Brčko. The Federation is further divided into ten cantons, of which five with a Muslim majority, three with a Catholic majority, and two cantons without an ethnic majority (in all cantons there are Serb minorities). There is a lack of reliable statistics on the country's present population (somewhere above 4 million), not to mention its religious affiliation.[1] A frequently cited estimate suggests that Muslims make up 40 % of the population, Serbian Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholics 15%, and others 14%.

After the first multi-party election in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1990, the demand for introduction of religious education in the schools appeared. During communism, religious education was considered a private matter. Before, during and after the war, the border lines between the ethnic groups grew stronger and religious consciousness arose. Religion, history and language are the main markers that distinguish the different groups. The language differences are small;[2] the three groups have a somewhat different view on history, but the main marker distinguishing the groups is religion. This might be one reason why the demand for a Religious

1. The last census was held in 1991, and did not survey religious adherence.

2. The grammar and structure is the same. Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian may be considered dialect variants of the same language. Before the war all pupils learned both the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabet and newspapers might mix both. Today, only the schools in Republika Srpska use Cyrillic.

Education subject in school became so important. The request was explained to be based on the obligation to respect human rights, and the assumption that the previous system discriminated by not letting religion exist as a school subject.

However, this school subject has created numerous difficulties, including with regard to human rights. A report by the Bosnian human rights Ombudsman names religious education in schools as a source of violation of children's rights (Institucija Ombudsmana 2000). In the majority of cantons, Religious Education is taught only to the children of the majority national/religious group. There is discrimination against children from minorities, mixed marriages and atheistic families. Parental and peer pressure forces pupils to attend or not to attend religious education. In some schools, religious education is obligatory, and there are even attempts to introduce collective prayers. The absence of religious education for other confessions is said to be justified by the small number of pupils. Religion teachers are not under the control of educational authorities (educational inspections), and in many cases they lack the legally required pedagogical education. Therefore, according to the Ombudsman, religious teachers have a special status in the educational system which is not prescribed by law.

As early as 1991, the education authority,[3] in cooperation with religious institutions, started to prepare and design a blueprint for religious education in schools for all confessions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The result of the final implementation of this idea was the adoption of the "Plan and Program of religious education for the Islamic, Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, and Adventist religion" in 1994. The subject of Religion was introduced in the school curriculum during the war, by the law of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it was adapted later in 1996 according to the new constitutional order, which needs a word of explanation.

The Bosnian constitution is unique: The citizens of Bosnia have not voted for it; rather, it was imposed by the international community as part of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The two entities have their own legal systems. The Federation is divided into ten

3. The Republic Secretariat for Education, Science, Culture and Sports (Republicki sekretarijat za obrazovanje, nauku, kulturu i fizicku kulturu).

cantons, which also have their own legislation, although the legislation is harmonized to a certain extent. Some fields are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the cantons, like culture, education, social and health care. Each canton passes its own education laws, according to the wishes and needs of the ethnic groups. The canton chooses the language (Bosnian, Croatian, or Serbian), the curriculum, and the textbooks. Although a Ministry of Education exists on the Federation level, it has little influence on cantonal politics, and serves more as a liaison between cantons, and as an advisory institution.

Thus religious communities prepared curricula for a religious subject that was approved by cantonal governments. They developed the methods and the teaching units for each grade and started publishing books. What subjects were designed depended on the majority ethnicity in the canton. In 2002, a Bosnian education reform was set in motion.

In this paper we will investigate what models of religious instruction exist in the schools. We will examine the intended aims for religious education stated in the laws on education, especially religious education. To establish how religious education is implemented in both entities and in the different cantons, we have carried out a questionnaire survey of schools. We will also give an introduction to "Culture of Religion," a non-confessional school subject that has been introduced in some schools in Bosnia. A presentation will be given of the content in textbooks used by the three major religious groups, Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox, with analyses of similarities and differences. Special emphasis will be put on how the textbooks of each religious tradition portray the other religious groups. We will also give highlights of the current debate on religious education in the mass media.

The laws concerning religious education

The Law on freedom of religion and the legal position of churches and religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004), Art. 4, reads:

> (…) Everyone shall have the right to religious education, which shall be provided solely by persons appointed so to do by an official representative of his Church or religious community, whether in religious institutions or in public and private pre-school institutions, primary schools and higher education (...).

The law states that all pupils in Bosnia have the right to religious education, and emphasizes the churches' responsibility and right to perform religious education within the school curriculum. The Framework Law on primary and secondary education (*Official Gazette* 18/2003) is valid for both entities and the district of Brčko. In addition, all the cantons have issued their own laws on education. In their articles about religious education these laws either quote the state law, quote part of it, or refer generally to the state law on education, as does the district law of Brčko, which does not say anything specific about religious education.[4] Confessional religious education is given high priority in the laws: The articles about religious education tend to come at the beginning of the law, together with the article that regulates school languages.

Article 9 of the Framework Law states that "Schools shall promote and protect religious freedom, tolerance and dialogue in BiH." An example of how this is reflected in cantonal legislation is the Law on primary education in Canton 10, Article 26:

> Schools shall promote and protect religious rights and freedom, tolerance and dialogue, and enable churches and religious communities recognized by law in Bosnia and Herzegovina to carry out regular religious instruction in primary schools in accordance with their beliefs and tradition.

Religious education is considered a school matter and is taken out of the private sphere. At the same time, the churches are in charge of the Religious Education subject, and therefore it is obviously a confessional school subject. It was felt to be important to establish religious education as a public matter, since during communism, it was kept strictly in the private domain. It is interesting to

4. Article 10 of the Brčko law reads: "Primary and secondary education within the District schools shall be harmonized with the standards and principles of the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

note that the law stresses the churches' authority and control over religious education, but says nothing about the schools' supervision over the subject.

The 2003 Framework Law charged the authorized education authorities, especially on the level of primary schools, with increased responsibility for protection of religious freedom, tolerance, and cultural dialogue. Accordingly, its Article 9 says: "(…) pupils shall attend religious classes only if latter match their beliefs or beliefs of their parents." The corresponding part in Article 26 of the cantonal law reads: "Pupils shall attend religious instruction in accordance with their own religious beliefs (…)."

The law does not mention any limitation on each pupil's right to religious education, and it does not state a minimum number of pupils required to offer classes in that confession in a school. The exception is the Republika Srpska (RS), which promises to give religious instruction according to the belief of a group of 30 or more pupils in a school (RS MoE, 1998). Since Bosnia is a multi-religious country, with three major confessions and a number of minor religious groups, the law disregards the considerable practical problems many schools would have if they were to follow this law to the letter.

Furthermore, students who do not wish to attend Religious Education classes shall not in any way be disadvantaged compared with other students (Framework Law, Article 9). The cantonal law similarly provides that:

> Schools shall take care that pupils who do not attend classes in religious instruction are in no way placed at a disadvantage in relation to other pupils and shall instead provide such children with other teaching or extracurricular activities during periods of religious instruction. (Canton no. 10 law, Article 26)

The law does not say what kind of instruction the exempted children should be offered. It might be natural to expect an offer of non-confessional religious classes, but this is not stated as an option. According to the general state law, Religious Education has the character of an optional subject in accordance with the pupils' own religious beliefs. With decentralization of education, in the Federa-

tion the responsibility for education policy, legislation and provision devolved on cantonal education authorities. In the valid cantonal laws in the field of education, the subject got a different status: it became a mandatory subject, or alternatively a binding subject per parents' choice. In accordance with this, some cantons followed the 1994 curriculum of Religious Education, while other cantons adopted their own curricula. The practical performance is full of problems: the lack of qualified teachers and appropriate books, and the fact that it is impossible to organize classes for various confessions in all schools.

The reality is that public schools offer Religious Education classes in the majority religion. In theory, students have the option not to attend, but in practice students of the majority religion have felt pressure from teachers and peers to attend the classes.

In cantons with a Bosniak (Muslim) majority, religious classes are optional (Sarajevo, Zenica-Doboj), or they are compulsory once one has made a choice to attend them (Uno-Sana, Tuzla, and Goražde). That is, if you choose Religious Education at the beginning of the year, you are obliged to attend classes for that school year. In these five cantons, schools offer Islamic Religious Education as a weekly two-hour elective course. Only in the Croat-majority West Herzegovina Canton is Religious Education obligatory over the whole school period for children who choose it in the first grade.

The constitution of Republika Srpska Art. 28 reads:

> Freedom of religion shall be guaranteed. Religious communities shall be equal before the law and shall be free to perform religious affairs and services. They may open religious schools and perform religious education in all schools at all levels of education; they may engage in economic and other activities, receive gifts, establish legacies and manage them, in conformity with the law.[5]

5. It is relevant to note that, until 2002, this Article continued as follows: "The Serbian Orthodox Church shall be the church of the Serb people and other people of Orthodox religion. The State shall materially support the Orthodox Church and it shall co-operate with it in all fields and, in particular, in preserving, cherishing and developing cultural, traditional and other spiritual values."

In the RS, children attend Religious Education classes in primary school but not in secondary schools. Serbs are expected to attend these classes, but attendance is not required for Bosniaks and Croats. If more than 30 Bosniaks or Croats attend a particular school in the RS, the school is required to organize Religious Education classes on their behalf. However, in the rural RS, there is usually no qualified religious representative available to teach religion to a small number of Bosniak or Croat students.

To sum up: According to the laws, Religious Education is to be taught confessionally by the respective churches/religious communities. Once Religious Education is chosen, it is a compulsory subject. Everybody is entitled to religious instruction according to their confession. Those who choose not to participate in religious classes are supposed to be offered alternatives.

Aims and goals of Religious Education

In the following we cite the goals and aims of Islamic and Orthodox Religious Education as they are broadly defined in syllabi we have obtained from schools. As for the goals and aims of Catholic Religious Education, we have relied on the book *Plan and Program for Catholic Religious Education in Elementary School*, published by the Bishops' Conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The aims of Islamic religious education are

- To introduce pupils to the Koran and to the belief in one God, His angels, His books, His prophets, and Judgment Day;
- To enable pupils to live practically in accordance with Islamic duties: the declaration of faith, prescribed prayers, religious discipline (the fast), religious material obligations (the *zakat* or alms-tax) and *hajj* (the pilgrimage);
- To develop a sense of duty and responsibility toward the above-mentioned;
- To get children to think about their surroundings;
- To introduce the children to the Islamic system of values;
- To develop and form active and conscious love for Allah and the Islamic community;

– To introduce the children to the appearance and development of Islam in our area, and to its material and spiritual heritage.

We may conclude that the stated goals of Islamic religious education are purely confessional.

The aims of Catholic religious education are:

– To build an openness toward transcendence and questioning the deepest meaning of human life and the world in relation to temporality and eternity;
– To develop mature human and religious personal uniqueness, on the individual and social level, in all dimensions of human life: spiritual and material;
– To build the capacity for understanding biblical messages and linking them to everyday life;
– To acquire a Christian consciousness in relations toward self, others, society and world;
– To develop an understanding that God has summoned people to mutual love and fellowship;
– To introduce and accept God's Trinity and Jesus as savior of all human beings;
– To reveal the strength of the Church of Jesus as a sacrament of salvation and enable pupils to live and serve in the Church;
– To introduce the significance of the history of the Catholic Church, which serves Jesus in different ways among Croatians on social, cultural, and scientific level;
– To develop gratitude for God's unlimited love and enable pupils for brotherly service, goodness, social justice, solidarity and feeling of mutual gratitude;
– To internalize the whole Christian morality, that is to say Jesus' law of love and servitude;
– To experience the spiritual strength and significance of liturgy, feasts, and sacraments;
– To get knowledge about others who are different, and develop respect for other cultures and confessions;
– To understand the causes of conflicts between parents and children, people and nations, and enable pupils to overcome

conflicts in order to build a harmonious personal and social life;
- To understand the role of the family in the development of personal and social life, and to build responsibility for one's own family and the broader community;
- To take a Christian path of faith, love and hope in order to resist negative temptations and problems in life, especially in the period of youth and growing up.

(Biskupska Konferencija Bosne i Hercegovine, 2003: 53-55).

We can conclude from these stated aims as well as from the analysis of textbooks that the goals of Catholic religious education are not purely confessional (Christian and Catholic), but also include the importance of knowing and understanding different cultures and religions, in a fairly neutral way.

The aims of Orthodox religious education are:
- To understand and accept God's trinity as basic Christian thought, and Jesus who sacrificed himself for the salvation of all mankind;
- To understand the significance of the Bible through which God sends messages for all mankind;
- To understand that God is endless, unlimited, absolute, a personal and spiritual being;
- To understand that knowledge of God is limited, but through the stages of cleansing (*očišćenje*), illumination (*prosvetljenje*) and delight in God (*ushićenje prema Bogu*) we can draw closer to God, and that God wants to draw close to us as his creatures;
- To understand the Christian message that solves the problems of life and death, morality and sins;
- To develop a sense that the Church, as the body of Jesus and fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, unites all people in God's love;
- To get pupils to participate in the life of the Orthodox Church, which maintains the pure and intact Christian message;
- To get pupils to live in accordance with Jesus' message and to learn and understand the subject of religious education not as

an obligatory school subject, but as important to their personal development;
- To develop Christian values and virtues among pupils, such as modesty, moral purity, benevolence, mercy, gentleness, generosity;
- To apply those values in family, church, and state, as the most important Christian communities;
- To understand the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church, from the medieval period till today, in order to develop our own national and religious identity;
- To enable pupils to respect the civilization and culture they are heirs to.

From this we may conclude that the aims of religious education are confessional (Christian and Orthodox) and national.

Analysis of the textbooks

Islamic religious textbooks

Our analysis of the textbooks for Islamic religious education shows them to be purely confessional in content. This can be also perceived in the preface of the textbook for the seventh grade, which states that the task is "to learn our faith and our tradition." The goal of every Muslim is Allah, his satisfaction and support. So "we want to be faithful and practical followers of Mohammed, a.s., (…) and this knowledge will make us good people, good believers, honest citizens and winners in this life and the life to come" (Omerdić and Halajdžisilahović, 2004: 5).

All textbooks seek to teach pupils about the basic elements of Islam, Islamic rules of behavior and morality, through verses from the Koran, stories from the life of the prophet Mohammed, stories from everyday life connected with Islam, prayers, and teaching about what is obligatory (*halal*) and forbidden (*haram*).

In every textbook, the importance of prayer (*namaz*) is especially emphasized. Prayer is the most important precondition for living a regular Islamic life and for salvation. Being perfect, God (Allah) does not need our prayer, but we need it in order to restore our soul and save us from evil thoughts and deeds. Prayer is a *farz* (strict Is-

lamic duty). A believer stays closest to God during prayer. It has its strict rules: purity of body, clothing, and place of prayer; decent attire; it must be conducted five times a day; the body must be turned toward Mecca, and there must be intent (*nijjet*): one must decide with one's own heart to conduct the prayer. The most basic text of prayer is the declaration of faith: I bear witness that there is no God besides Allah, and that Mohammed. is his prophet.

The remaining three pillars or basic Islamic duties, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage, are also covered. As the very word Islam means obedience to God, the importance of performing Islamic duties is emphasized in every textbook. A special place is also given to the rules and norms of Islamic behaviour (*ahlak*). Three groups of rules are outlined: 1) duties toward God: to avoid everything he has forbidden and to perform everything he has ordered, to repent for our sins, and to always pray for forgiveness; 2) duties toward ourselves: to maintain our health and protect our life, to work and earn a living, to feed ourselves, to cure disease, to improve in morals, and to learn useful sciences; 3) duties toward others: parents, children, neighbours, fatherland, and the Islamic community.

The third group of duties is very important; in every textbook some of these duties are mentioned. For instance, Islam stresses the brotherhood of all Muslims, and the textbook for the third grade says: "In short, Muslims have to live as one family and be as one body. Only in that way will they be powerful, strong and able to defend themselves from enemies. Only in that way will they be in Allah's grace and earn his help" (Ćatić and Štulanović, 2004: 100). The importance of community can be seen in the fact that the collective prayer is 25 times worthier than individual one, for it develops the feeling of Muslim solidarity (Ćatić and Štulanović, 2004: 48). So children are called to respect, love, and listen to their parents, parents are called to care for their children's lives and health, to educate them in the spirit of Islam, to teach them about religious truths and rituals, to prepare them for an honest profession, to help them to establish a family when they grow up, etc. The importance of Muslim brotherhood is also illustrated through stories from Mohammed's life: his respect for children, orphans, sick and older people, as well as through the fact that the Medinan Muslims gave

half of their income to Muslims who were persecuted from Mecca (Ćatić, 2005: 42). A *hadith* says that those who do not care for public affairs are not Muslims (Ćatović, 2004: 115).

Among forbidden deeds, the stress is laid on: believing in many gods and idolatry; murder; theft; sexual promiscuity; disobedience to parents; alcohol; gambling; bad deeds toward others (to endanger the life of another Muslim, to damage his property, to endanger his honor, to be in bad relations with another Muslim longer than three days, to do any harm to another Muslim, etc.). As can be seen, the emphasis is on relations with other Muslims, while "the others" are mentioned very rarely, e.g. in one poem to the effect that Muslims are brothers, but to hate other people is not prescribed in the Koran (Ćatić & Štulanović, 2004: 3).

All this shows the strictly confessional character of religious education for Bosniak (Muslim) pupils. However, it is also stated as an Islamic duty to love and protect the fatherland. Problematically, the accompanying illustration shows the multi-confessional fatherland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in green (the color of Islam). The textbooks speak about religious others, Jews and Christians, from a position of having the only and whole truth: Islam is described as the perfect religion, and Jewish and Christian prophets have only prepared the coming of the last and most perfect prophet Mohammed. Islam is considered as the sum of universal rules, which were revealed not to one nation but to all humankind. Islam is not a new faith, but the peak of God's revelations. The value of the right path, truth and kindness present in Islam cannot be replaced by anything else (Ćatović, 2004: 21). Islamic rules and norms are given in complete accordance with human needs and possibilities, since Allah has created man and therefore knows what is good and bad for him. Truth, justice, humanity, love, courage, honesty, morality, diligence, optimism and all other universal and eternal values are present in the Islamic way of life (Ćatović, 2004: 22). It is even claimed that every child is born in the nature of Islam, yet his parents make of him a Jew or a Christian.

Every religion, especially every monotheistic religion, claims to possess the whole and universal truth. But in the situation of living in a religiously heterogeneous community such as Bosnia and Her-

zegovina, such claims and assertions cannot contribute to the establishment of a tolerant and humane society. For example, in the textbook for the fourth grade, children are asked to think about the facts that all people are not Muslims and that all Muslims are not true believers. These questions are intriguing but also assume a critical mind beyond the capacity of ten-year-olds.

The emphasis on duties and obedience prevails in all textbooks. Children are called to follow the Islamic rules very strictly. Some rituals are described in minute detail. For instance, the *abdest* ritual of ablution before every prayer is depicted with photographs and explained in more than three pages filled with rules.

Although it is mentioned that a good Muslim is tolerant, tolerance is emphasized primarily in relations with other Muslims. The West is described as godless. This, it is said, is why many people in the West suffer from depression, loneliness and helplessness, and the suicide count is high, whereas such phenomena are very rare in Islamic countries, because of a strong belief in God and in the importance of community.

Catholic religious textbooks

Through a variety of texts, illustrations, photographs, famous artistic works and quotations from Scripture, literature and philosophy, the Catholic textbooks offer an interesting and overall view on Catholicism, but also on the nature of religion in general, other world religions (Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam) and other Christian communities (Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Greek Catholicism). All this is placed in the context of the modern world, its problems and challenges: liberty, persistent and even growing poverty, the consumer society, ecumenism, the need for dialogue and tolerance. The problems of young people are also highlighted, along with their right to freedom and the importance of their maturity, development and improvement, in the sense of their freedom from evil and from modern sorts of idolatry, and their right to develop as a whole and unique persons. This is discussed in the context of basic Christian norms: love for God, his son Jesus and love for other people whom we must love as ourselves.

However, the contexts are, as we have already mentioned, mainly confessional. In all textbooks, the stress is laid on the Bible (Old and New Testament), on its history, its prophets and prophetic laws. The history of the Catholic Church—its basic dogmas, rituals, prayers, holy people (saints), and sacraments—is presented, not without a critical standpoint: Some moments in the history of the Catholic Church are criticized, such as the Inquisition, abuse of power by some popes and clerics, simony, and holy wars (especially medieval crusades). A short history of Croatia is also presented, and connected with the history of the Catholic Church in this area, with its famous Croatian leaders, saints and martyrs. Special stress is laid on the Bible, with its rich and complex history. It is said that one must take four paths in order to understand the Bible: understanding the world of Abraham and the nomad tribes who moved in the area where biblical events took place; keeping in mind that the Bible consists of many books written in different genres; understanding that "the world of the Bible is the world of us all," as it speaks of man in general, people's hopes and dreams; and realising that the Bible is not just literature, but the word of God sent to all people.

History is presented through the life and work of prophets: Abraham, Jacob, Moses and Jesus (the last is the peak of prophecies) and Jewish kings: Saul, Solomon, and David. The coming of Jesus represents a turning point in history, for Jesus promotes a completely different attitude toward sinners, the poor and the sick, women and children. His teaching that all people are equal has marked the entire history of humankind. He gave back dignity to all people and promised a new kingdom of Heaven, the basic law of which is love. In that kingdom, riches are not measured in money, nor is authority acquired by military power. The continuity of Jesus' word is explained by the missionary work of Paul and the other apostles, by the lives of martyrs who marked the history of Christianity, and by the life of Jesus' mother Maria and her place in the Church today. A short history of Christianity is given in all textbooks. The emphasis is on the persecution of first Christians, their life in the catacombs, and the acknowledgment of Christianity by Roman emperor Constantine. The later privileged position of Christianity in society is described as dangerous, for there was a threat that Church would

care more for the secular than for the spiritual and identify itself with political authorities. The bright sides of the Church in history are said to be the establishment of universities, the development of theology, the building of magnificent cathedrals and monasteries, and the religious orders (Franciscans and Benedictines).

In the textbook for the eighth grade, special attention is paid to the Catholicism of Croats: the baptizing of Croats; Church organization and work in promoting culture and education; difficulties during the Turkish occupation; the struggle for liberty, political unity and own language in the period when Austria-Hungary ruled over Croatia; and the difficult position of Catholics in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (1918-1941). The activities of the Catholic Church in Croatia during the Second World War are described as a struggle against totalitarianism. The national, racial and religious discrimination of the Ustasha regime in the Independent Croatia is ascribed to the pressure of German and Italian fascists. Nothing is written about the connection of Catholic Church with the Ustasha regime, which is a very controversial question, or about the genocide against Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies, and the forced conversion to Catholicism of Orthodox Serbs in that period.

Special attention is given to the renewal of the Catholic Church in 20th century, especially after the Second Vatican Council. The Catholic Church promotes ecumenism and reconciliation with other Christian Churches, inter-religious dialogue and tolerance towards other religions, and separation from the state. The Church acknowledges the independence of culture, science, and technology, but does not want to be excluded from social life. On the contrary, the Catholic Church wants to enrich it with Christian and evangelical values, and one goal of religious education is the promotion of those universal values and their internalization. Therefore the most important Christian truths, commandments and norms are given in the context of modern society: the ever-growing process of idolatry in modern society (famous film and music stars), discrimination, human rights, etc;, as well as in the context of situation of young people: the problems of puberty, maturity (physical and mental) and their desire to master the world of adults. The need for religious dialogue and tolerance in world today is also highlighted, and a

special place is given to the work of Pope John Paul II, who, it is said, succeeded in finding updated solutions to those problems. In that spirit, the textbooks give basic information about other religions, and the importance of reconciliation between Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants is especially highlighted. The importance of common inheritance and mutual respect between Jews and Christians is also mentioned. Christ's suffering on the cross for the love and salvation of all people must not be abused for hostilities and hatred. One of the most interesting parts in the textbooks concerns the problem of discrimination and the need for dialogue between different people. Although different, all people are connected and every person is important for humankind. All world religions are said to have the same command: We should treat the others in the same way we want them to treat us.

In short, the textbooks for Catholic religious education are written in a rather open, intriguing and critical way. By telling about other religions and stressing dialogue, tolerance, freedom, and personal development, the textbooks are likely to improve the general knowledge of pupils and enable their critical and personal development. The emphasis on Catholicism enables pupils to learn more about their religious tradition and rituals, but the context is not purely dogmatic and uncritical. However, some controversial periods in the history of the Catholic Church (especially during the Second World War) are omitted, and national history is presented as a struggle for freedom, national and religious liberty, and martyrdom. If those deficiencies had been overcome, there would be no remarks on the contents of textbooks for Catholic religious education in BiH.

Orthodox religious textbooks

The textbooks for Orthodox religious education are more narrowly confessional in character. The textbooks for pupils from first to fifth grade present a shortened version of the Bible, with the main prophets and martyrs from the Old and New Testament. They have numerous simple illustrations depicting key events from the Bible.

Textbooks for pupils from the fifth to ninth grade go into more depth about Christianity, its prophets, teachers, and history. The fifth-grade textbook explains the history of Christianity through the

acts of the Apostles, the establishment of Christianity, Holy Synods, the baptizing of the Slavs, and church schisms. The eighth-grade textbook introduces pupils to the Orthodox dogma: God, the creation of the world, Christ's prophecy and resurrection, human nature, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life. The ninth-grade textbook deals with Christian ethics: Humans are the only moral beings on the earth, for they are endowed with reason and freedom and the ability to distinguish good from evil. Particular stress is placed on Christian virtues such as modesty, moral purity, grace, benefaction, compassion etc. These virtues are explained through simple stories and examples from everyday life, and examples from the Bible. However, the basic Christian virtues are faith, hope and love. These virtues help us to orient ourselves in life, to avoid sin, to improve morally, to find peace in our souls, and to find the strength and will to struggle for our salvation. The highest virtue of these three is love, for it enables man to draw closer to God and unite with him. Also, the highest Christian commands are connected with love: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Vrhovac, 2004: 26-27). Life in the spirit of Christianity is something to be achieved gradually with an effort, through virtues Jesus explained in the Sermon on the Mount. Accepting and internalizing these virtues, man grows ever closer to God.

Besides such universal Christian dogmas and ethics, the textbooks give much space to the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church, to national history, and to the specificity of Orthodoxy compared to other Christian communities. The seventh-grade textbook speaks of the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church and of national history, which are presented as linked and intermingled. The rule of certain Serbian medieval rulers is briefly described: They founded churches, shrines, and monasteries, and most of them, before their death, became monks. On their graves, many miracles have taken place. The rulers who expanded the territory of the state are singled out for particular praise. Naturally, special attention is paid to the life and work of Saint Sava, who was the son of Serbian ruler Stevan Nemanja, but abandoned the secular way of life to

become a monk. His most important achievements are the establishment of an independent autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church, the founding of monasteries, and the promotion of culture and literature (Pajić, 2004: 18–30). Stress is laid also on the fall of the Serbian medieval state and its submission to the Turkish Empire. The Kosovo battle is described not only as a military conflict, but also as a clash between Islam and Christianity. In that way, the military conflict and its political consequences (the accelerated fall of the Serbian state) are understood and described in religious symbols and colors. The conflict is perceived in the light of the so-called Kosovo ethic, founded, as it is presumed, on the Christian teaching about the soul. It assumes service to the high ideals of justice and truth, freedom and sacrifice. The striving for the so-called "freedom of all Serbian areas" is built onto that, thus the Kosovo ethic is considered as the highest ideal and moral achievement of the national consciousness (Pajić, 2004: 46). Also stressed is the period of struggles for national freedom in the Ottoman empire, and the role of the Orthodox Church and its representatives in this process.

In general, we can conclude that the textbooks for Orthodox religious education in Bosnia are purely confessional, but also national.[6] They try to explain to pupils the Orthodox understanding of Christianity, with the claim that the Orthodox Church has maintained the purity of the Apostles' faith, whereas, e.g., the Catholic Church organizes the church as an autocracy (Mojsilović, 2004: 21). The textbooks are written from a position of having the only and whole truth, e.g. "we Orthodox recognise that our church is the true continuity of that first community, established by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles" (Stojanović, 2005: 5-6).

There is very little information about the other religions. One chapter of the eighth-grade textbook states that fatalism, the belief in Fate, is present in Arabian religions, Greek mythology, Hinduism, Islam, Chinese religion etc. Only in Judaism and Christianity, God is understood as an all-knowing and free person and man as a free per-

6. This derives from the historical fact that, after the fall of the Serbian state and Turkish rule, the church played an important role in maintaining the ethnic identity.

son, who opts freely for community with God, and in that way overcomes the limits of temporality (Stojanović, 2005: 24). As for relations toward "others," Serbs must teach their children to maintain their own faith and cultural inheritance, but also to respect the others (Pajić, 2004: 46). However, there are some "others" from whom we need special protection. They are described as "sects" (Jehovah's Witnesses, Satanists, Adventists, Pentecostalists), whose goal is to destroy the person, the family, and thus the whole society. This is also one of the objections that can be raised to the textbooks for Orthodox religious education in Bosnia. There should be more information about religion in general and world religions such as Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam. Also, because Bosniaks and Croats as well as Serbs are constituent peoples in Bosnia, some basic information about Islam and Catholicism should be given, especially when we take into consideration that religion, or rather the political abuse of religion, helped bring about and rationalize the horrors of war in Bosnia. It is also problematic to write about the "sects" without giving information about Protestantism's origins and main characteristics.

Survey of schools implementing religious education

The laws on religious education ambitiously seek both to secure everybody's right to be taught in their own beliefs as a school subject, and to secure that pupils who do not opt for religious education are given appropriate alternatives. But since the responsibility for education is placed on the cantonal level, and the religious communities have authority over this subject, each part of the country deals with the issue its own way. We also know that some cantons in Bosnia have not implemented the education reform. It is therefore interesting to examine how the schools have arranged the subject of religion in practice; whether there are any differences in the way religious education is arranged in the Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic areas; and how multi-religious schools have arranged the subject.

A questionnaire was sent to 44 schools in both entities, all cantons, and the district of Brcko (see Table 4.1). Both rural areas and

Table 4.1: Bosnian school survey questionnaire

How many ethnic groups do you have in your school? How many per cent approximately are from each ethnic group?
How has the school solved the matter of religious education?
What alternative is provided for the children who do not attend Religious Education?
What kind of background do the teachers have?
What is the content of the subject? Is it theoretical or also practical, with a distinct confessional character, learning prayers and religious songs?
What are the expectations of the children joining religious classes?
What are the expectations of the parents?
Does the subject Religious Education also cover some information on other confessions? If yes, which confessions?
Do you feel that the school has authority or control over the content and conduct of the subject Religious Education?

cities are represented. The survey covers both regions with majority/minority religions and regions with two more equally-sized religious groups. Schools were randomly selected according to these criteria. We got responses from 25 schools. While one cannot extrapolate from this limited sample to the situation concerning religious education as a school subject in Bosnia as a whole, it does serve as an indicator of the present situation.

To the question "How has the school solved the matter of religious education?" all schools replied that they conducted religious classes in the majority religion. In schools with more than one significant religious group, religious classes are conducted in both confessions. One school reported that only the dominant religious group has classes within the school schedule. Some schools refer to surveys they have done to learn the wishes and needs of the parents.

All the majority schools, where the large majority of pupils belong to one ethnic group, report that all the pupils attend religious classes, according to their own and their parents' wishes. One Serb school stresses that a child needs both his parents' signatures to

withdraw. There is a slight difference between Republika Srpska and the Federation, because in the RS, religious classes are obligatory for Serbs with the possibility of exemption, whereas in the Federation, the subject is voluntary, but once chosen, it is compulsory. In reality the situation is the same in both entities; pupils who belong to the majority religion, all attend. There are no differences between Muslim-, Catholic- or Orthodox-dominated schools in this respect. Asked what alternative they offer the children who do not attend religious classes, the schools give different answers. Most of them claim that alternatives are not necessary, since all pupils attend religious classes. Croat schools say that pupils not attending can choose activities as they like. One RS school with 75% Serbs, 22% Muslims, 2% Croats and 1% Roma stated that it is impossible for the school to meet the demands in the non-discrimination clause of the Framework Law's Article 9, which they find quite strict. This school offers no alternative to the Orthodox classes. Another school from RS, with 90% Serbs and 10% Muslims, arranges religious classes for both confessions within the school's timetable.

One Muslim-dominated school says that pupils of other confessions (than Islam) attend religious education in religious institutions, and then they bring their written report from this institution to the school, which accepts this document. Most of the schools give the other pupils free time, therefore classes are conducted at the beginning or the end of the day. Three Muslim-dominated schools say that exempted children go to the library, read books and have social games. Another Muslim-dominated school offers sports activities. A third offers extra-curricular studies under teachers' supervision. So there is a variety of models.

Regarding teachers' qualifications, the schools have similar answers. Elementary school teachers in Islam need at least to have the *Medresa* (Islamic secondary school), and in addition they should have pedagogical training or a bachelor degree in theology from the Pedagogical Academy, which takes two years. The same is the case for the Catholic religious teachers; they can either have Catholic secondary school and college (*Viša škola*, a two-year study), or a university degree in Theology. The Orthodox teachers have the same background: Orthodox secondary school and college or

university education. About half the schools report that their teachers have sixth or seventh grade, which means they have no higher education. What is important is that the teachers of religion in the different confessions need a certificate from their respective religious communities. The communities have the right to approve the employment in each school. The schools pay religious teachers, and they are employed on the same terms as other teachers.

The answers from the schools about the content of the religious subject differ slightly. We asked: "What is the content of the subject? Is it theoretical or also practical, with a distinct confessional character, learning prayers and religious songs?"

A typical answer from a Croat school was that the content is mainly theoretical and confessional, with the stress on teaching the pupils about their identity, but also that it includes some prayers and songs. All the Muslim schools underline the theoretical character of the subject, half of the schools say that it is purely theoretical and that the practical parts are conducted in the mosques, whilst the other half says that the subject also includes reciting suras, learning prayers and practicing religious behaviour. The Serb schools also emphasize the theoretical character, but the main difference among the confessions seems to be that the Orthodox subject includes more practical teaching. All the Serb-dominated schools underline the confessional nature of the subject, teaching prayers and songs. One school says it is important that the children learn about the rich spectrum of Orthodox spirituality, the music and architecture. During religion classes pupil go on field trips to monasteries and churches. Another school arranges for pupils to go to mass.

As to the expectations of the children joining religious classes,[7] all schools answer that the children expect to learn major elements of their own culture and religion. Many schools report that the children hope to gain a moral or ethical platform, from which they can build their personality, form humane attitudes, and gain universal values. They want to learn the basis of their faith and hope to be able to apply religious rules and norms in everyday life. Some

7. Note that this is the *school's* understanding of parents' and pupils' expectations.

schools also add that the children expect some kind of spiritual refreshment and relaxation, in contrast to other subjects.

The impression given by the schools, that pupils really like the religious subject, is corroborated by our talks with pupils graduating from primary school in Herzegovina region. At an OSCE conference about education, the participants were presidents of student councils from 39 schools in the area, all very eager and critical towards the school system in the country. Randomly we interviewed ten, all from majority schools. Asked about their experience in the subject religious education, they all had participated and enjoyed it, and they did not want a system where religion would be a strictly private matter. Asked if it would not be good in a multi-religious country to have a non-confessional religious subject about all religions in the area, the answers were a unison "no" if it were to replace the current subject. "We need to know our own religion," they said, and this class was one of the best during the school day, because "it helped us grow on a personal level."

The answers to the question about parents' expectations are also similar from all the schools. The parents expect their children to learn about their own faith and their own culture. Some schools report that the parents hope that religious classes will help the children to achieve a love for their faith. The parents hope that through this education, the children will become positive members of the social community, and that moral standards are impressed on the children. The subject is looked upon as a help in upbringing, which will hopefully be a support for choosing the right path, and prevent the pupils from using drugs and alcohol and immorality. One Catholic-dominated school says that their parents want the children to meet the religion in the spirit of dialogue and ecumenism in order to learn all dimensions of their faith. Serb schools say the parents are happy that their children get the opportunity of religious education, "because they were denied this kind of education during 50 years of totalitarian atheism." Another Serb school says: "The parents are almost uneducated and illiterate in respect of their own religion." Now they want something different for their children.

All the schools except for one say that in the higher classes, the pupils learn about the other two main confessions in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, and in most schools also about Judaism. One Serb school also teaches about Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventists, and Satanists (whatever they mean by that).

We asked: "Do you feel that the school has authority or control over the content and conduct of the subject religious education?" Half the schools answered that they had control, in the sense that they were working with the religious community and that curricula were presented in the schools, 25 % said they did not have any control, and 25 % said that they had authority in the respect that they administered the subject, put the grades in the report card, and scheduled the classes.

The overall impression about religion as a school subject is that the children from the majority religion all attend and are pleased with the subject, and the parents are happy that their children get the opportunity for religious education in the schools. The alternatives for children who do not attend differ from school to school, but the overall impression is that they are given no real alternatives. The schools all state that the subject of religion contains knowledge about other confessions, but as we have seen, the curricula and textbooks give little space to this issue. It seems that the schools' authority or control over the subject depends on their cooperation with the religious community.

The law states that children who do not participate in religious education should not be disadvantaged. However, it is a general opinion that the children who attend religious classes get good marks, which count the same as in any other subject. Pupils who do not attend may be given extracurricular activities that do not earn them any marks, so they are in fact placed at a relative disadvantage.

Culture of Religion

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country, there have been attempts to establish a non-confessional school subject called "Culture of Religion." This school program was designed for middle school, since it requires pupils to have a certain level of maturity and understanding.

The OSCE started the project in 2000, in co-operation with the Goethe Institute in Sarajevo, with the involvement of the ministries, religious communities, teachers, parents and other experts.

The reason why the OSCE wanted to introduce this new school subject was the conception that lack of knowledge often is the main reason for misunderstandings and conflicts. The main idea was that this new subject should help to avoid further conflicts by teaching objective knowledge about other cultures and religions, encouraging critical thinking and reflection, and allowing the pupils to discover their own country from different points of view. The subject was not intended as an alternative to confessional religious education. Culture of Religion was supposed to be an additional module to the common curriculum.

The goals for the subject Culture of Religion are:

- Knowledge of religions, with special interest in the religions in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Understanding of the importance of religion as a force in the development of different cultures and civilizations;
- Consciousness of the religious traditions, the beliefs and practices in society, underlining what is relevant for Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- To encourage tolerance and develop intellectual abilities for universal cultural-religious values;
- To develop dialogue skills, and to respect people with other convictions.

The idea is for this to be a compulsory subject for all pupils in Bosnia, as part of the school curriculum, to be treated and graded in the same way as other subjects.

The OSCE has offered start-up help to the schools that would join: curriculum, textbooks and teacher training. They are looking for teachers with backgrounds in Sociology or Philosophy to teach this new subject.

It has been difficult to establish this kind of subject in the schools of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The plan was to pilot the project in all the cantons in the Federation and at least ten schools in Republika Srpska. By the school year 2004/2005, the subject was being tried out in only eight schools in RS, because the other

schools rejected it. The subject runs in some regions in the Federation with a Bosniak/Muslim majority. According to Hazema Ništović,[8] the Islamic Community is not against the subject Culture of Religion, but sees it as an option for the future. In Catholic-dominated cantons, the non-confessional subject was in no way let into the schools. In the Mostar region, where the religious communities play a significant role in all aspects of education, the subject was rejected by the religious communities, and it was run by just one Muslim-dominated school in eastern Mostar.[9]

Claude Kieffer, who heads the Culture of Religion program for the OSCE, and has been working with education in Bosnia since 1997, says it has been difficult even to pilot this school subject in Bosnia. It seems that especially the Roman Catholic Church is opposed to the new subject. The Church, it is said, was invited and initially participated in the process of establishing the subject, but soon withdrew all participation and support. When we talked with the Nunciature, to the contrary, they said that the reason they could not support the new non-confessional subject was that they had not been invited to discuss its content.

The reason for the particular scepticism or antagonism of the Catholic Church may be might be that the Church is afraid to lose control over the school. In Republika Srpska, the Orthodox Church has full control over the school system in a quite homogeneous entity, and the Islamic Community has a strong position in the Federation. The Catholic Church is also influential in all school matters in the Catholic-dominated areas, but these areas are leaking people to Croatia, since the Catholics usually also have Croatian passports, and consider themselves a minority in Bosnia Herzegovina (even though they are in majority in certain cantons, and they are one of the three constituent peoples).

It seems that all the religious communities fear that the new subject may in the future weaken the position of the confessional Religious Education subject, even though it has been stated very firmly

8. Teacher and author of religious textbooks, Islamic Pedagogical Academy, Zenica; interview with the authors.

9. According to Matthew Newton, Head of the Mostar education department, OSCE.

that this is not the intention. At a conference held in March 2003,[10] all participants agreed that religion is an important part of culture, and that was one of the reasons for the introduction of this subject in the EU. Representatives from the Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox religious communities in Bosnia agreed on the importance of religion as one of the manifestations of cultural life. They also agreed that confessional religious education should remain in schools, and Orthodox and Islamic representatives claimed that whereas the confessional Religious Education introduces children to their own tradition, Culture of Religion could help them to develop better understanding and respect for other religions (Isanović, 2001). The Catholic representative, dr. Pavo Jurišić, however, was rather skeptical about the new subject. He stated that confessional religious education has a clear epistemological and didactical framework, rooted in history and tradition, whereas the new subject does not. Behind categories such as human rights, coexistence of differences, liberal democracy, and freedom, new forms of authoritarianism might be hidden. The Catholic Church wants to introduce its members to the truths of their faith, in the spirit of ecumenism and dialogue, and therefore rejects religious relativism and syncretism. Therefore, Jurišić concluded, Culture of Religion can only be an alternative school subject, attended by those who do not want to attend confessional religious education (cited in Isanović 2001: 8).

Culture of Religion is in its start phase, and has been given a pilot period of about four to six years. The OSCE hopes that more and more schools will want to introduce the subject.

Current debate

The existence of three curricula—Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian—is quite a problem, which creates disunity in the education system. There has been much discussion on the subject of religious education, which is compulsory in some regions and optional in others,

10. The conference was organized by ABRAHAM (a citizen's organization for peace and inter-religious dialogue), the Goethe Institute, and the OHR. Participants included representatives of religious communities in Bosnia, as well as scientists and researchers from Germany, the UK, Croatia and Bosnia.

with wide variation in the provision for minority groups. Some are concerned over the lack of opportunity to attend classes, while others fear social pressure to attend. There is also the problem, noted above, that the pupils who do not attend risk lower average grades.

In the Republika Srpska, where the religious subject is compulsory for Serb pupils, Islamic, Catholic and Jewish religious communities experience difficulties in some regions when they try to establish religious classes, although the Ministry of Education has approved these plans.

There have also been debates on the content of the Orthodox Religious Education. The major criticism has been that the textbooks for the first grades are too complicated and almost dogmatic.

In the Federation, the Mostar region, divided between Croats/Catholics and Bosniaks/Muslims, is a particularly difficult area. In this region a hotly discussed concept is "two schools under one roof": In one school building, there are two school administrations and two sets of teachers and pupils working separately, segregated along religious/ethnic lines. Attempts have been made to unify schools in the same building, for instance to share administration. Parents, pupils, teachers, and politicians are discussing whether such administrative unification also means the homogenization of curricula and the subordination of one of the official languages. There are about 50 cases of "two schools under one roof" in the Zenica-Doboj, Hercegovina-Neretva and Central Bosnia cantons, though the majority is in Central Bosnia Canton. Politicians in Mostar, asked about two curricula in one school, as they like to call it, reply that they are in favour of keeping them apart, because: "We had a joint curriculum before, and you can see where that lead us—to war."

OSCE ambassador Douglas Davidson stated in September 2005:

> The history of the phenomenon known as 'two schools under one roof' offers an instructive lesson in unintended consequences. (…) They were seen as a means of encouraging return by families with school-age children to areas in which their nation had become a 'minority' during the war. Yet, although the international community originally blessed this development, it always had reservations about it.

> For one thing, by suggesting that pupils from all three constituent peoples and the ranks of the 'others' should not attend school together, it appeared to legitimize and institutionalize a form of segregation. For another, by duplicating administrative and teaching staffs, complicating budgetary processes, and creating yet another barrier to the modernization of primary and secondary education, it appeared wasteful.[11]

The most important school issue among the international community—the OSCE, the OHR, and the Council of Europe—is to work for non-segregated schools, and discussions on religious education are subordinated to the overall question on how schools are run. With the unification of schools, we might see more problems in the administration of religious education in areas with more than one dominant religion.

Summary

The background to the introduction of religious education in schools was desecularization during the 1990s and the role of religions in marking and deepening divisions between three constituent nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. Religious education in public schools is a controversial matter, as can be seen in the legislative disunity. The Dayton Peace Agreement decentralized Bosnia into two entities and ten cantons. In the Federation education is under the exclusive jurisdiction of cantons, and therefore the status of the subject of religion varies. In some cantons it is optional, in some obligatory per parents' choice, and for minority groups it is non-existent in some and mandatory in others. In the Muslim-majority cantons Sarajevo and Zenica-Doboj, the subject of religion is optional, whereas in Uno-Sava, Tuzla and Goražde Canton it is compulsory. The situation in Republika Srpska (RS) is more homogeneous, for several reasons: it has no cantons, and its non-Serb population has largely been displaced to Croatia or the Federation, leaving a clear Orthodox majority. Also, the Serbian Orthodox Church enjoys a privileged position in RS, where it almost has the status of a state religion. In RS, religious education is

11. Donaldson in *Večernji list*, March 24, 2005; English version available online (http://www.oscebih.org/public/default.asp?d=6&article=show&id=969).

compulsory in elementary school, but attendance is not required for Bosniaks and Croats. If more than 30 Bosniaks or Croats attend a particular school in the RS, the schools is legally required to organize religion classes on their behalf; actual practice varies.

The legal requirement that "pupils shall attend religious instruction in accordance with their own beliefs" (Framework Law, Art. 9) makes it clear that Bosnia has adopted a confessional model of religious education. Our analysis of the Islamic, Catholic, and Orthodox textbooks of Religious Education, and the goals and aims defined in the curricula, further shows the narrowly confessional character of this subject. This model is supported by public rhetoric. For instance, the influential Orthodox intellectual and University of Eastern Sarajevo professor Bogoljub Šijaković (2001: 43) thinks a general knowledge of religion is impossible, because religion as a complex phenomenon can be experienced only from within a particular faith. He claims that "only from our own religion can we look at other religions, not from some alleged neutral way." Similar rhetoric can be found among religious representatives and professors from the Catholic and Muslim community.

However, a first step towards a neutral modal can be seen in Catholic Religious Education. The pupils are taught not only about their own, but also about other religions in a relatively neutral way, underlining the similarities between different religions, and the need for tolerance, dialogue and love between different confessions. In contrast, the Islamic and Orthodox versions of Religious Education aim more narrowly at introducing their own respective faith, internalizing its system of values and maintaining their own culture and tradition. It is therefore interesting to notice that the Roman Catholic Church is most strongly opposed to the additional non-confessional subject Culture of Religion now piloted at some schools in Bosnia.

There are many problems arising both from the laws and from the practical challenges of their implementation. This can be seen from our small questionnaire survey of different schools in all regions of Bosnia. We conclude that schools are ethnically divided: in most answers there are more than 90% pupils of one nation/confession; minorities have either extracurricular activities or no

organized alternative at all. Schools have no or very little control over the subject, apart from record-keeping. While the schools commonly answered that the subject religious education does also cover some information on other confessions, our analysis of the textbooks has shown that very little space is reserved for these issues (again with partial exception for the Catholic textbooks).The survey also shows that some religious teachers do not have appropriate higher education, they are very often still university students at theological faculties or have only completed secondary confessional school.

As we have seen, problems in that field are also reported in the Ombudsman's report on children's rights, which names religious education in schools as a source of violation of children's rights (Institucija Ombudsmana 2000).

Confessional religious education by its nature takes place in segregated classes. In the Federation, however, a more pressing issue is the total ethnic and religious segregation in so-called "two schools under one roof." The international community is striving for their unification. As we can see, the issue of integration or segregation goes much deeper in Bosnia, where it concerns not only religious education, but the entire educational system.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, then, there is religious instruction in public schools, based on normative theology. The confessional subject of Religious Education is taught separately, and the segregation between the different religious groups is quite strong. The subject is compulsory if chosen. The curriculum and textbooks are made by the religious communities, who also approve teachers. In both entities, the majority religion is taught in the schools, while the legally required provision for pupils of minority religions or no religion is haphazardly implemented in practice. The subject is a politicized issue. It is difficult to make room for a neutral, informative subject, but it is now tested out in a few schools.

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5. Religious Education: The Case of Serbia

Zorica Kuburić and Milan Vukomanović

Confessional religious education was introduced in the Serbian public school system (but not in Montenegrin schools)[1] as a multidenominational and optional subject by a governmental regulation published on July 27, 2001. This decision was preceded by an incomplete public debate that lasted from November 2000 to July 2001. Most of the relevant actors participated in this debate: official state and religious bodies (republic and federal ministries, church synods, etc.); political figures; religious representatives, theologians, teachers of catechism; public school teachers, university professors, sociologists, psychologists, pedagogues and other educational workers; NGO representatives, human rights activists; and various other individuals, including writers, academicians and other public figures. Some of their arguments and rhetoric will be discussed below in a separate section.

Four years later, it is possible to assess both the preconditions of the Serbian government decision and the consequences, related not only to initial experiences in the primary and secondary schools, but also to church-state relations (religious rights and freedoms) in general. More precisely, the issue of public religious education in Serbia appeared to be a litmus test for the forthcoming legislation on religious organizations and for the new social and political role of reli-

1. Since 1997, the Republic of Montenegro has pursued its own policies largely independent of the larger Republic of Serbia and of the federal government they share. Religious education has not been introduced in Montenegro, where public opinion is divided on the issue. One survey of public opinion in the 1990s showed that 64% were in favour of religious education in schools (Laušević 1997).

gious communities, especially the Orthodox Church, in Serbia today.

The religious context

A specific characteristic of Serbian society, over the last fifty years, has been a significant variation of attitude towards religion: from its utter rejection, to its acceptance and revival. These variations were not only the result of changes in the religious system, but also of educational and political transformations. In the early 1990s, religious activities were renewed, first with an anti-sectarian discourse and process of stigmatization of religious sects, seen as the common threat that homogenized religious groups. Before the introduction of religious education, numerous lectures were held at schools on this topic. Religion also assumed a place in public life, the media and the educational system. Various studies conducted among the adult population and youth indicate that the revitalization of religion and religiosity resulted in a process of de-secularization (Djordjević, 1984; 1994; Blagojević, 1995; 2002; 2003; Blagojević and Djordjević, 1999; Kuburić, 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999; Jerotić, 2002; Kuburić and Stojković, 2004).

The classification of religious communities in Serbia comprises a dominant, domestic, national Serbian Orthodox Church, which tends to become the state religion; the traditionally present religious communities with national characteristics; and other religious communities, referred to as small religious communities, religious societies, or sects. The attitude towards the sects, in particular in the media and lectures organized at schools and universities over the past ten years, had a fairly strong negative connotation that even incited individual acts of violence (Kuburić, 2005b).

Three main religious traditions are present today in Serbia and Montenegro: the Serbian Orthodox Church (prevalent throughout the country); the Roman Catholic Church (concentrated in the northern regions) and Islam (concentrated in the southern regions). The religious complexity of the region is further enriched by the growing presence of Protestantism. The Serbian Orthodox

Churc49has significantly influenced the development of Serbian and Montenegrin history and national identity.

No census has been conducted on the entire territory of Serbia and Montenegro, but some estimates are given in Table 5.1.

According to the census in Serbia in 2002 (which did not include either Kosovo and Metohija or Montenegro), 83% of the inhabitants are of Serbian nationality. Nearly 85% of the inhabitants declare themselves Orthodox Christians. Catholics, the second largest religious community in Serbia, make up 5.48%. The percentage of Muslims in Serbia is 3.20%. There is only a small percentage of Jews in Serbia (0.01%). According to the census figures of 2002, the number of religious communities was roughly 68, half of them (34) Protestant, but these are small communities, and they make up just 2% of the population. There are ten religious organizations of Oriental origin (0.01%). Only 0.53% of citizens declared themselves non-religious, with 1.83% of unknown religious affiliation and 2.63% who refused to declare their confession in accordance with the constitution's Article 43.

How religious are the citizens of Serbia and how do they demonstrate their religiosity? There is no simple answer to this question. The standard sociological studies employ religiosity indicators with predetermined modalities, among which the respondents choose one. Over the past sixty years, much research has been conducted on the changes in religiosity. In 1999, the Institute for Sociological Researches in Belgrade (Radisavljevic-Ćiparizović, 2002: 223) found

Table 5.1: Main confessions in Serbia and Montenegro

Confession	*Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo)*	*Serbia and Montenegro (excluding Kosovo)*
Orthodox	68%	83%
Roman Catholic	5%	5%
Protestant	2%	2%
Muslim	20%	5%
Other	5%	5%

(Estimated share of population)

that 26.6% of respondents are convinced believers who believe everything their religion teaches, and 32.7% of respondents are religious, but do not accept everything that their religion teaches. The undecided add up to 14.5%, the indifferent ones to 6.8%. Another 17.6% are not religious, but have nothing against religion. Finally, those who do not believe and are against religion make up 1.4%.

This shows that the majority (one third) of respondents are believers who selectively accept religious teachings. Together with the convinced believers in Serbia, they add up to 60% (Radisavljević-Ćiparizović, 2002). Other studies were conducted in detail concerning the accuracy of the census figures and number of members of particular religious communities (Kuburić, 2002; 2003; 2005a; 2005b).

The study "Sociological aspects of multiculturalism and regionalization and their influence on the development of AP Vojvodina and the Republic of Serbia," conducted on a sample of 1,235 citizens of Vojvodina, separates the citizens of Vojvodina into two groups: the religious ones and the non-religious. In the first group, religiosity takes different forms, the dominant ones being the Orthodox confession, a critical relationship toward one's church, and believing without accepting everything that the church teaches (22%). Second in numbers are the "customary believers", i.e. those who express their belief by keeping customs, rather than theological teachings. Of course, there are also more dogmatic believers who accept everything their religion teaches. Finally, a certain number of believers believe in God, without belonging to any particular church or confession.

There are 18% who are not believers, but keep religious traditions and customs of their national religion, more out of conformism than religiosity. The non-believers who accept the religious affiliation of others make up 11%, those who are not interested in religion 3%, and those who are opposed to all religion only 1%.

In short, 61% of the respondents are religious. One third of respondents are not religious, but consider themselves tolerant toward those who are, and even join religious ceremonies, even though they do not attach any religious significance to them. Those who are not sure whether they are religious or not add up to 6%, while the per-

centage of those who are against all religions is almost insignificant —1% of the respondents (Kuburić and Stojković, 2004).

Religiosity develops in the socialization process, based on the influences of the social environment, and realized primarily through the family, which selectively transfers the system of values to its descendants. However, it has to be emphasized that religiosity, as well as its absence, is not always a personal choice based on individual motivation, nor, again, a passive submission to the social influences. According to research (Ćimić, 1984; Kuburić, 1995; 1996), religiosity is primarily an outcome of family choice, which reproduces itself from generation to generation. The family is more powerful than the school in religious socialization. The students are more inclined to align with their parents' wishes, than with their school friends' inclinations in the matters of religious beliefs and values. On the other hand, religious families that, in their transmission of religious values, forget the emotional component of a child's personality and omit associating religion with the satisfaction of child's needs, open the doors for the rejection of religion.

Models and main actors

In 2001, Serbia opted for a confessional, segregated, multi-denominational model of religious education that may be conducted in public schools by seven "traditional" or "historical" religious communities: the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), the Roman Catholic Church, the Islamic Community, the Jewish Community, the Slovak Evangelical Church, the Christian Reformed Church and the Evangelical Christian Church in Serbia-Vojvodina. Religious Education was initially offered as an optional subject, with the alternative choice of either Civic Education, or neither of the two subjects, in the first grades of elementary and high schools. However, in 2002–2003, a new regulation made the choice of one of the two subjects compulsory. The decision was argued as a result of the unexpectedly low interest of school students in both subjects, and especially in Religious Education (Gredelj 2001–2002). Notwithstanding those arguments, it would be worthwhile to examine both the advantages and weaknesses of this model within the broader

context of religious pluralism, religious freedoms, education policy and church-state relations in Serbia. In other words, what are the political, legal and educational ramifications of this model?

Some of the questions that became acute or surfaced already during the debate that preceded the government decision were as follows: Who are the official partners in church-state relations? Which religious communities and what state (federal or republic)? What constitutional solutions are to be expected in the near future? Will the new, long-expected law on religious organizations be passed on the level of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, or just on the republic level (Serbia only)?

The second set of concerns was related to the arbitrary selection of only seven religious communities that were permitted to offer confessional education in public schools. The selection criteria were based on the constitution and laws of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the period before World War II. But can the same criteria be applied today, in the 21st century, in a modern secular republic that recognizes the legal distinction between church and state? Is this the way in which the status of those communities will be defined in the forthcoming legislation on religious communities? If so, does this mean that Serbia, like Russia, has opted for the model of so-called "historically recognized religious communities"? And, most importantly, are other religious communities in Serbia still equal before the law? What would the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia say about that?[2]

Aware of the potential problems, some organizations with experience in the area of academic religious studies, such as the Center for Religious Studies (CIREL) of the Belgrade Open School,[3]

2. A public debate on this issue was indeed held at the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia in Belgrade on June 24, 2003. One of the authors of this paper, Milan Vukomanović, participated, and this particular case, including the arguments used at the session, will be discussed below.

3. CIREL was established in 1999, while the Belgrade Open School, its mother-organization, has operated as an alternative educational institution (a sort of "invisible college") since 1993. When the debate on religious education started, CIREL had open communication and contact with the representatives of the Ministry of Education of Serbia, with the goal of discussing and pursu-

tried to mediate in this process. In 2000, CIREL had already launched its multi-disciplinary educational program Religious Studies whose aim was to prepare students—future lecturers in high schools and at the universities in Serbia—to thoroughly study (and later to teach) religion from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. At a later stage, this program would prepare high school and university professors for teaching courses such as: History of Religions, Religion and Culture, or Introduction to Religious Studies. The program itself was non-confessional and multi-disciplinary, based on several theoretical and methodological principles:

- The academic, non-theological study of religion does not necessarily imply that students, lecturers and researchers belong to any particular religious community or affiliation.
- Such an approach to religion implies sensitivity to religious pluralism.
- Methods of studying religion are comparative. In this program, students were given a chance not only to learn about various theoretical models and methods used in research on religion today, but also to study world religions in their different historical, cultural, and social settings and aspects.

Therefore, in order to have a complete view of the different aspects of religious phenomena, the program would enable the students to approach religion from at least three different perspectives: 1) *historical*—the study of the concrete, historically based religious traditions; 2) *theoretical*—philosophical, sociological, anthropological, psychological, geographical and other approaches to religious topics and problems; 3) *comparative*—a comparative study of at least two religions covered by this program.

According to its proponents, applying this model in the public school system would bring multiple advantages. The program itself was designed as a non-confessional study of religions open to students of all denominational and cultural, ethnic backgrounds. The students would learn about religions, instead of just receiving confessional religious instruction (catechism), which is already available

ing the most appropriate model of religious education in public schools.

within the religious communities. The CIREL program would, therefore, go beyond a standard catechism and offer a pluralistic and comparative approach to world religions, including the religions of the Balkans, with an idea that such a program was most appropriate for a multi-confessional society that had experienced a series of inter-ethnic conflicts and wars in the near past.

However, despite the CIREL proposal and the initial favorable reaction of the Ministry of Education, the government of Serbia opted for a confessional, multi-denominational model of religious education. The rationale for this governmental decision was primarily political and pragmatic. The decision was made by Dr. Zoran Djindjić, Prime Minister of Serbia, who consulted only religious representatives, while the Ministry of Education (the main institution in charge of education) was completely circumvented in the decision-making process. The Ministry of Religious Affairs—which, from the very outset, unreservedly sided with religious communities (and especially the SOC) in their effort to promote the confessional model—was pleased with the Prime Minister's decision, contributing, thus, to an unusual schism within the government itself. To make things even worse, the former vice-president of the Serbian government, Mr. Čedomir Jovanović, admitted that the decision itself was completely pragmatic in character, stemming from the government's attempt to appease the SOC after the extradition of Milošević to the Hague Tribunal![4]

Notwithstanding this political-pragmatic view of the entire process, some authors argue that

> (…) within the education reform of 2001, the parallel introduction of Religious Education and Civic Education could be seen as a political strategy of the then government to express its gratitude to the SOC, creating a 'symbolical distance' to the ideological heritage of the previous regime and thus securing the support of the electorate by referring to a set of 'traditional' values and confirming a modern, democratic, pro-European orientation. (Baćević, 2004: 1)

At any rate, when the agreement on Religious Education became official in July 2001 (with the publication of the aforementioned

4. TV interview with Čedomir Jovanović, Insajder B 92, April 13, 2005.

Regulation), two deputy ministers of education offered their resignations. Furthermore, no one was able to predict if enough teachers of catechism would be available for the beginning of the new school year in September 2001, or whether the government would be able to find additional funds for their salaries (the previously adopted budget did not allow for that), or whether those teachers would have enough training and experience to conduct this kind of education in public schools.

Arguments and rhetoric

The main lobbyist in favor of confessional religious education was the SOC, the majority religious institution that pressed the government to make its hasty decision. It is apparent, on the other hand, that the government expected some fast-and-easy political benefits in return, especially considering the influence and credibility of the Serbian Church in the country.

Already in November 2000 (immediately after the fall of Milošević), the Church had stepped onto the public stage with its request that confessional religious education be introduced in public schools. Very soon, the SOC expressed its willingness to be an equal partner with the state in the education process. Furthermore, the Office for Religious Education of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate announced that "the state should protect its substance and nation: with this goal in mind, it should proclaim Orthodox Christianity as the state religion; i.e. our state should be verified as an Orthodox state" (Brkić, 2000: 8). Other religions and denominations would have the right to exist, but not in the same rank as Orthodoxy, and they would be registered only if, by the assessment of the Serbian Church, "they are not considered Satanist" (Brkić, 2000: 8).

Since October 5, 2000, the Serbian Church has established direct lines of communication with the relevant state institutions and bodies, rejecting and condemning, at the same time, the civil society organizations and their initiatives to organize an in-depth public debate on religious education. For example, in its official press release, published on November 24, 2000, the Serbian Church reacted to the statement of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in

Serbia that the initiative of the Serbian Orthodox Church and President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Vojislav Koštunica, to introduce religious education in the public school system is "a serious violation of the principles of the secular state."[5] The Church's reaction to this statement reflects its archaic, anti-modern language: it characterizes the arguments of the civil society organizations as "the fear of Satan and all his followers in the last six decades—manifested in each place under the sky of a country that only nominally expresses the concept of Serbia in a comprehensive sense."[6]

As seen from the previous example, the arguments and rhetoric used in this debate reflect a rather heated public atmosphere and sharp divisions into two major camps—pro and con. Among the pros one finds various religious representatives and church bodies, conservative politicians, writers and other public figures.[7] They usually referred to the repression of religious institutions under communism, the positive experiences of other countries, the educational and moral significance of religious education, the new role of religion in post-communism, etc.

The strongest voices among the opponents were the NGO representatives and human rights activists who complained about the violation of the legal distinction between religious communities and the state, discrimination of the minority religious communities, threats of de-secularization and clericalization, etc.

Various experts (lawyers, sociologists, psychologists, pedagogues) often assumed a sort of "middle position", trying to assess the potential advantages and disadvantages of such education, including legal, psychological, pedagogical, methodological and logistical concerns. The analysis of arguments and rhetoric used in the debate reveals a certain degree of over-simplification, reductionism, bogus ar-

5. "Prihvatanje vere i veroispovesti – lični izbor svakog pojedinca," *Politika*, November 22, 2000.

6. *Novosti Informativne službe Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve,* November 24, 2000.

7. As soon as the governmental Regulation was published, a group of academicians, writers, lawyers, scientists and priests, headed by the members of the Serbian Association of Writers, reacted very positively to the decision to introduce religious education in the public school system.

guments and politicization of the entire issue. On the one hand, views such as: "The communists forbade religious education, let's return to the situation of 1945" completely neglected the difference between communist atheism and modern secularization and ignored the irreversibility of certain historical processes. On the other hand, arguments such as: "Religion is only a private affair, it should not have its place in the public sphere" were contrary to the examples of other democratic and secular states that do have religious education in public schools (Vukomanović, 2002: 318-319).

Let us group and comment on the more articulate arguments for and against the proposed model of religious education.

Arguments for

1. *The issue is not about introducing, but about* returning *religious education to the public school system.* This was an argument often raised by the SOC representatives, who complained about the communist decision to ban religious education from public schools soon after the end of WW II. The fact that the circumstances in the year 2001 were not the same as the ones before WW II was largely ignored by the proponents of this thesis.

2. *Religious education is one of the fundamental human rights.* This argument, also raised by church representatives, was based on a misunderstanding. Freedom of religion is, indeed, a fundamental human right. It implies freedom of religious instruction and education within religious communities, but not necessarily in the public school system. Religious education was allowed within religious communities even during the Milošević government.

3. *The positive experience of other European countries (Germany, Austria, Norway, etc.) with religious education argues for its introduction in the Serbian case.* These examples were often mentioned. As a rule, the different historical and constitutional traditions of those European countries were not the subject of any serious consideration.

4. *Religious education will have moral significance; it will "make better persons."* Again, the clergy of SOC often referred to this point. The representatives of the Office for Religious Education of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate quoted, without any elaboration, a "decrease in juvenile delinquency by 80% and abortions by 50% in Republika

Srpska" where religious education had been introduced earlier (Brkić, 2000: 8).[8]

5. *Religious education in public schools reflects the new, positive role of religions in the post-communist period.* This is an argument put forth not only by SOC, but by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as well. It was often used in other East and Central European countries during their debates on religious education.

6. *There are enough teachers for the confessional religious education model.* This was partly true as far as the numbers are concerned, but the quality of those teachers' education was rarely discussed. In fact, those teachers were educated at the Theological Seminary of the SOC, which has not been part of the university system since WW II. Their curricula and methods of instruction significantly differed from the training of other teachers who graduated from state universities.

Arguments against

1. *Religious education in public schools will violate the constitution and affect church-state relations in Serbia.* This objection was often raised by the members of NGOs, two of which (the Yugoslav Committee of Lawyers for Human Rights and Forum Iuris) brought this entire case before the Constitutional Court of Serbia.[9]

2. *Religious education will violate human rights and rights of the child in the area of freedom of religion.* It is interesting that the Yugoslav Child's Rights Center, an NGO located in Belgrade, was the first to raise this concern and the first to launch the public debate on religious education in general.[10]

3. *There are positive examples of countries that do not have religious education in public schools.* Again, the historical and constitutional traditions of those countries (such as the United States or France) were rarely subject to any serious consideration.[11]

8. An interesting and inventive philosophical analysis of the argument 'religious education makes better persons' was offered by Tomisav Žigmanov in Kuburić (2002: 89–105).

9. See the next section (Legislation).

10. See "Protiv veronauke", *Danas*, November 5, 2000.

11. A rare example of such a serious and rather comprehensive analysis is

4. *Religious education in schools will only contribute to psychological problems of school students.* These problems, usually raised by psychologists and pedagogues, are related both to development psychology and identity concerns. For example, will elementary school children be able to grasp such complex theological concepts as the Holy Trinity? How will their segregation into different classes reflect on their identity (e.g. their divisions into denominational groups or believers and non-believers)?

5. *There are not enough funds for this project.* This was a serious objection, because the already adopted republic draft budget had not allowed for such a comprehensive project. According to the Minister of Education, it would have cost about 1.5 million euros.

6. *Minority rights and freedoms will be affected by introducing single-denominational or compulsory religious education.* This was another objection raised by the Yugoslav Committee of Lawyers for Human Rights—first in the press, and then before the Constitutional Court of Serbia. Early in the debate, some sociologists were also concerned about this issue (Vukomanović 2001: 11). This objection lost its relevance when a different model (confessional, optional and multi-denominational education) was finally adopted.

Legislation

In this section, we will tackle the gradual changes in the legislation following the governmental Regulation on the organization and realization of Religious Education and an alternative subject in the elementary and high schools of July 2001.[12] This executive regulation defined some important elements of the future church-state relations before any proper law on religious organizations, or new constitution of Serbia, was even drafted.[13]

Maksimović (1998).

12. *Uredba o organizovanju i ostvarivanju verske nastave i nastave alternativnog predmeta u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi* (published in *Službeni glasnik RS* 46/2001). This Regulation was signed by the then vice-president of the Serbian government, Mr. Dušan Mihajlović.

13. At the moment of the completion of this paper, no such law or constitution has been proposed for adoption at the Parliament of Serbia.

Some changes are also reflected in the republic laws on primary and secondary schools.[14] The Law on the changes and amendments to the high school act (2002) includes five articles concerning religious education (Articles 3, 4, 6, 10 and 11). Article 3 states that the Religious Education program is adopted by both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, upon the proposal of the traditional religious communities defined by the government Regulation. A special governmental commission will co-ordinate those proposals, as well as the textbook proposals. The textbooks are recommended by the traditional churches and religious communities and approved by the Ministry of Education (Article 4). In Article 6, Religious Education and an alternative subject are defined as optional, while Article 10 states that the grades for those subjects will be descriptive and not quantitative. Finally, Article 11 provides that the training of Religious Education teachers will be determined by the Ministry of Education upon the proposals made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and traditional churches and religious communities.

The decision to introduce religious education in Serbian schools was challenged before the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia on June 24, 2003. This constitutional debate was a sort of synthesis of the entire debate that followed the governmental decision of July 2001. An assessment of the constitutionality of the governmental Regulation was requested by the following organizations: The Yugoslav Committee of Lawyers for Human Rights, the citizens' association Forum Iuris from Novi Sad, and a Belgrade attorney at law. According to them, the Regulation in question was not in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and international conventions, because it places citizens, national minorities and religious communities in an unequal position by allowing religious education for the 'traditional' religious communities only. Thus education in the elementary and high schools is

14. *Zakon o izmenama i dopunama Zakona o osnovnoj školi* (*Službeni glasnik RS* 22/2002) and *Zakon o izmenama i dopunama Zakona o srednjoj školi* (*Službeni glasnik RS* 23/2002). Finally, the Law on the foundations of the system of education was passed on June 17, 2003. Concerning its reflections on religious education see Joksimović (2003: 25).

not available to everyone under the same conditions (Popović and Vitorović-Umićević 2003: 1). The second objection referred to the constitution of the Republic of Serbia (Article 41, paragraph 2): only religious communities may establish religious schools, therefore the state may not engage in religious education. The third objection challenged the right of religious communities to conduct church mission in schools and pastoral care of school children. Religious communities are allowed to recruit believers, but not in the state schools. Finally, there was a problem with descriptive grading, because the extant Law on high schools did not allow for such a grading policy.

Derived from those and some other objections raised during the discussion, the actual subject of the constitutionality assessment were the following issues:

1. The possible violation of the constitutional distinction between religious communities and the state;
2. The equality of religious communities before the law and constitution;
3. The possible violation of the extant laws on elementary and high schools;
4. The possible violation of the freedom of religion of parents and custodians of the school children, because they have to choose between the two school subjects on offer;
5. The possible violation of the freedom of religion and equality of religious communities before the law in the cases when seven traditional religious communities, along with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs, determine the plans and curricula of Religious Education.

The final outcome of this entire debate was that the Constitutional Court of Serbia did not reject the governmental Regulation, but confirmed it as constitutional on November 4, 2003.[15]

15. "Veronauka", *Danas* online, November 5, 2003 (http://www.danas.co.yu/20031105/frontpage1.html); "Izbor odbranio ustavnost", *Dnevnik* online, November 6, 2003, (http://www.dnevnik.co.yu/arhiva/06-11-2003/Strane/drustvo.htm).

Curriculum

In the autumn of 2001, Religious Education was introduced into our schools for the first time in almost half a century. Civic Education was introduced, for the first time, as an alternative subject to Religious Education. In 2001/2002, Religious Education and Civic Education were introduced only for the first grade students in the elementary and high schools. Their attendance was optional. In the following academic year, Religious Education and Civic Education were given the status of elective subjects at both levels of schooling, which implies the compulsory attendance of either of the two subjects once the selection is made. In 2002/2003 Religious Education and Civic Education were introduced for the first- and second-grade students of elementary and high schools. Today, if a student selects Religious Education, this means that this subject will be compulsory throughout his education. Religious Education is attended from the first to the fifth grades of elementary school and all grades in high school. Within the next three years, all students in elementary and high schools will have an opportunity to attend Religious Education.

The program of Religious Education for the elementary schools in Serbia is designed for one hour of classes per week, or 36 hours annually. There is a tendency, however, to have two hours per week, because the students tend to forget what they learned.[16]

Curricula and textbooks are proposed by the seven "traditional" religious communities. The tasks and contents of Religious Education are defined for each of these seven churches and religious communities. Since 2005/2006 this opportunity has been given to the Romanian Orthodox Church as well. However, the realization of Religious Education is logistically rather complicated, due to the many small groups that take those classes in the same schools at the same time.

Besides confessional Religious Education, as a separate subject for the seven traditional churches and religious communities, educa-

16. This argument is put forth by Sandra Dabić, secretary of the Council for Religious Education of the Belgrade-Karlovac Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate.

tion about religion is also conducted within other subjects, especially Serbian language, History and Arts.

For example, the Sociology textbook for the third and fourth grade of high school includes a special chapter on the sociological definition of religion, magic, animism, mythology, and monotheistic religion. There are also sections on Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. The syllabus for Philosophy classes at the same level does not give preference to any single world view or philosophy, but aims at general education. This includes sections on e. g. philosophy and Christianity, and the relationship between knowledge and faith.

The latter question, incidentally, became acute in 2004, when the then minister of education, Ljiljana Čolić, sought to to expel the theory of evolution from the education system. Čolić was soon replaced, but the "God's will" vs. "natural selection" dilemma contributed to the conflict between Religious Education and Civic Education (not to mention Biology).

Aims and goals of Religious Education

The reform of the educational system in Serbia started with the introduction of religious and civic education. This was the result of a broader social change. The return to religion and rise of religiosity were some of the most important reasons for introducing religious education.

The aim of the Religious Education subject is to promote confessional religious beliefs, provide information on the students' own religion, and to encourage and train students to perceive and to practice the Liturgy. While the specific contents of the subject are confessionally defined for each of the traditional churches and religious communities, the stated aims are largely the same for all.

It is significant that the goals of Religious Education have not changed since the outset. Those aims and tasks were identically formulated for the elementary and high schools (*Službeni glasnik RS – Prosvetni glasnik* 5/2001, 4/2003, and 6/2003).

The general goals of Religious Education in Serbia are to acquaint the students with the faith and spiritual experiences of their own church or religious community, to enable them to get an integ-

rated religious view of the world and life, and to enable them to acquire the spiritual values of their church or religious community, as well as to preserve and cultivate their own religious and cultural identities. One might say that the goal of religious education is to develop a theistic world view, faith in God, and the capacity to practice religion in everyday life.

The goal of Orthodox catechism in the first grade of high school is to develop trust, love and unity with classmates and fellow students, and to cultivate solidarity and mutual assistance, and care for nature and the world. Another goal is to point out the basics of the faith and experience of the Church as a source and inspiration for personal and community development.

Talking about religious education in high schools, Orthodox bishop and textbook author Ignjatije Midić says that adolescence is actually the best period for making live contact with God and attending church. However, he thinks that religiosity is not established by the simple presentation of a certain world view, or by teaching a certain number of concepts and aspects of theology, thus enforcing ethical norms and rules of conduct. Religiosity represents an ethos of freedom and love. This is why the goal of the classes for the first high-school grade is to develop the awareness of students that Christianity is a church, a liturgical community, and to draw the attention of students to the notion of *character* as a basic Christian concept. Without an adequate understanding of the concept of character, it is impossible to understand that the Christian belief in God is a way of life, and not an academic doctrine or ideology (Midić, 2003: 63).

Religious Education in the second grade of high school emphasizes Christian ontology, based on the doctrine of the One God who is the Holy Trinity. In the third grade, the plan is to convince students that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the created world, while the goal of the fourth year is to suggest to students that history has its goal: the created world will become of the Kingdom of God, and death will be overcome.

Textbooks

The curricula and textbooks are proposed by the religious communities. The textbooks are written by authors from within the religious communities. All books must be revised by the Commission of the Ministry of Religious Affairs which controls and approves the textbooks. This Commission, which meets several times a year, includes seven representatives from the seven traditional religions and three representatives each from the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs (since December 2004) plus the Chair of the Commission, 14 members altogether. A Serbian Orthodox priest or bishop heads the Commission. All the textbooks are published by the monopoly publisher, the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Supplies (*Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva*).

Orthodox textbooks

The analysis of the textbooks for Orthodox Religious Education clearly reveals their confessional character. The textbook for teachers is entitled *Priručnik za nastavnike osnovnih i srednjih škola* (2003). The only author of all textbooks for both teachers and students is Ignjatije Midić, a Serbian Orthodox bishop (Midić, 2001; 2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; 2003d; 2005).

The textbooks for students of the first through fourth grades have a typically Orthodox visual focus on icons and pictures. The books have between 31 and 51 pages (A4 format). There are no published textbooks for students from the fifth to eighth grades, only the numbered list of lectures. The following lectures are planned for the fifth grade: Preparation of the world for the coming of the Son of God; God's care for the world and people before Abraham; the choice of Abraham and his descendents as the cornerstone of the Church; Abraham and the Jewish people as the first image of Christ and his Church; the Ten Commandments and Old Testament prophecies; death as the ultimate enemy, and human efforts to overcome it. The plan for the sixth grade includes a discussion about Christ and the Orthodox creed. In the seventh grade, the students will work on the concept of the Holy Trinity, as well as baptism and liturgy as the practical demonstration of belief in the

Holy Trinity. The eight grade elaborates the Christian understanding of character, including freedom as a precondition of personality.

The book *Crkveni slovar* (Church Grammar) for the first grade of the elementary school has eleven lessons. Each one is accompanied by an "Instruction in Faith" and questions about the lesson. The illustrations are very traditional and diverse. Each lesson is written as a story with key concepts such as love, church, selfishness, generosity, baptism, liturgy, and the Eucharist.

The textbook for the first and second grades of high school (Midić, 2002) has 88 pages and includes 37 pages of full-color pictures characteristic of Orthodox tradition. After an introduction about the importance of personality in Christianity, the author pays attention to faith and atheism. The second lesson is about the relationship of faith and knowledge, including the possibility of understanding. The approach itself is philosophical, logical and theological. The lesson "Love of God as the Love of Man" is about the love between the people living in a community. Towards the end of the textbook for the first and second grades of high school, there is a lesson about the creation of the world and the primeval fall. Every lesson ends with questions and further instructions for students. The books are, in general, characterized by a dogmatic and theological approach.

We may conclude that the textbooks for Orthodox religious education are confessional and catechetical in character. They try to explain the Orthodox understanding of Christianity.

Roman Catholic textbooks

Roman Catholic textbooks include various texts, illustrations, photographs, pictures of famous artistic works and quotations from the Holy Scriptures, as well as from other religious sources.

The author of the Roman Catholic textbook for the first grade of the elementary school is Rev. Andrija Kopilović (from Subotica). The title of his textbook is "Let the children come to me" (*Pustite k meni malene*).[17] The textbook was printed by the Institute for textbooks and teaching supplies in December 2001 after it was ap-

17. An allusion to Mt 19: 14, Mr 10: 14, Lu 18: 16.

proved by the Ministry of Education. The textbook is in accordance with the plan and program published in *Službeni list* 5/2001. It has five thematic parts and 29 lessons. The content reflects the spirit of ecumenism as well as the recommendation of respect for other confessions. The general impression of the textbook is that it seeks to be acceptable for all Christians and that its content and artistic format reflects the state of the art in publishing of textbooks for younger students (Dačić, 2002). It is available in Croatian and Hungarian.

The textbook for the first grade of the high school, "Know yourself" (*Upoznaj samoga sebe*) by Janos Penzes and Andrija Kopilović has 63 pages and numerous black and white photos from earlier periods.

Islamic textbooks

The program for Islamic religious education does not include thematic chapters, but 30 educational units with short instructions. The textbook is called *Ilmudin*, and it has three authors: Hazema Ništović, Dževeta Ajanović and Edina Vejo. Its goal is to teach children the rules of conduct in Islam, which clearly distinguish Muslims from other religious communities. This practical side of demonstrating faith is developed from the very outset of this textbook. It starts with a Muslim greeting (*Selam*), i.e. the instruction on how to greet the members of Islamic faith. It remains unclear how to recognize a Muslim in a plural society, such as Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, where non-Muslims also live.[18] The *Selam* greeting is represented in a following way: two boys shake hands and utter this greeting while meeting friends and acquaintances. In the textbook for the first grade of the elementary school there is a picture of girls. They wear long dresses and headscarves.

Each lesson is written in the imperative form—*remember*. The girls are represented as small women dressed traditionally. A child is situated in a homogeneous Muslim environment, without any relations to others. A flag and a mosque are represented as symbols of Islam and Muslim identity.

18. This textbook is the same in both of these states.

Major importance is also given to diet and to *suras* from the Koran, written in Arabic and followed by a translation. The textbook is clearly confessional in character. Its purpose is to teach about faith and Islamic tradition.

The textbook for the first and second grades of high school (*Uvod u islam: Ilmudin*) is a translation of a well-known book by Muhammed Hamidullah (2002).[19] The book covers information about Islamic faith, culture and history. It does not have a single picture, just the text organized over 166 pages in 15 chapters.

The textbook represents Islam as an all-encompassing system, from the revelation to everyday life. The most frequently misunderstood question, it is stated, is about the meaning of holy war. Its goal is

> to establish freedom of conscience in the world, which is the goal of Muhammad's struggle. This is the holy war of Muslims, the only war whose goal is not exploitation, but sacrifice, the war whose only goal is the triumph of God's word. Everything else is forbidden. There is no mentioning of waging war in order to coerce people to adopt Islam. Religion itself prohibits that. (Hamidullah 2002: 122)

On the same page we also learn that Islam prescribes strict discipline:

> The basis of Muslim nationality is religious, not ethnic, linguistic or geographic. Normally, the conversion from Islam was considered a political treason and it was punished, but history shows that this punishment was not applied. Neither at the time when Muslims ruled from the Pacific to the Atlantic, nor today, at the time of the political, material and spiritual impotence, did there exist apostates from Islam. This is true not only for the Muslim states, but also for the states under colonial dominance, making all efforts to convert Muslims into other religions. (Ibid.)

This passage seems rather controversial in the light of the fact that religious education in plural societies is offered to children of

19. Muhammed Hamidullah (1908–2002), distinguished Muslim scholar who lived in exile in France after the partition of India and Pakistan. The original book, *Introduction à l'Islam* (first published 1957, several revised editions since) was intended as a correspondence course.

the same age, from the standpoint of different positions towards the issue of conversion, i.e. the right to change one's religion or belief.

Teacher training

The training and selection of teachers plays a key role in the realization of Religious Education. For this kind of class, an elementary knowledge of pedagogy and psychology is necessary. The government ministries that share responsibility for Religious Education have organized training seminars three times so far. The Ministry of Religious Affairs organized a seminar for teachers on February, 6–7 2004. It was dedicated to methodology, since Religious Education classes are taught by priests and laypersons who may not have had psychology and pedagogy in their education. Another seminar for religious teachers, organized in summer 2005 by the Ministry of Education, included small groups of school administrators. A group of authors prepared a manual for the seminar leaders (Dešić, 2005).

The leaders or religious communities issue a permission to teach religion in public schools. For all teachers, education level VII/I is required, but level VI is also accepted.[20] If there is an insufficient number of teachers for confessional religious education in schools, other persons can teach if the respective religious institution grants permission.

In Serbia today, there are nearly 2,000 teachers of Religious Education. This is a new workplace for all those who studied theology in traditional religious communities, especially for female teachers.

The Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Serbia instructed the department heads in the former Ministry how to organize Religious Education (December 9, 2002), and the instruction was forwarded to schools. It includes six points, as follows:

1. *The status of the subject and teachers:* students sign up for Religious Education a year in advance; it remains an optional subject for the first generation of 2001/2002 (until the end of their educa-

20. Level VI is a high school diploma, while the level VII/I is a university bachelor's degree.

tion); each year, the teachers of the subject sign a work contract with their school; they have a right to vacation.

2. *Teachers' duties:* to accept school duties; to prepare for classes; a pedagogue may audit classes to learn about the realization of Religious Education.

3. *Notification of religious education.*

4. *Grading policy:* grading is descriptive and does not influence the final grade point average; the abbreviations for descriptive grades are: outstanding (*Ist.*), good (*Dob.*) and satisfactory (*Zad.*).

5. *Free activities and supplementary education*

6. *Instructional resources.*

The government shares responsibility for teacher training with the religious communities. Between 2001 and 2005, eight seminars for teachers of catechism were conducted by the Serbian Orthodox Church.[21] In 2005 two regular annual seminars were organized. There are groups of Religious Education teachers that hold meetings once a month in sixteen Belgrade municipalities. There are separate groups for elementary and high schools.

The number of students opting for Religious Education has not been precisely determined. According to research and some estimation, this figure goes up to at least half of the enrolled students. Among 195 teachers, there are 10 priests on the level of the Belgrade Metropolitanate. There are 90 women who work in the elementary and high schools with the same rights and duties as men.

Empirical data on the attitudes towards religious education in schools

Several studies have looked at attitudes towards religious education prior to its introduction to the Serbian educational system (Kuburić, 1997; 1999; 2001; 2002; 2003; Djordjević and Todorović, 2000). Attitudes towards religion, atheism and sects are interesting research subjects, due to their significant transformation over a short period of time. One may note significant differences between experts, religious leaders, Orthodox theologians, Protestant students and secular students. Orthodox Christians would like to have confessional edu-

21. Interview with Sandra Dabić (cf. n. above).

cation for their own community only. Protestants, as well as secular students, prefer education *about* religions, to be taught by philosophers and sociologists rather than theologians.

According to the Ministry of Education data, about 30% of parents whose children started their education decided that their children will not attend either Religious or Civic Education. One third opted for Religious Education, 20% for Civic Education, while 10% chose both (Radisavljević-Ćiparizović, 2002: 222).

In the next year, the option not to select any of those subjects was canceled, so that Religious Education and Civic Education became the alternative subjects (Joksimović, 2003). More than 50% of elementary-school children, and half as many in high schools, applied for Religious Education. This demand was not fully met, due to a shortage of staff and teaching materials. In the second year, according to informal data, enrollment was 49% for the first grade of the elementary schools.

A joint study by the Center for Empirical Research of Religion, Novi Sad, and the Institute for Pedagogical Research, Belgrade, was carried out in 2003 (Kuburić, 2003). The sample comprised 540 parents and 628 high school students. The questionnaires including questions related to the following concerns: the reasons why parents and students opted for a certain subject; the degree of expectation fulfillment and satisfaction with learning a selected subject; and the willingness to select the same subject again. The respondents were also asked to express their opinions about the teaching contents and teachers, as well as to assess the teaching effects of the selected subject.

The parents think that their children have positive attitudes towards the teachers of the optional subjects. The parents of children attending Religious Education (Serbian Orthodox Church) frequently point out changes in children's behavior related to religious restrictions. If one compares what the parents and children say about Religious Education, one may conclude that positive opinions prevail. Both the parents and students assess most favorably the content of this subject. A considerable number of them are also satisfied with the teaching method, because it differs from that of other subjects. Favorable assessments of teachers pertain to both

their methods of teaching and personal characteristics and attitudes towards students. At the same time, a number of parents and students make remarks about the process of teaching with regard to the organization and conditions of work, teaching methods and teachers themselves. The remarks about religious teachers indicate the importance of teachers' selection and training, so that they can get acquainted with the methods most appropriate for students' development according to their previous knowledge and capacities (Joksimović, 2003).

The majority of the population in Serbia is Orthodox, so research has mainly covered the implementation of Religious Education conducted by the Serbian Orthodox Church. There are more problems with regard to religious minorities (Aleksov, 2004; Milićević, 2005). Research remains to be done on other churches and religious communities, and on the reaction to Civic Education.

Conclusion

Religious Education, more than any other school subject, has been a conflict-prone field on many levels, especially in the education system. Its reception ranged from rejection to acceptance, from fear to the hope that it has the power to install or uproot a socio-political system.

Even though it was not compatible with the programs and contents of other school subjects, Religious Education was launched in Serbian schools in November 2001, as an optional subject for students of the first grade of elementary school and high school (ninth grade). Pupils could choose between two subjects, Religious Education or Civic Education, or select none of them. The following year (2002/2003), Religious and Civic Education received the status of elective subjects: the students were obliged to take one of the two. In 2003/04 their status remained the same, but was also effective for the third grade of the elementary school. In 2004/05, this procedure became applicable for the entire duration of education. By doing this, Serbia followed Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina where, by demand of the dominant religious communities,

confessional religious education was implemented in 1991 and 1994 respectively.

Traditional churches and religious communities obtained the same rights in conducting religious education in public schools. It is interesting that this right was granted only to those religions that are nationally or ethnically based (the Serbian Orthodox Church, with Serbs; the Islamic Community, with Muslims/Bosniaks; the Roman Catholic Church, with Croats and Hungarians; the 123

Slovak Evangelical Church, with Slovaks; the Reformed Christian Church and the Evangelical Christian Church, with Hungarians; and, finally, the Jewish Community). In 2005, the Romanian Orthodox Church, another "national" church, was added to this group.

The programs and contents of Religious Education are defined for each of the traditional churches and religious communities, reflecting the confessional character of religious instruction. The confessional, multi-denominational model has survived a constitutional challenge, whereas proposals for a subject based on a multi-cultural, comparative Religious Studies approach have not been accepted.

According to the data gathered by research that examined the reasons why students and parents chose religious education, the majority of children mentioned new knowledge and interest in the subject as their motives to take this subject. Religious education has succeeded in meeting parents' expectations, more than the students'.

Throughout the twentieth century, religious education in Serbia reflected political changes: from being the main value system carrier in schools (during the time of the Kingdom of Serbia and Kingdom of Yugoslavia), to being an enemy, who had to be expelled together with teachers who taught it (during the communist period). Fifty years later, it was reinstalled in the education systems of the post-communist states, influencing again the moral behavior of young people. Empirical studies show that religious education is accepted as the free choice of students. Any coercive implementation of such a subject in public schools, or state prohibition of its availability within religious communities, would not be in agreement with religious rights and freedoms of individuals and religious communities.

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6. Introducing Religious Education in Macedonia

Zoran Matevski, Etem Aziri and Goce Velichkovski

The question of introducing religious education in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia became relevant after the fall of communism, the dissolution of Socialist Yugoslavia, and the establishment of Macedonia as an independent state. Until then, the subject had been taboo. Religious education took place only within the religious communities, and it was completely separate from public education. Even in the curricula of subjects such as History, Sociology, or Marxism, the phenomenon of religion and its functions in contemporary society were not discussed. At the time, secularization had impacted particularly on the sphere of education.

After the fall of communism, one characteristic of Southeast European societies has been the revitalization of religion, which has had considerable impact on all spheres of public life. The process of secularization is in crisis. In Macedonia, an extremely close connection was established between the political and the religious elite. There was even talk of making the then Archbishop the first Prime Minister of the state. That, fortunately, did not happen, but this was a sign of the connection that was being made between politics and religion.

In the transitional period, huge social changes have taken place. There has been a widespread feeling of uncertainty about the future. Unemployment has shot up, and poverty has knocked on the door of many homes. Social ills have proliferated, especially among the young: alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, crime, etc. A crisis in the sphere of education and in the family, as the basic cell of society, was followed by a crisis of moral norms and values in the youth

population. In addition to this comes a perceived lack of prospects, which has resulted in a brain drain to Western Europe, North America, Australia, and other developed countries. In the mid-1990s, nearly 101,000 people, or 5.3% of the population, were in temporary work in foreign countries (Matevski, 1995). In a few towns, nearly a fifth of the population had gone abroad to work.

These two processes, revitalization and the crisis of secularization, were preconditions to opening the question about introduction of religious education. This question was put forward by the religious elite, especially representatives of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, supported by representative of the Islamic Religious Community, the Catholic Church, and the other religious communities in Macedonia, including all the religious minorities (for the religious composition of Macedonian society, see Table 6.1).

Religious education was implemented in public schools in the year 2001/2002. The subject was named Catechism. It was not obligatory, and there was no evaluation (grading) of pupils. It was confessional: The curriculum was directly connected with the basic theological categories either of Orthodoxy or of Islam, the two leading confessions in Macedonia, and the teachers were from the two biggest religious organizations in the country: priests from the Macedonian Orthodox Church and *hoca*s from the Islamic Religious Community. The children studied only their own religion—Macedonian pupils learned Orthodoxy, Albanian pupils Islam. None of them learned the basic principles of other world religions (Catholic Christianity, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.). The content of the curriculum was strictly dogmatic theology. The subject was one-dimensional, in that of the four disciplines that deal with the social phenomenon of religion (History of Religion, Sociology of Religion, Philosophy of Religion, and Theology), only the discipline of Theology was studied. The target group was primary-school pupils from the third and fourth year (nine- to ten-year-olds) and the seventh and eighth year (13- to 14-year-olds).

Table 6.1 National and religious composition of R. Macedonia

Total population	*2,022,547*	*100.00%*
By nationality		
Macedonians	1,297,981	64.18%
Albanians	509,083	25.17%
Turks	77,959	3.85%
Gipsies	53,879	2.66%
Vlahs	19,695	0.48%
Serbs	35,939	1.78%
Bosnians	17,018	0.89%
Others	20,993	1.04%
By religion		
Orthodox	1,310,184	64.78%
Muslims	674,013	33.32%
Catholics	7,008	0.35%
Protestants	520	0.03%
Others	30,820	1.52%

Source: 2003 census

Because of the large number of mistakes that were made, mistakes of a social, pedagogical, and cultural nature, the subject was terminated after one year of existence. These mistakes may be summarized along the following lines.

- No change was made to the Laws on primary and secondary education, which in their Articles 13 and 7, respectively, ban all political and religious organization and activities in schools. Nor were changes made to the Law on religious communities and religious groups, which states in its Article 24 that religious education can only be conducted in public locations where religious rituals are conducted (i. e. in churches and mosques), and only outside school hours. Therefore, the Constitutional Court on November 5, 2003 terminated the new religious education subject, referring mainly to the education laws.
- Before the subject was introduced, there was no public debate and consultation that would allow all those concerned

with the problematic—social scientists, teachers, pupils, parents, politicians, and members of religious organizations—to contribute their views on how it should be implemented.

- Perhaps most importantly, the pupils were segregated by national and religious identification. This does not improve inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance. For that reason, this way of implementing the subject was rejected by members of the international community. (This is based on the interviews given to the media by the officials of the international community).
- No serious study was made to determine the most appropriate age group for this kind of education.
- Most sectors of modern Macedonian society did not approve of the entry of religious representatives into public schools.

As a result of these problems, the question of religious education was shelved for a long time. Recently, however, it has been reopened.

The first precondition for this turn of events was the establishment of the aforementioned close link between the religious and political elite. That link was formed during 2004, in connection with the dispute between the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Then, for the first time after the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, a political consensus was reached on the matter. All the political parties, even those of "pro-Serbian" orientation,[1] gave public support to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, there was daily communication between the Church and State on the problem of religious tolerance, a condition for Macedonian entry into the European Community and NATO. This eventually resulted in the President and Prime Minister of the state being seated around the same table as the Archbishop of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the leader of the Islamic Religious Community. The talks have opened questions such as the denationalization of religious properties and the implementation of religious education in public schools.

1. The Socialist Party and the Party of Serbs in R. Macedonia are oriented toward the policies of Serbia and Montenegro.

Still, the religious elite had to find a strong argument to convince the Macedonian public of the necessity of introducing religious education. The winning card on which they played was prevention of the moral decline among Macedonian youth. After World War II, Macedonians were inculcated with socialist moral values. The youth was taught that moral values have to be found in the framework of the so-called communist point of view. After the fall of communism, the independent state opted for so-called civic morality. Subjects such as Marxism and Marxist Ethics were replaced with the subjects Civic Education and Modern Sociology. However, the inculcation of civic morals in people's minds was seen to be a difficult and slow process. What have come instead are "moral values" needed for success in life and professional promotion. Selfishness, unscrupulousness, egoism, and the Machiavellian thesis that "the aim justifies the means" have come to characterize contemporary Macedonia.

These arguments are supported by sociological research, which has led to the irrefutable conclusion that social ills have multiplied enormously. Alcoholism has become widespread among youth, and drug abuse and prostitution, too, have slowly but certainly infiltrated society, providing an outlet for the feelings of disappointment, rejection, and a lack of prospects (Sulejmanov and Stojanoski, 2002).

These social problems, coupled with the revitalization of religion, have thrown the door wide open to the penetration of religious norms into society. The Ten Commandments, the speeches of Jesus and the law brought by Mohammed have again become relevant to the present. Religion has in a real sense begun to serve both an individual-psychological and especially an ethical function. With regard to individual psychology, the Church has again raised the question of judgment day and the apocalyptic end, frightening youths that they will have to face God who will be the judge of their life on Earth. To some extent, religious norms have become a substitute for legal norms, as the legal system of the state has fallen into a deep crisis. The ethical function of religion has played a key role in the introduction of religious education.

This, then, is the thesis that all religious representatives[2] have promoted in public: Religious education can only help improve the moral situation in Macedonian society. It can fill the moral vacuum that has opened up in the so-called transitional period due to the rejection of socialist moral values and the slow establishment of civic ones. Thus it can alleviate the "moral panic" that has spread among the population.

This thesis received support from some representatives of the intellectual and scientific elite, and all this resulted in a "political agreement" between the religious representatives and the representatives of the state.[3] The question about religious education is no longer whether it will be introduced, but in what form, for whom, and when. Having learned from experience, this time the Ministry of Education and Science has fortunately initiated a widespread public discussion on the issue, though at the time of writing there are no documents available. The authors of this paper are actively included in commissions of the Ministry and of the Bureau for the Development of Education (*Biro za razvoj na obrazovanieto vo R. Makedonija*) for the development of the subject's curriculum.

Bearing all this in mind, there is a need for serious research on all aspects of this serious question. As we have pointed out elsewhere,[4] that kind of research is particularly needed in Macedonia, as a unique country in the region which for the first time in its history is thinking seriously about the implementation of religious education. This question has already found some solution in all the countries of the Balkan region, save Albania, though as yet only the preliminary results of those solutions can be discussed.

2. None of the religious minorities have opposed the introduction of religious education. The Catholics generally agree with the Orthodox and Muslim views, whereas the Protestants have suggested that the contents of other religions besides Orthodoxy and Islam should be learned.

3. Media interviews with the president and prime minister as well as the leaders of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and Islamic Religious Community, after their formal and informal meetings.

4. Presentations by Zoran Matevski, Etem Aziri, and Goce Velichkovski at the conference "Religion in Schools: Problems of Pluralism in the Public Sphere", Kotor, April 2005 (http://kotor-network.info).

Starting from the multi-dimensional nature of this problem, we have carried out a study based on a qualitative methodological approach. We conducted 30 interviews with representatives of the three social groups most directly concerned with this problem: eminent scientists, relevant politicians, and representatives of the religious organizations in the Republic of Macedonia. Since the most important religious and ethnic communities in Macedonia are Orthodox Christians (mainly Macedonians) and Muslims (mainly Albanians), they are equally represented in the sample, without regard to the population difference (68% Macedonian, 26% Albanian, see Table 6.1). These two groups have significant influence on the implementation of religious education. We have not included in this study representatives of smaller religious and ethnic communities. The people interviewed are aged between 35 and 65 years, of urban background, mostly from the capital Skopje and from Tetovo, the most important town in the region of western Macedonia. The politicians chosen represent the most influential Macedonian and Albanian political parties (SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE, DPA and DUI) as well as the Ministry of Education and Science. The intellectuals are mostly from the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, and SEE University in Tetovo. The religious representatives are from the Macedonian Orthodox Church (hereafter MOC) and the Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia (hereafter IRC). Most of these are central officials, but some local priests and *hoca*s are also included.

Results of the survey

The responses to the questionnaire are presented as the sum of opinions of each social group separately.

What is your opinion on the introduction of religious education in public schools in the Republic of Macedonia?

Generally, all the representatives of the MOC favour the introduction of religious education. This kind of education, they say, is essential for our educational system, because the pedagogical function of religion in society is based on it. The pupil who has

completed some degree of education will not only gain knowledge, but also become a better person with moral qualities. Some of the priests think that the aim of this kind of education will be achieved only if the subject is theologically oriented. If the subject is scientifically oriented, they think it will confuse the children, and damage their spiritual life. They hold, however, that any kind of religious education will be useful for the development of the youth. The following answer is characteristic:

> Religion has to be learned as civilizational and cultural heritage. To develop a modern approach which will seek to achieve the highest aims, to inspire the young to be brave and develop a social conscience. Religion frees the spirit toward creativity.

The representatives of the IRC see the introduction of the subject as an imperative of the time. They consider religious education to be part of international culture. Its introduction in primary and secondary schools would be a positive step for society as a whole, and a step towards the realization of elementary civil rights and freedoms in Macedonia as a liberalizing, parliamentary democracy.

The Macedonian politicians are divided over the introduction of religious education in schools (three against, two in favor). Those who are against it think it will bring disorder to the education system and undermine the secular orientation of the state. All that would be possible, they say, is to introduce some content on religion in regular subjects, such as Civic Education, History, Sociology, Philosophy, and Civic Culture. Those who are for it think that such education ought to be institutionalized, since when it goes on outside the institutions of the system, it is not under state control, especially regarding the curricula and quality of the teachers.

The Albanian politicians hold similar opinions (three against, two in favour). The supporters argue that introducing this subject in public schools will have a positive influence on pupils' lifestyles. Interestingly, they emphasize that education about religion must take place in public schools in parallel with such education in religious settings (churches, mosques). The opponents think that there is already quite enough religious education in churches and mosques,

and that the Islamic Religious Community in particular has organized it very well for children of all ages (especially the youngest.)

Among Macedonian scientists and intellectuals, the main argument of the opponents is that there are other ways for children to learn about religious diversity; the theological approach is not suited to the context of modern life. Religious dogmatics will limit the choices of different points of view, they say, and theology is always in collision with science. This is a rough intervention in the principles of privacy and freedom of choice, limiting the open, pro-active and creative spirit of the children. On the other hand, some hold that such education will be priceless, especially in its ethical aspect, regarding universal values such as love, philanthropy, empathy, solidarity, filial affection etc. It will improve moral values, which can be formed both according to the civic conception and the religious conception. The Albanian intellectuals above all think that such a subject must be regulated by law, since it will not only help individuals but also make society more stable (the social integrative function of religion). It will play a positive role in the socialization process. All Albanian intellectuals support religious education in public schools in Macedonia.

Must religious education remain in the frame of houses of worship, or can it be introduced in primary and high schools?

The MOC representatives are unanimous that two types of religious education have to exist in parallel, one in churches and the other in public schools. The methodology and function of church catechism differs from the methodology of public schools. Religious education is connected to all phases of the individual's spiritual development. The IRC representatives hold similar views, with the difference that mosque instruction must be considered a kind of preparation for religious education in public schools. Religious education in the mosques is accepted as part of customary norms, while on the other hand, incorporation of religious education in public schools is accepted as a part of civic morality, as religious education in public schools will be obligatory and organized through educational plans and programs verified by the Ministry of Education.

Some Macedonian politicians hold that such education should remain in churches and mosques, but needs to be controlled by the state. In public schools, the contents may be learned through other subjects, such as Civic Education. Others support the subject's introduction and institutionalization in public schools, because everything that takes place outside of institutions can come out of control and be problematic. Likewise, three of the Albanian politicians support its introduction in public schools, while two think it must be confined to houses of worship, otherwise a sacral ideology would be introduced to public schools that are supposed to be non-ideological.

Among Macedonian scientists and intellectuals, opinions are divided. Some argue that faith is a private matter and must therefore stay out of public life; it should not penetrate children's conscience and choices through the school system. Others think a combined approach will be positive and do no damage. Albanian intellectuals believe religious education needs to move from houses of worship into public schools so that it can be put in a legal framework.

Should the same curriculum that is taught in churches and mosques be introduced in public schools, or a different one? If a different one, what would be the differences?

The MOC representatives believe it must be different, since in the churches the curriculum is more practical, through participation in divine services and rituals, with an emphasis on communication with priests. In public schools, it will be done in a more academic way, through lectures, workshop activities, excursions, etc., and the pupils will be acquainted with the other religious communities in Macedonia. Texts from the holy books should be presented to form a collective consciousness that will help youths integrate into social life. According to the IRC representatives, the curricula in churches and mosques must be different from those in public schools, since education is a social institution where pedagogical methods are of primary importance. The contents of religious education in public schools must be in touch with political, economic, social, and scientific developments. Interestingly, one states that "I think that reli-

gious education in public schools has to include the historical, sociological, and philosophical segments of religion…"

Macedonian politicians hold that the curriculum must be prepared by experts of various scientific disciplines dealing with this field. Religious education must be state-controlled to ensure that the curriculum does not contain anti-state and nationalistic elements, but teaches ethnic and religious tolerance. The curriculum should give basic knowledge of the different religions existing in society. Some Albanian politicians hold the interesting view that the religious education curriculum must *a priori* be different, because mosque-based religious education is directed only at children of primary-school age, so religious education in secondary schools will continue the learning process begun in the mosques. They add that the curriculum must contain elements of religious ethics.

Macedonian intellectuals unanimously hold that the curriculum must be totally different from church catechism. It must take an inter-disciplinary approach, looking at the religious phenomenon from the viewpoints of sociology of religion, ethics, psychology of religion, history, etc. Through that approach, religion will be placed in its social context, bringing out its influence on social phenomena such as the family, ethnic groups, economy, politics, etc. Stress must be placed on relations between religiosity and social morality. Albanian intellectuals point out that religious education in public schools must be more differentiated by age group than mosque instruction; the teaching plan must include the same pedagogical, didactic and methodological elements as in other subjects taught at the same age level. In the *mekteb*s the learning process is more traditional and informal than the public-school teaching methods with their use of broader literature. The pupils need more exact knowledge about religion. Interestingly, one states that: "If we keep in mind that religious education is also a science, the curriculum must be different from the one taught in churches and mosques because the children have to be acquainted with scientific religious education…"

From what age should pupils from public schools start with lessons in this subject?

In both religious communities, the prevailing opinion is that the best age group for beginning this kind of education is 10–12 years. At this age the children are on an emotional and intellectual level where they can handle some abstract thought and metaphysical themes. This opinion is based on educational systems where religious education already exists.

The politicians think that the starting age should be determined by a commission of experts appointed by the Ministry of Education. The education officials are the most acquainted with the characteristics of different age groups. The decision has to take into account the opinions of psychologists and knowledge of children's psychology at different age levels.

The intellectuals find the question very complex and sensitive and believe a serious sociological, pedagogical and psychological study should be done on the country's young to determine what age group is best for the subject. It is necessary, they say, to start with a one-year pilot project in some classes and reach the final decision only after evaluating this group. The Albanian intellectuals, however, are unanimous that the starting age should be 11–12 years.

What are the main reasons for the introduction of religious education in public schools in the Republic in Macedonia?

The MOC representatives hold that religious education is requested by the believers and the whole Macedonian public. Another reason is improving morality among the young and and giving them healthy values. Accordingly, religious ethics are the most significant aspect of the subject, and objective knowledge of religions or religious history is of secondary importance. The MOC argues that a high percentage of the believers are loyal citizens of the state, who pay their taxes and do their military service, and since the believers are contributing to the financing of public schools, the state should be sensitive to their request.

IRC representatives' answers may be listed as: religious socialization, improving morals, preventing social ills, individual emotional

development, positive conduct, solidarity, humanity, tolerance, respect for the institution of the family, etc. Religious education will also help the young to meet other religions that are present in society with tolerance and understanding.

Macedonian politicians hold, first, that this kind of education must be institutionalized in order for the state to control the curriculum and prevent religious fundamentalism; second, that religious indoctrination should be avoided; and third, that this education should be directed towards acceptance of positive religious values.

The Albanian politicians think that religious education will aid individual development. Through encountering the positive aspects of faith and the basic postulates of all world religions, pupils will build their moral identity as well as strengthen their cultural and religious identity.

The opinion of Macedonian intellectuals is divided. Those in favor of the subject say it will improve inter-religious tolerance. Young people have limited knowledge about the basic postulates of their own religion and of the basic moral principles found in the Bible, the Koran, and other holy books. Religious education will reduce the prevalence of "traditional" beliefs and pagan rituals. On the other hand, those who oppose it think the widespread thesis, that the subject will help integrate society and solve the problems of national identity and ethnic tolerance, is very wrong. The subject, they say, will rather create more confusion and tensions, and social divides will increase.

Albanian intellectuals cite as the main reasons for introducing the subject: getting acquainted with spirituality and the transcendent; an education with religious values needed for the development of a stable personality in a time of crisis; learning about religions and their role and function in society from a scientific point of view.

Will this kind of education aid the development of the person and of society as a whole? If the answer is yes, what direction will the improvement take?

Representatives of both religious communities believe religious education contributes to personal and social development in a very positive way. The MOC representatives point to Western countries in which, they say, the sociological category "church-goer" has the

secular connotation of a trusted person with good moral behavior. Religious education will create a better kind of person who will carry religious ideas and values in the sense of creativity and of religious rights and freedoms, and this will help in the creation of a better society. To the IRC, religious education consolidates the spiritual aspect of personality, helps the young to integrate easily into society and will help save Macedonian society from "deviant" behaviors.

Macedonian politicians think the answer will depend on whether the curriculum is well-prepared and taught by well-trained teachers. Albanian politicians think the subject will form a personality prepared for integration in all spheres of social life, ready to make a successful career based on religious values and not through corruption, organized crime, egoism, etc.

Among intellectuals, we find the argument that religious socialization, which comes in addition to family and pedagogical socialization, is better performed in public schools (where it will be controlled) than in religious schools or the private sector outside the state control. Many examples, they say, show that faith can play a positive role in personal development where it is not abused for other ends. Positive experiences can be found in some Western European countries. By contributing to better knowledge of ourselves, it will promote spiritual tranquility and pacific attitudes.

What should the content and program of this subject be like? Should it be strictly theological or should it have contents from the Sociology of Religion, History of Religion and Philosophy of Religion?

According to the representatives of the MOC and the IRC, the term "theological content" should be understood as all the wisdom, experience, and knowledge found in the holy books, which includes philosophical, ethical, psychological, and sociological teachings which were accepted and implemented in the life of the most significant representatives of mankind. Especially in high school, the program could actualize some modern views on religion, faith and spirituality. Though the program should nourish the children spiritually with knowledge of the basic principles of theology, the young must simultaneously acquire historical, sociological, and philosophical knowledge of religion, if we aim to develop complete

persons who can manage modernity and function in modern Macedonian society.

The Macedonian politicians hold that the curriculum should be multi-disciplinary and not markedly theological; theology should stay in the churches and mosques. The Albanian politicians believe the program and content must include both sociological and theological aspects, with emphasis on moral principles.

It is the clear attitude of the intellectuals that the program must be non-confessional, and that the approach must be inter-disciplinary. It has to be directed towards the development of the pupils' capacity for a moral conscience, and not towards religion *a priori*.

Within the frame of this subject, should one learn only the content of one's own religion (Christianity or Islam), or both at the same time?

The MOC representatives say that for primary-school pupils, it is better to learn about their own religion, based on their authentic revelation and devotion. When they enter high school, they can learn about other confessions, not just Christianity and Islam, but also the other world religions. Interestingly, all the IRC representatives think that the subject must take a multi-confessional approach. Children are not sufficiently acquainted with other religions, and knowledge only of their own religion would limit their point of view.

All the Macedonians politicians hold that the approach must be complementary, i. e. one must learn about different religions at the same time. The opinion of the Albanian politicians is divided. Some favor first learning one's own religion, and then learning to compare one's own religion with that of others, while others favor simultaneous study of all world religions.

According to the Macedonian intellectuals, it would be a mistake with catastrophic consequences if pupils learn only their own religion. It would lead to the segregation of pupils on a confessional basis. One Macedonian scientist says:

> I will say what I have said many times in the media. If in ethnically mixed schools, of which there are many in Macedonia, we let an Orthodox priest enter one class and an Islamic priest enter another, then the pupils from an early age will ask themselves: 'Why am I in one

class and my friend in the other?' The presence of two types of religious teacher will be the end of ethnic and religious tolerance in Macedonia.

According to the Albanian intellectuals, the children must begin by learning about their own religion, and study the other religions in later years when they are sufficiently mature to understand and distinguish the religions. Bearing in mind that the modern world tends towards bringing different cultures closer together, the pupils must learn about all the religions found in Macedonia.

What function of religion should be be emphasized in the subject—ethical, psychological, emotional, or socially integrative?

According to the MOC representatives, Christianity as divine revelation in itself includes all the mentioned functions, but before all this comes its salvation function. The emphasis must first be placed on the psychological and emotional function, and then, as the pupils grow older, on the ethical and finally the socially integrative function. To some of the IRC representatives, all the functions mentioned are relevant, but the socially integrative function is the most important. Other IRC representatives think the ethical role is crucial.

For the Macedonian politicians all the described functions are important, and for the Albanian politicians, the ethical and socially integrative functions are most relevant.

Both the Macedonian and the Albanian intellectuals think that all positive functions of religion must be included in accordance with the age of the pupils, but that because of the serious moral decline in our society, stress must be put on the ethical function.

What should the subject be called?

The MOC representatives think that question calls for a wide discussion, but some think the name should include 'Catechism', while others suggest 'Spiritual Pedagogical Education.' The IRC representatives have several different ideas: 'Basic Principles of Catechism', 'Basics of Islam and Christianity' and 'Basic Confessional Principles.'

The Macedonian politicians, who think the subject should be included as a part of other regular subjects, say the name is irrelevant, what matters is the program and curriculum. The Albanian politicians suggest 'Teaching about Religion', 'Basic Principles of Islam and Christianity', or 'Humanistic Religious Education.'

The Macedonian intellectuals say the name should be based on profane principles, hence 'Education about Religion' would be suitable. Albanian intellectuals suggest 'Religious Education', 'Teaching about Religion', 'Religious Culture', 'Religious Pedagogy.'

Who, in your opinion, is best suited to teaching religious education—theologians, sociologists, historians, or philosophers?

Representatives of the MOC and the IRC hold that the subject may be taught only by Theology graduates with additional training in pedagogy and modern teaching methods. Theologians are best suited, because their education includes both the ethical, the psychological, and the historical character of religious education.

Albanian politicians and most of the Albanian intellectuals share the view that Theology graduates should teach the subject. For the Macedonian politicians, to the contrary, it is crucial that this subject *not* be taught by theologians. Instead, they think it could be taught by all human-sciences graduates. Macedonian intellectuals agree that the subject must not be taught by theologians. Since only sociologists and philosophers are trained in relevant sub-disciplines (i. e. Sociology of Religion, Philosophy of Religion, Ethics, and Sociology of Morality), and historians or psychologists are not (their studies do not include History of Religion or Psychology of Religion), the subject should be taught by Sociology or Philosophy graduates.

Who is most engaged in introducing religious education?

According to the MOC and IRC representatives: all citizens, but especially the parents. According to the politicians, first of all the members of the political parties should have influence, but of course also the members of religious communities. According to the intellectuals: the members of the MOC and IRC, especially their council members.

Must the Law on primary and secondary education and the Law on religious communities and religious groups in the Republic of Macedonia be changed before this subject is introduced?

All the interviewees agree that if we want to implement religious education in public schools, both these laws must first be changed.

Conclusions

Regardless of whether the interviewees favor or oppose the introduction of religious education in public schools in Macedonia, it seems that they all see a need for education about religion (whatever the type of program) in primary and secondary schools. Before we began this study, the Ministry of Education and Science had already decided to include some religious content in the regular curricula of state education.

It is only to be expected that the representatives of the main religious communities in the country, the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Religious Community, hold that religious education is an imperative of our time. This shows that religious organizations are the primary driving forces behind the introduction of such a subject in state education. But politicians, too, are very concerned about this question, because they insist on placing religious education in a state framework. As an aside, it is interesting to note that not all the relevant politicians respect the decisions of their government and party leaders in this respect.

A very significant fact is that all the interviewees believe catechism should remain in the churches and mosques, and that religious education in public schools would be a new subject that must exist in parallel with catechism. Our supposition that the subject would simply move from churches and mosques into schools is thus shown to be incorrect. All, priests included, are trying to develop new curricula for this subject in schools.

Again, the opinion of the Macedonian politicians is very interesting. Some of them consider that uncontrolled religious education, especially in the mosques, can lead to unspeakable consequences for the state. They did not speak openly about this, but what they seem to have in mind is forms of fundamentalism and the possibilities

that teachers might be members of foreign, anti-state organizations. Their arguments for the institutionalization of this activity are akin to the political arguments for the legalization and regulation of prostitution. If for the religious leaders, public morals is the main motive for introducing the subject, for the politicians, the main motive is state control.

The intellectuals go into the problem in more depth. As analysts of social problems, they seek a cure for the causes of social crisis. When a transitional society such as Macedonia falls into economic, political and moral crisis, followed by social ills and "deviations," one of the cures that come to mind is education about religion. Religious education, with its ethical and socially integrative function, is not seen as the only way but as one of several ways to improve moral conduct.

Since we speak of two different subjects—church catechism and its Muslim equivalent (*mekteb* teaching) on the one hand, and religious education in state schools on the other—it is natural that they should have different curricula. In our interviews no single view crystallized as to what age is the best for starting this subject, though the most common answer was age ten to twelve (the third to fourth school year). We may conclude that some serious interdisciplinary scientific research needs to be done on this question.

Various reasons were given for the introduction of religious education in public schools:

- Ethical aspects of religious education, which will fill the moral vacuum and improve the moral behavior of the young.
- Socially integrative aspects, through which the children will learn about each other and integrate into the social system.
- Individual psychological aspects, such as moral improvement through the fear of Judgment Day.
- Placing religious education under the control of the state.

It is believed that this kind of education will help the young develop their own thinking, mutual understanding, social integration, and personal qualities (humanity, solidarity, respect, empathy, etc.) which will preserve Macedonian society from "deviant" behaviours.

Only the representatives of the religious communities hold the opinion that this subject must be mainly theological. The others

clearly think the subject should be non-confessional, and include elements from the most important scientific disciplines dealing with religion (Sociology of Religion, Philosophy of Religion, and History of Religion). Also, the content of this subject should be adapted to the age of the pupils. The religious leaders believe pupils must first learn about their own religion and only later about the other world religions, while the others, especially the intellectuals, believe the subject should be multi-confessional and emphasize the ethical function of religion.

There are widely differing views on what the subject should be called, and in the final analysis, the name will have to be determined by the curriculum. Naturally, religious representatives insist that the subject should be taught by theologians; indeed, economic motives (employment) are part of the reason why they call for the introduction of religious education. For the intellectuals, the most suitable teachers are Sociology and Philosophy graduates, because they are most qualified.

The groups most engaged in the introduction of this subjects are religious communities, politicians, and parents. Before the subject is introduced, the Law on primary and secondary schools and the Law on religious communities and religious groups must be amended.

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7. Summary and conclusions

Zorica Kuburić and Christian Moe

All the successor states to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have introduced, or are planning to introduce, some subject about religions in public schools.[1] In Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia), and Serbia, the model adopted has been a multi-denominational, confessional Religious Education subject, supplementing, but closely modeled on, the teaching methods of the religious communities (catechism, mektebs). The subject is taught in segregated classes, and is offered to children of select denominations, which obviously do not include all religious communities registered in the country (though the Bosnian legislation would seem, in principle, to provide for just that). The subject is optional or 'compulsory-optional,' meaning that once a pupil has opted in, the course must be followed to the end of school (in Serbia and some Bosnian cantons) or at least to the end of the year. Grading policies differ from country to country: in Bosnia and Croatia, pupils receive normal grades that count towards their grade point average; in Serbia, they are only graded descriptively. Alternative subjects are offered in Serbia (Civic Education) and in Croatian secondary schools (Ethics), but not in Bosnia.

Slovenia is the only country in our study that has fully introduced a non-confessional, elective Religions and Ethics subject teaching about various religions, though the subject has so far been in scant demand. Proposals for a similar subject, often referred to as "Cul-

1. Without prejudice to the eventual final status of Kosovo and the independence of Montenegro, both of which at the time of research were within the internationally recognised borders of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, and neither of which at the time had religious education in public schools.

ture of Religion," have been ignored in Serbia and Croatia. In Bosnia such a subject is in a pilot phase, promoted by the international community in the face of opposition from the major religious communities. Our Macedonian contributors favour a similar model for a future subject in their country.

The dominant religious community in each country—or, in Bosnia, all three major denominations—has pressed for confessional religious education. With the support of the major nationalist parties, they have succeeded in the three successor states most deeply involved in the armed conflicts of the 1990s; in Macedonia, an abortive attempt to introduce religious education (Catechism) was made in 2001, when that country was beset by internal armed conflict. Smrke and Rakar in their contribution set out the plausible hypothesis that reactions of "cultural defence" in a context of armed conflict help explain the different patterns of relations between religion and politics in the successor states.

The role of religious minorities is more complex. One may suggest a general pattern in which the larger minorities support confessional religious education when they are granted equal terms with the dominant confession in this regard, while the smaller minorities are opposed or indifferent. Muslims, for instance, supported the introduction of confessional religious education in Serbia; initially opposed it in Croatia, until they got a special agreement with the state; and express indifference in Slovenia, where they lack the human resources to provide teachers. It is noteworthy that a leading imam in Croatia in the early 1990s opposed confessional education in schools with cogent arguments; a few years later, as the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, he would advocate its introduction in that country.

Opponents of religious education have included civil-society organisations and secular academics involved in the study of religion. In Slovenia, sociologists of religion, including one of our contributors, have had a high public profile as defenders of secularism in this and other church-state debates. Elsewhere, too, non-theological expert opinion has been critical and has urged support for a non-confessional subject covering a range of religions. They have pointed out, as do Marinović Bobinac and Marinović Jerolimov in this volume, that where there is no alternative to confessional edu-

cation, some children will be deprived of any learning about other religions.

A variety of arguments have been used to support the introduction of confessional religious education. One line of argument casts it as a democratic right: Since the communists suppressed religious education, the argument goes, its reintroduction is part and parcel of a healthy democratic transition. By extension, the human right to religious education is misconstrued as requiring the state to provide confessional teaching in public schools; and opponents who insist on the secular nature of the state are portrayed as unreconstructed defenders of the former atheist regime. Proponents correctly argue that many Western democracies teach religion in their schools; less correctly, they ignore the important exceptions. The fact that believers pay taxes is used as an argument that public schools should teach their beliefs and convictions, though the principle is not extended to ideological convictions or to religious non-belief.

It is also argued that religious education, engaging soul, spirit and heart as well as the brain, is important for a well-rounded personality and the building of character. A related argument moves from the individual to the social, portraying the moral influence of religion and religious education as a cure for social ills that are said to have exploded in the transition period: drink, drugs, divorce, pornography and prostitution, to mention but a few. The latter argument, reported from several of the countries studied, seems to be most pronounced in the Macedonian debate.

Opponents of confessional education, too, have argued their case by reference to religious freedom and non-discrimination as a human right. Moreover, in most of the successor states they have been able to refer to constitutional provisions mandating the separation of church and state. As Kuburić and Vukomanović note, their arguments have sometimes mirrored those of proponents, conflating religious freedom with a strictly laicist view of the state and citing foreign experiences selectively without regard to different historical circumstances.

Matevski, Aziri and Velichkovski in their contribution make the acute observation that religious education in public schools opens up new employment opportunities for the candidates of theological

faculties, so that there is also an economic motivation behind arguments for introducing such a subject and staffing it with theologians. Presumably, the same argument applies also to sociologists of religion and other secular academics, who naturally see their own graduates as best qualified to teach, and this consideration should perhaps inform our critical reflection on the researcher's own position.

Our contributors report that the introduction of religious education in their countries has been hasty, has not been preceded by adequate public debate and consultation, and has not taken non-theological expert opinion sufficiently into account. The Croatian subject was introduced on the eve of war; the Bosnian one in wartime. In the other two cases, Serbia and Macedonia, a subject was introduced head over heels in 2001 amid considerable logistic problems. In both countries, constitutional objections were raised; in 1993, the Macedonian Constitutional Court struck down the subject, while its Serbian counterpart upheld it. The exception, again, is Slovenia, where a broad and orderly process of consultation was chaired by a noted sociologist of religion (though Catholic Church spokesmen claim to have been marginalised).

Thus hastily introduced, religious education policy has overtaken the legislative process with regard to the legal position of religious communities and their relationship with the state. The most significant case in point is Serbia. As Kuburić and Vukomanović note in their chapter, the arbitrary (or not so arbitrary) designation of seven confessions allowed to conduct religious education in schools would seem to prefigure a Russian-style "historical religious communities" model for church-state relations in a future law on religion.

Otherwise, legislative frameworks differ widely, from the Slovene and Macedonian legislation that presently allows no confessional teaching in public schools, via the jumble of cantonal laws providing for religious instruction under confessional auspices in Bosnia, to the Croatian law that requires the public school system in general to take "values of Christian ethics" into account.

Who controls what is taught? In Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia, responsibility is shared between the relevant religious communities and the state. Teachers are supposed to have theological training,

though laymen may teach if necessary. In Croatia and Bosnia, religious communities draw up the curricula, provide the textbooks, train and certify the teachers, and have the power to de-certify them. In Bosnia in particular, the oversight exercised by state authorities and the school administration appears to be largely nominal, though this varies from district to district. In these countries, only persons approved by the religious hierarchy are allowed to teach; in Slovenia, conversely, ordained priests (though not lay theologians) are excluded from teaching. In Slovenia, the state is firmly in control, but the Religions and Ethics curriculum was drawn up in a process of consultation and compromise inter alia with the Catholic Church, which is also in practice the sole confession with the capacity to provide the required additional teacher training for non-theologians. As for Macedonia, the politicians interviewed for this volume appear keen to bring religious education into public classrooms precisely to give the state a strong role in controlling what religious contents are taught.

The preliminary analyses of curricula and textbooks undertaken in the framework of this project in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia yield very similar results. The emphasis in the Orthodox textbooks is on church history and doctrine, as well as art and music; in the Muslim ones, on ritual and social duties. In either case, the textbooks are narrowly confessional, in the sense that they pay little attention to other religions, except to state a general principle of religious tolerance. This principle is qualified in Muslim textbooks by a primary emphasis on intra-Muslim solidarity, and in Christian textbooks by a negative portrayal of broadly-defined "sects." In Bosnia, Orthodox textbooks in particular focus on national identity, but Catholic textbooks too tie religion to a national history, while Muslim ones stress love of the fatherland.

Catholic textbooks stand out for their modern style and for their relatively inclusive, dialogical, and ecumenic approach to other religions. There are several views among our contributors on how to assess this approach. It is commendable that confessional subjects take an enlightened and dialogue-oriented interest in other confessions, but we need not lose sight of the fact that the agenda behind their ecumenism remains a confessional one, and that this remains

problematic in the context of public education. Popov and Ofstad note the apparent paradox that the Catholic Church in Bosnia has been the fiercest opponent of a neutral "Culture of Religion" subject. One explanation might in fact be that the Church's own school subject is its closest competitor.

In terms of the underlying social philosophies behind the differing policies on religious education, the liberal approach that would keep the state and its schools neutral with regard to religious conceptions of the good appears strongest in Slovenia, where it takes the form of a de-ideologised *laïcisme*. The liberal approach is multiculturalist in the weak sense that children should be taught about different cultures and religions that make up society. In all the successor states, though, the language of liberalism, rights, and freedoms is also employed by religious communities to argue why the state should teach their religion confessionally.

The model of religious education adopted in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia may be said to be founded on multiculturalism in a strong sense: the idea that the state should help maintain and reproduce the communal identities and value systems of different groups within society—in the present case, by using its education system to inculcate religious beliefs and norms as defined by the religious hierarchies. It is a restricted multi-culturalism, however, in that these states do not throw their support behind each and every religious tradition, but give pride of place to the dominant religion(s) as the carriers of national identity, values, and solidarity.

Early indications from Macedonia suggest that the prevailing philosophy there might be described as communitarian: The state should use its schools to foster the moral virtues, common values and social cohesion that are threatened by transition and ethnic conflict. Confessional religion is here less of an end in itself, as in multiculturalism, than a cultural resource to be instrumentalised by the state in its struggle against social ills. The underlying presumption is that all the major denominations, or all the 'Abrahamic' traditions, teach roughly similar values and are a positive, integrative influence on society. Smrke and Rakar, however, argue that religion might be seen as a disintegrative rather than integrative force even in relatively homogeneous Slovenia.

Relevant social research in the countries studied has given a picture of the religious composition of the populations, the relative strength of their religiosity and religious knowledge, and, in some places, the public support for and parental satisfaction with the religious education subjects. The findings in this volume, setting out in a more qualitative fashion the models and aims of religious education, provide a significant baseline for further research. A logical next step would be field research to show how the models and aims are implemented in practice and with what effects, through methods such as: interviews or questionnaire surveys with children, teachers, or parents; interviews with religious community representatives; and classroom observation. We have only scratched the surface of what might be learned from a rigorous content analysis of textbooks. As time goes by, it would also be interesting to explore some of the untested but testable arguments made for religious education, i. e. that it could alleviate the social ills associated with transition.

These matters of disinterested scientific interest aside, it is also clear that the region's secular academic students of religion share common concerns and interests in developing and promoting school subjects that give knowledge of many religions without committing themselves to the views of any religion.

Glossary

ahlak	Islamic morals (Ar. *akhlāq*)
canton	an administrative unit within the Federation of BiH, which is an entity (q.v.) of Bosnia and Herzegovina
catechism	church-based religious instruction, traditionally based on a set of questions and answers
catechumen	a person receiving Christian religious instruction
constituent people	a people constitutionally recognised to have a claim on a (post-)Yugoslav state
diocese	the jurisdiction of a bishop (Western churches)
entity	in Bosnia, one of the two parts in which the country is divided (Republika Srpska and the Federation)
eparchy	the jurisdiction of a bishop (Eastern Orthodoxy)
farz	a duty under Islamic law (Ar. *fard*)
hadīth	a traditional report on what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, or approved; a normative source in Islam
hajj	the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca
halāl	permitted under Islamic law
harām	forbidden under Islamic law
hoca	popular term for imam (q.v.) (Turkish spelling; also *hodža*)
imam	Islamic prayer leader
laicism	a doctrine of strict state-church separation that opposes the presence of religion in the public sphere
medresa	Islamic institution of higher learning; in the former Yugoslavia an Islamic secondary school (Ar. *madrasa*)
mekteb	in the former Yugoslavia, mosque-based children's school for religious instruction (Koran school)
missio canonica	a writ of permission to teach according to the Roman Catholic Church
mufti	in the former Yugoslavia, the chief administrative official of the Islamic Community in a region
nunciature	a permanent diplomatic mission of the Holy See (Vatican)
namaz	the prescribed five daily prayers in Islam
nijjet	right intention, which must be stated in Islamic ritual (Ar. *niyya*)

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