

Coming Out Religiously

Religion, the Public Sphere, and Religious Identity Formation



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Religionless Religious Education? Secularizing for the Common Good

Abstract

This paper is a creative application of John B. Cobb's proposal of "secularizing" religion for the common good to the scope and practice of religious education. As religious private schools participate in state-funded voucher programs, they can "secularize" in terms of emphasis and mission. "Religionless" religious private schools may affirm critical examination of their inherited traditions, seek to serve public needs, and solve social crises rather than to simply remain internally focused. Religious education may thus become a valuable and contributing voice in the public square that is focused "outward" rather than "upward" or "inward". If religious private schools open themselves to secularizing, they can effectively partner with public school districts to meet the real and pressing needs of the community at large and contribute to the "salvation of the world".

Introduction

In an age of intense secularism, religious education is experiencing marginalization in the public square. Such secularism is not a result of outside forces alone, but religion's own tendency toward withdrawal from or reaction against real-world problems. In the case of religious education, the era of withdrawal from broader society, or the tendency for religious private schools to be escape hatches from public life, is rapidly waning. Instead, religious education finds itself at a crossroads of cultural engagement: religious education must either make meaningful contributions to broader society or face the threat of irrelevance. If the latter is realized, religious education may be entirely eclipsed by secularist education.

However, religious private schools are also currently experiencing unprecedented opportunities. The expansion of state-funded tuition voucher programs in various states and countries are enabling religious private schools to expand their reach to socioeconomic communities who have not been historically able to pay private tuition. Publically-funded tuition voucher programs are available in 12 states and more than 50 cities in the United States (NCSL 2013; Berends, et. al. 2009, xvii).

When religious private schools were predominately driven by tuition privately paid by families, they posed no real threat to the public sector. Families paid tuition to send their children to religious private schools and simultaneously paid taxes that funded public schools. However, with the emergence of state-funded voucher programs for private schools, public school districts are beginning to notice the effects of private appropriation of public funds. Because religious private schools that participate in voucher programs are serving a public need using public funds, they are seen as direct "competitors" to public school districts, who have historically maintained a monopoly on such funding.

As religious private schools participate in state-funded programs, scrutiny will increase about issues such as religious indoctrination and the validity of religious perspectives taught in the classrooms of such schools (Hand, 2004). If religious private schools cannot demonstrate that they are meeting public needs

and engaging public concerns, criticism will continue to be leveled against religious education as a viable component of the educational sector.

As Jack Seymor notes, “religion is an important and growing aspect in the public sphere” (Seymor, 2013, 233). In fact, Friedrich Schweitzer (2013) argues, “all children (that are interested in it) have an inalienable right to have access to some kind of religious education... this claim makes religious education a public matter, and no competing principle, for example, of the separation between state and church or religion can override this human right in order to neglect it” (250). If indeed religious education is a right, then religious private schools may be considered institutions rendering a public service, especially in locales where tuition vouchers are available. However, religious educators must reflect critically on their own scope and practice in the context of prevailing secularist education.

Inadequacies of Secularist and Religious Education

John B. Cobb argues that both secularist and religious education have been largely ideologically driven and both have failed to meet the direst needs of the world. Secularism has marginalized religion from the public and religiousness has marginalized the public from religion. In so doing, both ideologies have done harm to one another and to the general public. Quite succinctly, Cobb identifies such blind, ideologically-driven mutual destruction “insane” (2010, 5-9). In terms of extremes, Cobb defines “religiousness” as the tendency toward legalistic escapism and secularism as the tendency toward economic self-interest (Cobb 2010, 125). According to Cobb, both extremes are inadequate as ideological foundations of education. Thus, religious education must secularize.

On one hand, secularism has presented itself as a “sane alternative to religiousness” but in so doing, it has sought to exclude religious voices from the public square (Cobb 2010, 8). Because religious education is assumed to be fundamentally sectarian, it is “relegated and confined to the private sphere” in order to preserve public unity around so-called shared “secular” values (Schweitzer 2013, 251). However, these secular values have not produced thoughtful solutions to public needs; instead, they have only perpetuated economic self-interest, which Cobb calls “economism”, at the expense of real human values and concerns (2010, 127). By marginalizing religion from education, secularist education silences the human spirit and de-emphasizes pursuits outside of pragmatic economic gain. By marginalizing religious education, secularist education represses its own religious heritage. After all, a “secular society is impoverished if it marginalizes the faiths from which it has emerged” (Observer 2011).

On the other hand, being “religious” is no sane alternative to secularism because it simply confirms existing patterns of behavior (Cobb 2010, 12). In other words, religiousness seeks to change others but does not seek to be changed by others; it has its own self-interests. In such a holding pattern, religion stagnates and cannot fully meet public needs or promote the common good. Its priority is the promotion of its own institutional and structural systems. Arguably then, religious education, and religious private schools in particular, have largely been quite “religious” according to Cobb’s definition. While this has not been the case for secularizing higher educational institutions, it has remained the case for religious primary and secondary schools.

Cobb’s proposed solution to this problem is that religion must secularize. But, secularizing is not capitulation to secularism. Cobb draws a sharp distinction between “secularism”, which he rejects, and “secularizing” which he affirms. Secularizing de-emphasizes the “us and them” dichotomy because it

does not elevate the superiority of a particular tradition; rather, it elevates the public need and common good above the needs of the religious institution. Secularizing religious schools should seek to be “relevant to the real needs of our time” (Cobb 2010, 106). However, because of the extremism so often part and parcel of religious education, it is still openly questioned whether religious education can “play a legitimized role in the public domain” (Meidema 2013, 239). To be “religionless” is to be free of the extreme of religiousness, not to be religion-free. This distinction is critical to Cobb’s proposal. Religious ideology, not religious values, is problematic. Cobb argues:

“... the real need is for an intensification of moral feeling, not its anesthetizing. It is important that more and more people feel a moral urgency to work for the salvation of the world. Our work for the common good is to be motivated by love rather than duty. It will respond to needs rather than conform to rules” (2010, 182).

Religious private schools have the moral architecture in place to secularize. However, religious educators must embrace the secularizing alternative and reform the scope of religious education to meet broader public needs. A creative application of Cobb’s proposal of “secularizing” religion for the common good is a viable alternative for expanding the scope and practice of religious education into the public sphere. But, religious educators must act. Cobb warns that the “dominance of secularism today is an even greater obstacle than religiousness” to the changes that the world desperately needs (2010, x).

Secularizing the Practice Religious Education: An Alternative

As a viable alternative to such extremes, Cobb sees secularizing as the sifting of religious insights through the “best thinking of the day” and the sifting of the “best thinking of the day” through religious insights. While secularism focuses on economism, secularizing focuses on the “salvation of the world” without obsessing over “otherworldliness”. By secularizing, religious education may thus become a valuable and contributing voice in the public square.

Cobb defines the term, “secularizing” as the process by which religious educators can:

“...critically examine the inherited ideas [of their religious tradition], clarify their valid meaning and use for life in the real world, and organize the resulting thoughts so as to ensure their mutual coherence” (Cobb 2010, 11).

In so doing, religious private schools can legitimately help shape the current thinking and practices in ways that benefit society as a whole, without succumbing to the extremes of religiousness on one hand or secularism on the other. When applied to religious education, religious private schools might seek to produce secularizing students, teachers, and citizens who are capable of not only deep literacy in their religious tradition, but the direct application of such thinking to public life. This need not mean political engagement; instead, it might simply mean the formation of students who are capable of living in and through the critically-examined values of their religious traditions in ways that lead to wholeness and healing in the world. Thus, religious private schools can seek to serve public needs and solve social crises rather than to simply remain internally and institutionally focused. Cobb calls this distinction “looking out” rather than simply “looking up” and “looking in” (2010, 11).

Cobb’s proposal for secularizing can be applied to religious education to mitigate the effects of secularism. As religious private schools participate in state-funded voucher programs, they can secularize,

not in terms of values or religious convictions, but in terms of emphasis and mission. A “religionless” religious private school may affirm a critical examination of its inherited tradition without, as Cobb notes, “wiping the slate clean” as secularism attempts to do. In spite of secularist claims of being “value free”, the effects of such secularism have been devastating.

Secularizing religious education can at once reject secularism, reject religiousness, and critically embrace the values and wisdom of their faith tradition for practical engagement of the world at-large. Secularizing embraces the “ought” of religion and applies it to a world in need (Cobb 2010, 9). The process of secularizing applies not only the practice of religious education, but to the scope of religious education in the public sphere.

Religionless Religious Education? Secularizing Funding and Function

In accordance with Cobb’s definition, William Davis (1999) argues that religious private schools must “provide for the common good of society and to address vigorously the serious challenges that they face”. Moreover, Davis notes that “generally speaking, private and especially religious schools, have a strong sense of community and an emphasis on increased human concern”. Such deeply-rooted values are examples of secularizing religious education. Thus, a “religionless” religious private school is one that critically applies the wisdom of its faith tradition to the real problems of the real world. When religious educators look “outward” to the needs of their communities (rather than “upward” to religious hierarchy or “inward” toward religious piety), they affirm the reality that in religious private schools “teachers and administrators see their efforts as involving more than a job; they view their efforts as a service” (Davis, 1999). Service, then, is more to the general public than to their own institutions. As Marissa Crawford and Graham Rossiter (1996) note, “if religious education is perceived as almost exclusively committed to the maintenance of traditional [religious] structures and teachings, it will have little credibility” (138).

There remains contention over the public role of religious private schools. However, Jason Bofetti (2001) refutes the three most common misperceptions about such schools; namely, “that they cater to the rich, they are essentially unregulated, and they do not serve the public good”. These assumptions are simply no longer the case, especially when secularizing religious private schools participate in state-funded tuition voucher programs. Even when public funding is available, however, religious private schools provide educational service to the public at a fraction of the cost of their public school counterparts, saving state governments, and the public, significant proportions of state and local education budgets (Aud and Michos 2006). Moreover, Bofetti (2001) notes the even minimal regulation of religious private schools “shows that we already believe that private schools serve a public function and must have some degree of public accountability”.

In spite of subsidization by tuition voucher programs, many religious private schools are “maintained at great cost” because of a “commitment to bring social justice and quality education to the poor and those most at risk educationally” (Davis 1999). When religious private schools operate for reasons such as this, rather than to indoctrinate adherents and perpetuate the causes of their own institutions, they are secularizing. Religious private schools that participate in publically funded tuition voucher programs provide not only a religious education for their own religious followers, but have proven to be “a life preserver for thousands of inner-city children drowning in failed public institutions” (Bofetti 2001).

However, the primary means by which religious private schools and public schools are distinguished are governance and funding. Funding is the crucial differentiator, especially if secularizing religious private schools seek to meet public needs in high-risk, high-poverty areas. Davis (1999) observes that “if a solid financial base is absent there is a danger that the poor will not be able to take advantage of these schools and could easily lead to the development of a more elitist school community”. When state-funded tuition voucher programs are available, public districts assume that religious private schools are draining their coffers of funds. There remains debate concerning the legal and political viability of tuition voucher programs (Harris, Herrington, and Albee 2007). Out of the funding debate, conflict emerges between secularist public schools and secularizing religious private schools.

However, Kevin Schmiesing (2010) contends that opposition to religious education on the grounds of public-private funding conflict is unfounded:

Despite heated rhetoric to the contrary, it is not true that school choice measures drain public schools of resources. Implementation of choice, because of the positive incentives it frames, results in a more efficient allocation of available educational resources, benefiting all students.

The reality is that secularizing religious private schools operate efficiently, thereby potentially saving local, state, and federal resources that can be re-allocated to public school districts (McEwan 2010; McEwan and Carnoy 2000; Jimenez, Lockheed and Paqueo 1991). In that function alone, secularizing religious private schools can be said to do a public service. Moreover, public-private partnerships have been demonstrably produced residual benefits to the public system; in some cases, tuition voucher programs were found to improve academic outcomes at corresponding public schools (Clowes 2009; Forster 2008, 5). Other studies have noted a litany of private and public benefits to such options, including freedom of choice, expanded achievement, productive efficiency, and social equity (McEwan 2010; Berends, et. al. 2009, 25; Levin 2009, 28-29; Levin 2001, 8).

Conclusion and Implications

As Bofetti (2001) argues, “some schools may be privately run and others publicly run, but all schools serve the public”. Although school choice has been an issue championed by political conservatives, Cobb notes that liberals, conservatives, progressives, and everything in between can secularize (2010, ix). Public-private partnerships between public school districts and religious private schools are “good for individuals, and... good for society” (Schmiesing 2010). If religious private schools can effectively secularize to meet the needs of the common good, they can “generate enormous social capital” that benefits society as a whole (Bofetti 2001).

Two proposals are viable paths forward for secularizing religious education. The first proposal is the secularizing of religious private schools through tuition voucher programs. This process is already drawing religious private schools into the public square and enabling them to meet general public needs, especially in high-need public school districts. In many cases, such schools are meeting important needs in public school districts where the job is simply too immense for the public education system alone. These needs include general access to educational options, education blended with social services, safe school environments, and pathways out of poverty. By partnering together, public and private schools can work together for the common good. The second proposal is for cooperative partnerships between

religious private schools and their public school counterparts to develop targeted programs to meet specific needs of students, families, and communities. Programs such as state-funded tuition vouchers for students with special needs, for example, allow religious private schools to develop comprehensive special education programs that lighten the operational and financial responsibilities of public districts. Because funding for such programs has been otherwise unavailable, religious private schools have not been able to adequately meet such specific needs and thus, have been marginalized, whether internally or externally, from the public square on such specific public needs.

Thus, “religionless” public-private partnerships may allow religious educators to break free from the tendency toward insular escapism and instead embrace a transformative vision for their scope of practice. In so doing, religious private schools may help overcome the dominant forces of secularism, yet provide a legitimate role for critically examined faith traditions in the public square. In such scenarios, “religionless” religious education can be achieved, not for the sake of religious institutions, but for the sake of the pressing needs of society. If religious private schools open themselves to secularizing, they can effectively partner with public school districts to meet the real needs of the community at large and thereby contribute to the “salvation of the world”.

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Transatlantic Encounters – what research on religious education in public schools in Europe can contribute to the issue of religion in the public sphere in the USA

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Introduction

In a modern society social cohesion cannot flourish without a fundamental discussion about what concerns the human person in that society ultimately: his/her life expectations, fundamental values, senses of direction and religious/non-religious convictions. The place *par excellence* to acquire the communicative competence to deal peacefully with norms, values and meaning is the school, this ‘microcosm’ in our complex and pluralized societies. In most of the European countries this vision is implemented in the provision of religious education (RE) in school. In this chapter I develop the idea that children and young people not only have to be taught in RE how they can live and learn together, but that they also have the alienable right to acquire spiritual competence in/through reflecting the foundations of their own personal religious or non-religious position in the midst of the encounter with others. Without this affirmation of the personal dignity there cannot be any appropriate discussion on social cohesion and solidarity in society. Community presupposes the presence of differences. The modern school with its RE provision can offer a safe space to learn to know one’s own and the other one’s religion and life stance – with its generic experiences and its mother tongue – within diverse relationships, and to live it reasonably, this means in a peaceful and constructive way.

This issue will be developed in four steps: RE within the school’s educational mission, the question of religious mother tongues and religious experiences in the public realm of the school, dealing with religious diversity and ideas for

implementing RE in a concrete classroom. I conclude with recommending 'RE for all' as an important pathway of human flourishing for future generations. This chapter originates from a European context, based among others on the research data of two large EU funded projects, namely REDCO (Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, et. al. 2007) and REMC (Smyth, Lyons and Dermody 2013) and should be considered in that respect. Other continents definitely have other issues to face, although one can argue that globalization is bridging many educational gaps these days.

RE and the educational mission of the school

A good school teaches children and youngsters different language games to perceive the fascinating and, at the same time, complex reality that they are surrounded by, from a linguistic, mathematic, geographic, literary, scientific, etc. point of view. In the RE class the religious dimension of reality is explored. Therefore, children and youngsters learn, by virtue of the religious and non-religious means of communication in past and present, to perceive existential questions, to evaluate them and to answer them. These 'slow questions' about the origins, the fundamental reasons and the orientations of the sense of life always reemerge anew and in different ways. According to the Dutch systematic theologian Erik Borgman (2008, 51), "in the places where this happens, culture appears in a way that is theologically relevant". The German researcher in education Jürgen Baumert describes four approaches to reality, including the theological one, as "modi of encountering the world" (*Modi der Weltbegegnung*) (Dressler 2011, 155). The Dutch RE scholar Thom Geurts talks about the 'lenses' used by the one who observes life in the world (1997). Each type of perception of reality understands the world differently, has its own constituent rationality or 'lens'. For example, literature, natural science and theology agree in what is reasonable and scientifically founded when reality is beheld, evaluated or understood from that specific approach. Education in school is grounded in this matrix of rationality.

However, education is also more than this. It is also about the human 'valuing' person, who has to deal morally and reasonably with the acquired knowledge. In complex societies, the question is often raised: "What can and should I do with my knowledge?" General education cannot be disconnected from personal

education. I perceive in the current educational context a great deal of interest in the issue of the human person who learns (Biesta 2011). The challenge seems double to me: firstly as a question of children and youngsters about their personal life orientations and secondly as a question about the 'with' of 'with others' in society, about social cohesion in the midst of the plurality of religious and non-religious life projects. Education is currently perceived, above all, in its double-facet of identity development and diversity management. The question about commitment takes a central place in this (Mette 1994): "What binds us unconditionally together? And, how can each individual's and each group's uniqueness contribute to the 'common good'?" With this broad concept of education as self-clarification [in German: *Bildung*] in mind, new and exciting questions can arise in the life of the young person at school: "What do I do with my knowledge and what does my knowledge do with me? How is my 'self' formed at home, at school, or at any other place? In which way do I want afterwards to make my own contribution to social cohesion? How do 'science and con-science', knowledge and ethics relate to my development as a human person? How do I deal responsibly with the others? How do I give responses to meaningful others around me? How do I obtain information about other points of view and to what extent do I allow them to become part of my own life project?"

In one way or another these issues – approaching the religious reality at school through the lens of theology and the personal appropriation of this approach in one's own life project – are dealt with in European RE classes. In some countries the objective element of 'learning *about* world views' is more central. In other countries the personal 'learning *from* world views' is more at stake. But in most cases teachers and scholars are aware of the dialectic of the two – how the "adolescent life-world curriculum" interferes with and shapes the "religious life-world curriculum" and *vice versa*, to put it in the words of the English RE scholars John Hull and Michael Grimmitt (cfr. Bates 2006, 20-22). Portraying this dialectic for each country in Europe is the aim of the research and book project Rel-EDU at the University of Vienna (Jäggle, Rothgangel and Schlag 2013; cfr. Kuyk et. al. 2007).

It is reasonable that this dialectic is dealt with publically in the framework of the school as learning environment. The RE class is a suitable place for this discourse (Mette 2010). It offers a *sui generis* understanding of reality that should not be

replaced by other language game. At this point in my argumentation it is not relevant whether or not this RE class is organized according to a specific confession or from a secular point of view. And again, at this point the variety of RE provisions in Europe is large. The central concern should be – as far as I am concerned – to legitimate (again) the RE class as a place in which existential questions can be perceived and taken seriously and in which reasonable interpretation models to understand and also to answer these questions can be found in a peaceful and constructive way.

Religious experiences and mother tongues in the classroom?

The German RE scholar Bernard Dressler establishes the goal of RE, in line with Jürgen Baumert's general concept of education, as follows: "to be able to behave critically in one's own life style towards religious praxis (active, passive or abstinent)" (Dressler 2011, 163). The fundamental question is however, what happens when religious praxis vanishes into thin air, when it cannot be perceived and cannot be either evaluated or understood? What happens when the religious point of view, that is *the lens*, does not work anymore because the religious perception and action, that is, *the sight*, are falling apart? One of the fundamental issues in current RE research is the question of what happens when the knowledge of the religious traditions is not factually available anymore. Or, in other words, what happens when each time we find fewer and fewer representatives who seize this knowledge and who can present it and transmit it to others reasonably? Intercultural and interreligious learning will make little sense when there is not a critical amount of different representative voices. Would RE become meaningless if fewer and fewer people have learnt the religious mother tongue or have been socialized religiously? Can we still talk about 'interreligious learning' (learning *about* and *from* religion) when the religious traditions who shape the 'inter' disappear – and this because of the fact that fewer and fewer people remember the core of tradition at the one hand or because there are only a few who maintain it and cannot or do not want to deal with their own hermeneutic position at the other hand? At school this might specifically mean that in class time a clash between religious illiterates and religious fanatics can take place. Can we then still talk about a healthy learning environment?

In the recent past, in the RE class, there have been attempts to overcome this situation by taking good care of the students' own world construction and by providing them a wide knowledge perspective; this way, students themselves can choose and taste and can become involved again. Others claim that, instead of a widening of the offer, a deepening of knowledge should be attained, for example, regarding the contents that are specifically Christian. Some others have decided on an approach towards aesthetic and moral training processes. There are still others who maintain that school has to be newly re-catechized and that schools themselves must expressively acquire the label of a community of believers. Finally, some believe that it is better not to talk about religion at school at all: the topic is old-fashioned and belongs to the private sphere of the individual.

This is my position: religious and non-religious worldviews are present in society in a blurred and fragmented way. A clear and systematic approach to this phenomenon in the RE class may reasonably be expected from school, due to its educational mission. Every child has the right to this learning process. RE for all should be the standard. With that aim in mind, information has to be placed at its disposal and has to be *represented* through teaching materials properly chosen. Information about religious practices, people and spaces should be present in the classroom, either virtually or physically. This information offers concrete accesses to a particular point of view, religious or not. Through the testimony of their lived faith the people who represent these points of view (virtually or physically) *present* at the same time their own affinity to faith. Children and young people have thus the opportunity of wondering and tracking how these concrete models can give them guidance about their own life project. This way, they get to know the variety of approaches to certain vital questions that each person considers. Facing these approaches the disposition to pose questions on one's own life perspective is renewed: "What is it that religious people (physically present here or represented by texts or images) are thrilled about? What have they seen that I have not seen up to today?" And all this happens in the midst of the creative space, in which the questions of human existence arise.

When such a variety of points of view, either religious or not, is mentioned and discussed, young people will feel provoked to explore themselves and their origins, and to take themselves and their own future seriously. Little by little, a *presence*, a personal point of view in a broad environment of lived convictions is

expected from them. Like was argued before: “Through the intercultural and inter-religious encounter I am challenged to re-define myself, to know myself better, and respect myself more, as a human person with dignity, who makes a difference through encounter with others. Another person’s view on a given (religious) question can only inspire me when I myself am committed to that question and begin to answer it” (Roebben 2013, 163). Only then, when the individual can find, “re-define and re-dignify” him/herself again, and as such, take part in the discussion, when he/she acquires the personal competence of a moral and intelligent human being, only then social cohesion can emerge out of the encounter of individuals. This comprehensive approach to interreligious learning – learning in the presence of the religious other (Boys 2008) – encompasses three elements: learning about, from and in/through religion (Roebben 2013, 164).

| Learning <i>about</i> religion | Learning <i>from</i> religion | Learning <i>in/through</i> religion |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Multi</i> -religious learning | <i>Inter</i> -religious learning | <i>Intra</i> -religious learning |
| Knowing the other | Respecting the other | Re- <i>defining</i> and re- <i>dignifying</i> myself |
| Information through documentation | Interpretation through communication | Confrontation through encounter |
| Heuristic competence | Social competence | Existential competence |
| Teacher provides information as <i>expert</i> | Teacher manages the communication as <i>moderator</i> | Teacher confronts with lived religion as <i>witness</i> |

Towards a productive relationship with one’s own singularity

In order to increase knowledge (*about*), communication (*from*) and appropriation (*in/through*) of religious diversity, the educational space has to be well structured and full of stimuli. When this is not the case, or, in other words, when the representations and presentations in the class do not take place or are confusing, the original intuition of the religious and non-religious positions – experience and mother tongue – have to be presented and inserted in a performative way. Regarding this point, as early as 1994, the German RE researcher Hans Zwergel stated the following: “When the RE class can hardly rely on previous religious

experiences, it would not have any other choice but to venture into new ways of cognitive and emotional connection which combine faith and life in the same class and, from there, to give new ways of consolidation aimed towards the subject” (Zwergel 1994, 44). And in 2004 the well-known expert on education Dietrich Benner argued: “In order to extend the experience of the world and human relationships in the class and in the school, at first, basic experiences about the world and relationships are required. If this premise is not fulfilled through pre-school education and socialization, firstly, they have to be created and guaranteed artificially with the help of explorations, visits, trips and practical activities, with the purpose of having subsequent instruction in class” (Benner, 2004, 14).

It is clear that the effect, motivation and interest for experiential learning in the presence of the religious other are different in each class, school and region. The German RE scholar Hans Mendl offers a clearly differentiated framework for a methodology of teaching an *Alteritätsdidaktik*, a didactics of otherness, a framework in which one can interact with religious positions that are different and opposite from one’s own beliefs in class. In the first place, he describes the aspect of “perceiving the experience of what is strange from a distance”, in which young people are taught, as an essential method, a draft of a personal map with religious similarities and differences (Mendl 2009, 33-34). Secondly, he defends that young people “should be made familiar through experiences with segments of other religions, which are different from their own” (34) and “should be given the opportunity to experience moments of specific participation in their own *strange* religion” (34-37). The last step, the “procedural comprehension of one’s own religion” (37-38) does not belong to the working package of the school. This step is of a catechetical nature and corresponds to the believers’ community. Even if children and young people reach a revelation of faith in the framework of the educational process, it cannot be a deliberate objective in class. In this situation the teacher can forward the question explicitly to the church or the faith community.

The second step is particularly interesting for our reflections: here young people receive the chance of knowing something about other people’s religious life and about the life of their own religion, as well as the possibility of participating in well-chosen encounters with the otherness of the other and the strangeness in others and ... oneself. The Dutch philosopher of education Siebren Miedema

holds the view that this way of proceeding, learning by doing through participation in ‘culturally structured activities’ (Miedema 2008, 39; cf. Hermans 2003) leads to transformational learning from a religious world view, and therefore, young people will be more challenged to take a stand by themselves than through the traditional strategies of transmission. Thus, they learn to understand better their position through the ‘with’ of ‘with others’, to value and to stand for it.

The Dutch RE scholar Ina ter Avest (2009, 26) states, thanks to the REDCo research, that many possibilities of education through social cohesion in the cultural and religious sphere are overlooked, because, although pupils are able to perceive cultural and religious differences on the playground, they are not invited in the classroom to present these differences personally, to perceive them more deeply and to take them into consideration. In Dutch, the RE class is referred to as *levensbeschouwing*. *Leven beschouwen* means to contemplate or to consider life in its complexity and plurality and to try to understand it as such. Life is literally left out ‘of consideration’ in too many RE classes today. The goal of *levensbeschouwing* is then simply not reached in RE! Even in schools that lack a great cultural and religious variety this topic cannot be omitted (Richardson 2010, 277). Religious variety takes always place (for instance on the Internet, in the media, on the playground, etc.) – even in so-called homogeneous religious contexts!

Concrete pathways to RE as human flourishing

‘RE for all’ can open a hermeneutical space for personal storytelling, for an intensified awareness of the (non-)religious stories of others and for the communicative ways to deal with the dialectic of these two in a peaceful way. It can make children and young people more resilient to cope with the accelerated complexity of modern society and to honor them in their personal contribution to that society. The title of this essay confirms this vision: ‘RE for all’ is as such a valid pathway for human flourishing of children and young people. In what follows I present five recent developments in RE research in Europe that concretize this approach.

The first and most basic development relates to *community building*. Young people need interaction chances to learn together. In the German religious didactics this idea is reflected in the so called ‘Compassion’ projects (Kuld 2002), in which young people engage with open hands in community work and discuss their experiences afterwards. In the USA a similar project is very successful: the Interfaith Youth Core (Patel 2007). Through service learning young people talk about their inspiration, in order “to identify what is common between religions”, but also to get the chance to discover “where each can articulate its distinct path to that place [of communality, BR]” (Patel 2007, 167).

A second path to create opportunities for human flourishing in the RE classroom is the *cultural path* – imaginative explorations in other people’s religions and belief systems. Sometimes young people need more distance to understand their own intentions – ‘mental detours’ in the words of Paul Ricoeur. Literature, music, film, theater, etc. can be helpful in that respect. A mere introspective approach to existential questions is often too intrusive. A story told by another person in a novel offers breathing space and the possibility of role taking, in order to understand oneself as another better (Ricoeur 1992).

The third dimension of RE development, both in praxis and theory, is the so called pedagogy of *sacred space* (*Sakralraumpädagogik*) (Rupp 2005). Presumption is that young people themselves deal with ways to ‘liquefy’ the spiritual capital of sacred spaces around them to interpret the transformations that are taking place in their neighborhoods. One of the central research questions is: What happens when young people conceive of spiritual questions in the presence of others and in the context of traditional sacred spaces (such as a church, a temple, a mosque), although lacking religious mother tongues, and/or using conflicting languages, and/or inventing other languages through e.g. new media?

The fourth track to stir up human flourishing through RE is the exploration of religious *rituals in schools*, related to experiences of passage, death, new life, hopes and expectations of young people in every day school life. Such “ritual-like practices have important functions and characteristics that potentially can enhance life. Perhaps not only enhance it, but are even essential to life.” (De Wildt 2012, 243).

And finally, related to the previous topic, there is a huge need for silence and focused reflection in RE. These relate to concentration and asceticism: to stand the restlessness, to wait till inner rumors disappear, to receive a new vision and a new heart to see the world differently. In silence the human person can become very wide and full of mercy for him/herself and others. Reconciliation with oneself is a necessary prerequisite for the encounter with the other (Hochheimer 2011). Young people have the right to learn this *habitus* or virtue.

This whole process ‘uses’ existing theology but also in a way ‘produces’ new theology: children and youth theology (Schlag and Schweitzer 2011). Young people are respected in their dignity as creators of a new theological discourse for the future. The UK researcher Julia Ipgrave is deeply convinced that we should not lose any time in this kind of support of human flourishing of children in religiously diverse classrooms: “I propose that religious education in schools should include (alongside its concern to increase children’s knowledge of different religious traditions) the active promotion of a theological method that takes the concept of God seriously, takes faith seriously, takes truth seriously, takes the religious perspectives of others seriously; one that forms children as theologians who are not afraid or embarrassed to express or reflect upon their own beliefs, to criticize and revise their own religious language” (Ipgrave 2009, 69). It is my contention that this comprehensive learning *about, from and in/through* approach can enrich appropriately the many educational tracks being developed all over the world to start with information *about* religions (see e.g. for the USA: Moore 2007, AAR 2010 and Moran 2010).

Conclusion

Is society prepared and able to stimulate these processes of vital importance in primary and secondary school and in higher education? The school alone or what is even worse RE alone cannot deal with this task. Knowing the peculiarity of the religious language game, addressing the slow questions and researching with young people the existential experiences in everyday life, cannot and must not be only a task for the RE class. I think that leaving all the burden of the secularization and modernization of religion on the children’s shoulders would not be justifiable. We are all responsible for dialogue among cultures, for learning *about, from and in/through* the cultural or religious other and, therefore, also for

the development of the self-awareness of the future generations in their contribution to a better world.

Good education helps children to start learning together, helps them to understand their own specific contributions and brings them at the end of the day together again – in reflecting and re-collecting their newly gained insights (Roebben 2012). Children do not need ‘more’ identity, they need a ‘better’ identity (quoted in Könemann and Mette 2013, 77), one that is fitting into their personal narration and into the larger context of a culture of recognition, of persons recognizing each other in their otherness.

This whole educational process costs energy, courage and, last but not least, money. I finish this chapter with an extensive quote from Elaine Champagne, a Canadian researcher in children’s spirituality. She points to the necessity of an educational community which shows the courage of its convictions: “It seems that the population and the governments count on the school to build a community of the future, capable of respect and dialogue in the context of plurality. But children cannot do that alone. Identity cannot be ‘taught’; it is rather experienced, supported and developed like a language, within a community. And dialogue in a pluralistic society is seriously challenged if social and personal identities are in crisis. To establish an authentic dialogue, there is a need to clarify our identities. And to clarify our identities, we need a collectivity. It would be a shame if we put the burden of social tolerance, respect and dialogue in a context of plurality on the shoulders of our children without addressing the questions for ourselves. The risk of exploiting the children for the sake of a better future is not only foolish, but absolutely unjustifiable. It is undermining of the very fundamental belief in the value of each individual” (Champagne 2009, 2).

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**On Learning to See the World Religiously:
Moral Awareness, Faith, and Public Moral Discourse**

Abstract: Our moral awareness directs our attention to salient ethical cues in our lives. This paper discusses how an understanding of the dynamics of moral awareness can enable people to ground their moral outlooks in their faith commitments while at the same time remaining open to dialogue with people of other religious outlooks so that they are able to discuss moral issues in the religiously diverse social and public places (the public squares) of our global, postmodern age.

Imagine seeing a child being pushed roughly to the ground by another child on a playground. Imagine reading August 2013 reports about hundreds of Syrian civilians being killed by chemical weapons. *Moral awareness* is the tug of morality. It emerges when our attention is drawn to situations that raise questions about the wellbeing of persons or communities. In such situations moral issues come to the forefront of consciousness – prompting us to try to understand what is going on and leading us to consider how we, others, or communities can and should respond.¹

How should our faith convictions inform our moral awareness? Morality is a constitutive dimension of faith. From a Christian perspective, we are called to show hospitality to the stranger, to have a special concern for the poor and the oppressed, and to respect the dignity of all persons as created in the image of God.² More broadly, the great religious traditions of the world offer resources for forming and informing an understanding of the moral dimensions of life. For instance, a Christian vision of welcoming and working to bring about the fuller realization of the Reign of God,³ a Jewish understanding of *tikkun olann* (repair of the world) as

¹ The analysis of moral awareness presented in this paper draws insight from the work of James Rest. See James R. Rest, "Morality," in *Manual of Child Psychology* vol. 3, vol. ed. J. Flavell and E. Markman, gen. ed. P. Mussen (New York: Wiley, 1983), 558-561; James R. Rest et al., *Moral Development: Advances in Research and Theory* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 3-8; and Darcia Narvaez and James Rest, "The Four Components of Acting Morally," in *Moral Development: An Introduction*, ed. William M. Kurtines and Jacob L. Gewirtz (Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 385-392.

² See Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Ana Maria Pineda, "Hospitality," in *Practicing our Faith*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 1997), 29-42; Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll; Orbis, 1983); Judith Ann Brady, *A Place at the Table: Justice for the Poor in a Land of Plenty* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third, 2008); on the dignity of the human person and respect for persons as persons see Dolores L. Christie, *Moral Choice: A Christian View of Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 105-131; on respect for persons as persons as central to religious education see Padraic O'Hare, "The Renewal of Education and the Nurturing of Justice and Peace," in *Education for Peace and Justice*, ed. by Padraic O'Hare (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 110-123.

³ See Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 15-38; and Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 1980), 35-55.

the spiritual purpose of life,⁴ and the Confucian concept of the cultivation of *ren* (humanity) as the ultimate goal of life,⁵ can all provide a foundation for robust moral visions. Hence, it can be argued that faith should shape moral awareness, and that religious education should form people to see moral issues in the light of their faith convictions.

However, questions are sometimes raised about *the role of faith in contemporary public life*. For instance, we might ask: When insights grounded within the situated convictions of specific religious traditions and communities are brought into public forums of discourse, aren't they more likely than not to cause tension and conflict given the religious diversity found throughout the world?

The next two sections focus on a few stories that can help us to understand more fully how faith becomes problematic in public forums of moral discourse. To address this problematic issue, the dynamics of moral awareness are then explored and guidelines are proposed for helping people learn how they can fruitfully draw insight from their faith convictions in discussing socio-moral issues. The paper focuses specifically on Christian moral awareness, but suggests ways people of diverse faith commitments can work together in addressing socio-moral issues in public forums of discourse.

Religious Insight and Public Moral Discourse: Blinded by the Light

Gerald (not his real name) began his freshman year in college by participating in a university-run, service program called Urban Plunge. He and other incoming freshman worked on various community projects in the neighborhood surrounding their urban college campus. Although the Jesuit, Catholic identity of the university was acknowledged in the program orientation, participants were told before each of their regular reflection sessions that it could cause conflict in their religiously diverse group if their personal reflections emphasized how their moral outlooks were grounded within their specific religious traditions. Instead, they were encouraged to focus on how their service deepened their commitment to the common good of society.

Urban Plunge expanded Gerald's moral outlook by bringing him into contact for the first time in his life with a diverse range of moral and religious perspectives. However, after his Urban Plunge experience and echoing the perspective of the Urban Plunge leaders, Gerald began

⁴ See Elliot N. Dorff, *The Way into Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005); and Sherry H. Blumberg, "Repairing the World: The Place of Mitzvot in Children's Spiritual Lives," in *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspective from the World's Religious Traditions*, ed. Karen Marie Yust et al. (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2006), 275-284. I developed a fuller understanding of the moral and religious educational significance of the concept of *tikkun olam* through conversations with Cynthia Nienhaus, who is at Marian University, Fond du Lac, WI. For broader perspective on Jewish morality and moral education see Elliot N. Dorff and Louis E. Newman, eds. *Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality* (New York: Oxford, 1995) and the analysis of "Jewish Theologians and Moral Education" in John Elias, *Moral Education: Secular and Religious* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger, 1999), 149-156. Elias, as well as many of the essays in the book edited by Dorff and Newman, emphasize how a Jewish moral vision is both rooted in the particularity of Jewish faith and universal in scope.

⁵ See Confucius, *Confucius Analects*, trans. by Edward Slingerland (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003), Book 12, verses 1-2; and Book 6, verse 30; Joel J. Kupperman, "Ren and Li in the Analects," in *Confucius on the Analects*, ed. Bryan W. Van Norden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Francisca Cho, "Ritual," in *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 88-90. My understanding of importance of *ren* as an ethical concept has been greatly enhanced by conversations with Imelda Lam, a religious educator who works for the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong.

to claim that too great a focus on the moral wisdom of any religious community could be blinding. That is, it could keep him from recognizing and being open to the moral insights of people of other religions. Then, throughout his years in college, Gerald questioned whether public moral discourse among people of diverse religious and philosophical convictions is possible. He also at times adopted a skeptical attitude and claimed that it is best to limit public discussions of morality to practical issues, focusing on coordinating action for the common good.

A few years later a student, Nikki (not her real name) asked me to discuss with her a proposal to create a program to help Catholics nurture a fuller sense of Catholic identity at the Catholic university where she worked. The proposal had been rejected on the grounds that it could be divisive. The Campus Ministry staff pointed out to Nikki that the staff included both Catholic and Protestant chaplains, offering both Catholic and Protestant services. However, staff members added that they were committed to the spiritual development of the school's religiously diverse student body, and that to hold up the moral vision of any religious tradition (even the founding tradition of the school) in the programs offered would be to fail to respect the many religions of students. Instead, their campus ministry programs emphasized the commonly shared human quest for the sacred or God.

Nikki disagreed. She argued that "a Catholic institution would be doing its students a great disservice if it provided a welcoming environment by sacrificing its Catholic identity." She added that in their commitment to open dialogue, including openness in discussions of moral issues, Campus Ministry staff members at her university have turned a blind eye to the wisdom of Catholicism and that, as a result, their spiritual and moral outlook has been impoverished. Nikki then claimed that in addressing moral issues, Catholics should begin with the moral wisdom found in Catholicism, striving to articulate an alternative moral vision to the dominant culture. Catholics, Nikki contended, should even be willing to assert the "superiority" of their moral perspective and show how the moral insights of others can be seen in a fuller light when viewed from a Catholic perspective.

In the above stories there is a sharp contrast between the Urban Plunge and campus ministry staffs, on the one hand, and Nikki, on the other. The members of the two program staffs focus on our *common humanity*. They contend that a focus on particular personal and religious commitments could blind us to basic or foundational moral inclinations (such as the tendencies to preserve life and seek community) that all people share and upon which personal and social life is built. In contrast, Nikki's focus is on what is *distinctively Christian* and particularly Catholic. She argues that Catholics compromise their Christian faith if they do not center their moral and religious outlooks in the unique revelation of God in Christ. From her perspective, a focus on our common humanity can blind us to the potentially world transforming moral vision presented in the life and ministry of Jesus and then carried forward in the church.

The third perspective presented in the above stories is that of Gerald. When discussing his Urban Plunge experience Gerald talked about becoming aware of the ways the moral perspectives he encountered were grounded in particular life stories and social contexts. For instance, Gerald commented on the strong sense of morality that was nurtured by the regular communal gatherings that took place in one neighborhood, and how this sense of community was deeply intertwined with the Catholicism of the people and their specific sense of ethnic identity. At the same time, Gerald accepted the claim of the Urban Plunge leaders that people need to step back from their rootedness in specific life contexts if they want to forge a shared sense of morality. In the end, Gerald felt caught between two conflicting insights. He recognized the inescapable situatedness of all moral perspectives, on the one hand, and he accepted the idea

that we need to try to transcend our specific life context if we are to see moral issues objectively, on the other. This conflict sparked in Gerald a deeper level of *critical reflection*. However, it also led him to become *skeptical* at times about whether or not we can create public forums for people from diverse backgrounds to discuss moral issues in a fruitful way.

The three points of view presented here illustrate some of the major problems that arise today in striving to create public forums for the discussion of socio-moral issues among people of diverse religious and social backgrounds. These problems are discussed more fully in the next section.

Public Moral Discourse as Problematic

In the past it was sometimes possible to stress the importance of shared moral convictions and a sense of common humanity in striving to create public forums for moral discourse. For example, in the Catholic neighborhood in which I grew up, almost everyone attended the same church, was educated in one of two local schools, and had a shared sense of the importance of religious and ethnic identity. In such a social context, there was solid ground for appeals to common values and a shared moral outlook. Today, there is often much less common ground given the socio-cultural and religious diversity of our contemporary, globalized communities. At a deeper level and as illustrated in part by Gerald's moral outlook, *people are also more likely today to recognize that an emphasis on common human experience can keep us from recognizing the distinctive and unique moral insights found in specific moral outlooks.*

Building on a contemporary, postmodern awareness of the situatedness of all human knowing and doing, some people today strive to establish a foundation for moral praxis by building on the strengths of specific moral perspective, especially faith perspectives. For instance, in the second story told above Nikki seeks to find a secure foundation for her faith and moral outlook in the wisdom and official teachings of Catholicism. *However, when we think that our own distinctive moral perspective gives us such a superior perspective that we do not need to take other moral outlooks into account, there is likely be little openness to appreciating the genuine moral insights in alternative perspectives.*

Among others today an awareness of difficulties in formulating a coherent moral outlook and establishing a framework for public moral discourse has sparked a greater level of critical moral reflection. In some cases, however, critical reflection has degenerated into skepticism and even destructive doubt. More fully, we live in an age of doubt. The institutions that once stood as symbols of stability and social and moral values are often questioned today. Business corporations, political parties, and even churches no longer command the respect they once did. For some people our contemporary tendency to doubt moves beyond constructive critical reflection and becomes an acid that corrodes the fabric of life and creates a breeding ground for uncertainty, suspicion, lack of confidence and even cynicism, skepticism and despair. *In an age in which there is an increasing awareness of how all human knowing and doing is situated within and bound by specific life contexts, focusing only on a sense of common humanity and how the moral wisdom of specific religious communities and traditions can limit our moral vision is likely to encourage destructive doubt.*

Overall, an awareness of the difficulties that can arise in creating space for people of diverse perspectives to share their moral outlooks and discuss moral issues may tempt us to question whether or not it is any longer possible to forge spaces for the public discussion of moral issues. However, as will be discussed in the next two sections, we can begin to move beyond these difficulties if we examine carefully the dynamics of moral experience with a focus

on moral awareness, and then consider how people can learn to draw insight from their religious convictions in contributing to public discussions of socio-moral issues.

Morality and the Dynamics of Moral Awareness

As human beings we are moral beings; we see the world not just as it is but as we judge it ought to be. For instance, in seeing a child being pushed roughly to the ground by another child on a playground, we are likely to see more than the physical actions taking place. We are likely to see violence, or abuse, or bullying; and we are likely to judge that it should not be taking place. However, even though we are by nature moral beings, our experience and expression of moral concerns are not on the level of *moral experience as common human experience*. Rather, we become aware of and then think and talk about the moral dimensions of life at the level of *moral experience as uniquely and distinctively human experiences*. That is, who we are as unique persons situated in specific life contexts shapes and to some extent determines how we experience and express the tug of morality, how we are drawn to attend to and articulate concerns about the well being of persons and communities in particular situations.

To gain a better understanding of the dynamics of moral experience we can examine three dimensions of moral awareness. First, *moral awareness can be experienced as moral perception in tandem with primary moral reactivity*. Imagine for instance, seeing a store clerk intentionally cheating a customer by giving him the wrong change. Similarly, imagine seeing a person pick up and turn in a lost wallet to a store clerk. When we see morally troubling or morally praiseworthy behavior we may be led to stop, take notice, and become aware of the moral dimensions of a situation through strong feelings or preverbal impulses. Such primary moral reactivity can often be expressed by talking about what is just or fair, on the one hand, or morally exemplary, on the other. However, the more intense our gut reactions are, the less adequate any conceptual representation of these reactions is likely to seem. Thus, negative moral gut reactions can often be most fully described as inner impulses making us aware of a *moral lack or incompleteness*, while positive moral gut reactions may be said to lead to a sense of *moral fittingness*.⁶ From a Christian perspective, the language of natural law provides one way of discussing moral perception and primary moral reactivity. As noted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), “The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables man [and woman] to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie” (CCC, No. 1954). (See also the apostle Paul’s understanding of the natural law in Romans 2.)

Second, people’s gut reactions to morally charged situations may be preceded, accompanied, or followed by affective arousal and response. *When experienced as affect or emotion, moral awareness is moral sensitivity*. In commenting on the distinctive nature of moral sensitivity Daniel McGuire notes that “affections keep us close to the flesh and find the reality beneath abstractions and statistics.”⁷ Additionally, there are two poles to affective moral sensitivity. First, it is experienced as an inner impulse of the heart. Second, this inner impulse leads outward toward a greater sense of connectedness with life, and especially with other human beings. Hence, affective moral sensitivity can be expressed through concepts such as *caring* and

⁶ For classic studies of moral perception and how it is analogous to aesthetic perception see Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Phenomenology of Moral Experience* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1955), and Wolfgang Kohler, *The Place of Values in a World of Fact* (New York, Liveright Publishing, 1938). See also Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁷ Daniel McGuire, *The Moral Choice* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 295.

connectedness.⁸ In discussing affective moral sensitivity from a Christian perspective the CCC points out that “feelings or passions are emotions or movements of the sensitive appetite that” lead us to be attentive to the needs and concerns of others and incline us “to act or not act in regard to something felt or imagined to be good or evil” (CCC, No. 1763). Christian moral sensitivity can also be discussed as *love* and be explored scripturally through reflection on such texts as Psalm 136, Matthew 22:34-60, and Mark 12:28-34.

Third, people’s primary reactions and affective sensitivity to morally charged situations may be extended by cognition. For instance, a sense of justice that is rooted in primary gut reactions may be refined by an affective connection to others and extended through thought so that people distinguish between distributive and commutative justice. In such cases, understandings of distributive justice express norms concerning the disbursement of the goods of the earth based on the claim that all people should have some share in these goods. Standards of commutative or basic community justice express norms about the importance of honoring social exchanges between people (such as contracts, sales agreements, or agreed upon terms and conditions of employment between a worker and his employer).⁹ Overall, *the cognitive processing of morally charged situations is often expressed in terms of personal and social norms that can serve as guides for making sense of the moral dimensions of life experiences*. Personal norms are internalized conceptions of obligation. Social norms consist of expectations, obligations, and sanctions anchored in social groups. When we are in the midst of morally charged situations our awareness may be filtered, often unconsciously, by internalized norms. For instance, as a person watches another person discreetly drop an item into a bag in the middle of a store, she may be *seeing* someone violating the *norm against shoplifting*. From a faith perspective, the moral norms of a religious community give expression to its collective moral wisdom. As such, they can serve as guides for making sense of morally charged situations in the light of faith.¹⁰

Ideally, in a mature moral outlook, the three dimensions of moral awareness would be fully developed and integrated with one another. This is, however, rarely the case. Drawing insight from Christian theology and contemporary psychology, it can be noted that moral

⁸ Affective moral awareness or moral sensitivity is based on the human capacity for empathy. See Martin Hoffman, “Is Altruism Part of Human Nature?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40 (1981):121-137; and Martin Hoffman, “Empathy: Its Development and Prosocial Implications,” in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* vol. 25, ed. C.B. Keasey (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1978). See also John C. Gibbs, *Moral Development & Reality* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 78-11; Larry P. Nucci, *Education in the Moral Domain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 107-123; and Robert C Solomon, *True to Our Feelings: What our Emotions are Really Telling Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For classic discussions of how affect can serve as the basis for a moral outlook focused on care for others see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Nel Noddings, *Educating Moral People* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002).

⁹ For a fuller account of the types of justice see David Hollenbach, *Justice, Peace, & Human Rights* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 26-30.

¹⁰ On norms and the formation of norms see Shalom H. Schwartz, “Normative Influences on Altruism,” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* vol. 10, ed. L. Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1977); J. Philippe Ruston, *Altruism, Socialization, and Society* (Englewood Cliffs: NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 41-51, 75-76, and 96-103; and Nucci, *Education in the Moral Domain*, 3-75.

awareness can be distorted by sin and evil.¹¹ There are also many personal and social influences that lead to the selective development of moral awareness. For instance, research has shown that both men and women are capable of understanding and utilizing a justice-oriented moral outlook (grounded in primary moral reactivity and norms of fairness) and a care-oriented moral outlook (grounded in affective moral sensitivity). Yet, because of the way human beings have evolved as social beings and the influence of current social influences, there is a tendency for men to prefer an ethic of justice while women often prefer an ethic of care.¹² It is also important to note that even among people with mature moral outlooks, there can be differences in moral awareness because of the distinctive ways their lives have unfolded and influenced their moral development.¹³ Additionally, religious beliefs and practices shape moral awareness in distinctive ways. For instance, a religious tradition or even a specific religious community may emphasize one aspect of moral awareness more than others, or shape in distinctive ways how an aspect of moral awareness is developed – consider, for instance, the similarities and differences in the ways affective moral awareness is shaped into Buddhist senses of compassion and Christian senses of love.¹⁴

Overall, because we as human beings are moral beings, we can expect other people to be attentive to moral concerns and to bring some sense of moral perception, moral sensitivity, and attunement to moral norms into their interactions with others. At the same time, we can expect people to express their moral awareness in many differing ways depending on how their moral outlooks have developed within the distinctive contexts of their personal and social lives. As will be discussed in the next section, building upon an understanding of the multi-faceted nature of morality and moral awareness, it is possible to offer a few basic guidelines for how people can learn to draw insight from their religious convictions in contributing to public discussions of socio-moral issues.

Learning to See Religiously and Public Moral Discourse

First, in guiding people to learn to see the world religiously, religious educators should help people to recognize and resist all forms of false humanism. Such false understandings of the human person minimize the unique contributions that people of faith can make to public discussions of socio-moral issues as they draw insight from their distinctive faith perspectives.

The Urban Plunge leaders and Campus Ministry staff members in the stories told earlier strive to create public discussion forums in which all aspects of human life, including morality and spirituality, can be discussed in terms of common, sharable human experience and in which all references to situated and distinctive life experiences are excluded. They have adopted what are, in essence, false understandings of human experience. As pointed out above, people do not

¹¹ See James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom* 2nd ed. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 2010), 45-65; Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations for Catholic Morality* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 89-122; and Ervin Staub, *The Psychology of Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹² See the discussions of empirical studies of an ethic of care in Mary M. Brabeck ed. *Who Cares?: Theory, Research, and Educational Implication of the Ethic of Care* (New York: Praeger: 1989), especially Muriel J. Bebeau and Mary Brabeck, "Ethical Sensitivity and Moral Reasoning among Men and Women in the Professions," 144-163.

¹³ For a study of the similarities among yet distinctive nature of mature moral outlooks see Anne Colby and William Damon, *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹⁴ Compare for instance the understanding of Buddhist compassion in "Compassion as a Liberating Power" with the understanding of Christian love explored in *Virtuous Passions* - John Makransky, *Awakening Through Love: Understanding Your Deepest Goodness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007), 157-200; and Simon G. Harak, *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (New York; Paulist Press, 1993).

experience life at the level of common human experience. We experience life as specific persons who live within specific social contexts and who have often unique and distinctive moral outlooks.

In order for public moral discussions to be fruitful *both* common, underlying social concerns *and* differences in moral outlooks must be acknowledged. Underlying common concerns provide, at a minimum, a reason for gathering for public discussion. At the same time, recognizing differences can enable those involved to name disputed issues clearly. At a deeper level, as Parker Palmer notes, “our differences are among our greatest assets.”¹⁵ Sharing differences in moral outlooks can expand our moral awareness. When recognition and discussion of differences is not allowed in public forums, moral discourse is impoverished rather than being enriched. And, in contributing to public conversation about social issues, insights grounded in differing faith convictions may confirm and strengthen one another at times, while at other times they may lead people from differing religious traditions to make unique and even challenging and corrective contributions to public discussions.

Forms of false humanism are often embodied today in institutional ideologies and practices based on secularism. Hence, there is a need for a second guideline. Specifically, *in guiding people to learn to see the world religiously, religious educators should lead people to recognize the inadequacies of and to resist all forms of secularism.*

Secularism can be distinguished from secularization. During the modern era there was a secularization of society, that is, a separation of many areas of social life from religion, and the creation of public spaces for discourse that were independent from the influence of religious (and most often Christian) institutions. This process of secularization, as Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, point out, “has been largely beneficial.”¹⁶ It enabled scientific enquiry, the arts, economic institutions, and other aspects of human activity to develop within their own social spheres, free from the often stifling influence of religious authorities who did not fully understand the inner logic and operating dynamics of these spheres. Moreover, because of the secularization of society public spaces were created for discussing social issues in which people stepped back from their specific life perspectives, including their faith commitments, in order to ensure that civil discourse was not plagued by destructive conflicts. However, when the process of secularization is taken to the extreme, it fosters secularism. Secularism is the ideological conviction that *religion and belief in the spiritual and transcendent* dimensions of life have *no place in public life*. From the perspective of secularism, faith convictions should be seen as purely private matters. Secularism is problematic because it obscures from view the social dimensions of faith convictions and how insights drawn from personal experience and religious traditions provide the foundations for our distinctive moral outlooks. For instance, in the stories told earlier, because they adopted a secularist outlook the representatives of the institution of higher learning that Gerald attended and at which Nikki worked, were unable to articulate how the Jesuit, Catholic identity of their school provides a foundation for university programs. They were also unable to recognize how they could create forums for public moral discourse in which they and others could share insights from their uniquely insightful moral outlooks as they address socio-moral issues of common concern.

¹⁵ Parker J. Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2011), 2.

¹⁶ Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993), 3. They discuss the differences between secularism and secularization on 2-3.

Third, as people who ground their lives in their faith commitments have reacted against the false humanism and secularism of our age, they have sometimes given into the temptation to overstate the extent to which we can draw insight from our religious traditions. Hence, in order for contemporary forums for public moral discourse to be fruitful a third guideline is needed. Specifically, *in guiding people to see the world religiously, religious educators should encourage people to resist all forms of religious imperialism*, that is, claims that the moral outlook of one religious tradition is superior to other outlooks coupled with attempts to force this moral outlook on others. Even when people of faith engage in civil protest and disobedience, our stance should be a dialogical one, aimed at sparking or contributing to public discussion of important social issues. From a Christian perspective, we should approach life with humility, always remembering that God has and continues to make God's self known within other religions and that the Christian church is not the Kingdom or Reign of God. Moreover, as Christians, we are called to follow the nonviolent way of Jesus and to be willing to face personal and communal risks in our encounters with others as we strive to move the world closer to the realization of what is authentically good and true.

Once our moral vision is clarified by the above guidelines, a fourth one can be offered. *In guiding people to learn to see the world religiously, religious educators should help people to recognize how religious education should always go beyond learning how to be religious within a specific religious community and explore how believers are called to bring their faith to bear in all aspects of their lives.*

Christian religious education should, of course, teach Christians about their faith tradition while also forming them to some extent, depending on the learning context, to be practicing members of a Christian faith community. In helping Christians grow in faith, Christian religious educators should also explore how Christians are called to carry forward the mission of the church to welcome and work to bring about the fuller realization of God's Reign, God's Peace and Justice, within the world. Additionally, Christians are called to respect people of other religions and to be open to the ways their faith commitments reflect the light of truth and can shed light on the pressing issues of the world.¹⁷ Overall, Christian religious education should educate people for life within as well as life beyond Christian communities. It should have both internal, communal and outward looking, public and social dimensions. It should form Christians for membership in their religious communities and to carry their faith into all aspects of their everyday lives in the world. Regarding the latter, building upon an awareness that we as human beings are moral beings who are created in God's image, Christians can confidently hope to enter into public conversations about socio-moral issues with people of other faiths and all people of good will. Based on an understanding of the various ways that moral awareness can be shaped

¹⁷ See Vatican II, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," especially, no. 3, which states: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in [other] religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teaching which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all" people (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html). See also the *Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, no. 2, which states that "inter-religious dialogue, which is part of the Church's evangelizing mission, requires an attitude of understanding and a relationship of mutual knowledge and reciprocal enrichment, in obedience to the truth and with respect for freedom" (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html).

and then experienced, Christians should strive to bring their distinctive moral outlooks into public conversations as they seek to contribute to discussions about the common good while at the same time being open to learning from others.

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Religious Identity of Dutch Cooperation Schools.

Abstract.

This paper focuses on the religious dimension of the identity of and the religious education at Dutch primary schools that are known as so-called ‘cooperation schools’: schools that are a product of a merger between one or more schools for public (i.e. non-religious) education and one or more schools for non-government (religious) education.

The paper describes how these schools see themselves in a religious perspective of their identity and how this perspective is shaped in the organization of religious education. Next to results of theoretical research, results of empirical research will be presented. This research will map the field of cooperation schools in The Netherlands and their religious identity and religious education. The duality of public and non-government education is still identifiable within a cooperation school. This means that a diversity of values concerning the (religious) education of a student is brought together in one school. In The Netherlands it is up to the cooperation school and its board itself to organize the forms and contents of the religious education for the different denominations. But how is this done in practice?

1. Introduction.

As all education in The Netherlands primary education is characterized by its duality: a Dutch school can be either a school for public education (a public school) or a school for non-government education. Since 1917 the Dutch constitutional law indicates that public education on one hand is initiated by government and that on the other hand private organizations or persons can found a school based upon a religious or philosophical orientation: non-government education (Glenn & De Groof, 2012; Noorlander & Zoontjens, 2011; Zoontjens, 2003). Unique for The Netherlands is that both are constitutionally settled and are equally financed by the government.

Some schools for non-government and for public education merge or consider merging. A school that is a product of this kind of merger is called a cooperation school .

Concerning the religious identity of this cooperation school we see that a non-religious school (t.i. public) has merged with a religious school. Two distinctive identities come together in a new school. The central question in this paper therefore is: how do these schools construct their identity and what are the implications of this identity for the organization of religious education?

2. Dutch educational system and cooperation schools in legal perspective.

2.1. Religious school identity.

School identity can be seen in two ways: restricted and integrated.

De Wolff (2000) describes a multi-dimensional concept of school identity: identity is not only interpreted in a religious way, but also pedagogical, educational and sometimes organizational and social. Ter Avest et al. say that in this 'integrated' way the religious dimension influences the other dimensions of identity (Ter Avest et al., 2007, Ter Avest, 2003). Next to this 'integrated' school identity also a 'restricted' way can be distinguished: the identity of the school is interpreted as and recognized in the religious activities in education (Ter Avest et al., 2007; Ter Avest, 2003).

2.2. Public education and religious identity.

Regarding the integrated school identity one of the main values of public education is its religious neutrality (Bakker, 2012; Zoontjens, 2003; Ter Avest, 2003; Noorlander, 2011; Ter Avest et al., 2007): the school cannot define or motivate its education from any religious point of view.

However next to this value another characteristic of public education is defined by the Dutch educational law. Public schools engage religious backgrounds of their students actively; religious expressions and thinking are acknowledged in all its diversity: 'active multiformity' (Braster, 1996).

This implies that public education has an 'open door' policy regarding the admittance of every student and staff member disregarding cultural, ethnic or religious background or sexual preference (Bakker, 2012; Zoontjens, 2003; Ter Avest, 2003).

Religious education can be organized in different ways.

In the first place religious education in a public school can be in the form of educating students in different religions and life stances. Every school in Dutch educational system is required to integrate these contents in the curriculum (Ter Avest et al., 2007; Ter Avest, 2003).

The second form is the obligation of a public school to enable students to receive some kind of voluntarily denominational religious education. This kind of education is provided by religious affiliated teachers who are not part of the school team and are sent by the religious group.

2.3. Non-government education and religious identity.

Several religious and philosophical groups can found their own schools. Characteristic for the Dutch Constitution is the right for every non-government school to receive governmental subsidy. Therefore the authority of the non-government school has to belong to an acknowledged orientation and education and teaching staff have to meet standards of quality and virtue (Zoontjens, 2003; Noorlander & Zoontjens, 2011; Glenn & De Groof, 2012). About 67% of all primary schools are non-government schools: most are religious schools based on the Protestant or (Roman-) Catholic tradition (each 30%) (Bakker, 2011). Non-

government schools are differentiated within themselves: schools of one specific religious tradition can interpret their integrated identity differently (Miedema & Vroom, 2002). This differentiated practice is illustrated by the right of a non-government school to admit or to remove students (Zoontjens, 2003). Because of the open admittance policy of most of the non-government schools groups of students at these schools are religiously differentiated (Bakker, 2011; Ter Avest et al, 2007).

Non-government schools have the right to organize their education and their religious education according to their values (Glenn & De Groof, 2012; Ter Avest et al., 2007). The government only has say over the quality of the education.

Concerning the restricted identity the religious bases is recognizable in several practical choices and activities. First at most schools teachers are appointed in accordance to the religious identity (Kuyk, 2012). Then: although institutional religion is absent at non-government schools (Ter Avest et al, 2007), religious education at most non-government schools is based upon a specific religious tradition. And thirdly: like public schools non-government schools are obliged to teach about different religions and life stances.

3. The cooperation school and religious identity.

A cooperation school is neither a school for public nor a school for non-government education. In order to do justice to the dual system cooperation schools are obliged to offer both public and non-government education (Senat, 2011; Onderwijsraad, 2000; Noorlander, 2011). The duality is still identifiable within a cooperation school.

Especially in the decades of 1960 and 1970 the number of attempts to start a cooperation school increased (Derriks, Roede, en Veugelers, 2000). Although they were an exception to the common system they were tolerated by the government. It was not until 2011 when educational law was adjusted (Glenn & De Groof, 2012). Then a cooperation school was described as follow: ‘A cooperation school is a school in which public as well as non-government education is offered.’ (Senate, 32 134, 2011, p.2).

In 2006 the possibility to create a cooperation school is founded in an adjustment of the Dutch Constitution: it was added that public education can be received ‘whether or not in a public school’ (Dutch Constitution, Article 23, section 4). Local authorities are obliged to insure that students can receive public education (Noorlander & Zoontjens, 2011). By law one of the ways is a cooperation school. The cooperation school therefore has to be accessible for all students (Noorlander, 2011; Senate, 32 134, 2011).

Here it must be added that a cooperation school cannot be founded: it can only be a product of a merger (Onderwijsraad, 2000, Zoontjens, 2003, Noorlander, 2011, Huisman, 2010).

Cooperation schools appear in so called ‘shrinking areas’ in The Netherlands: in those areas the amount of students decreases.

Special characteristic of both the integrated and the restricted identity is the fact that a diversity of religious values and religious education comes together in a school. In groups of students and of teachers non-religious education (t.i. public) has merged with religious education. Both identities have to be presented in educational practice. But based upon what values and what (new) identity is this done and what are the implications of this identity for

the organization of religious education? We will answer this question in the empirical part of this article.

4. Empirical research of the identity of cooperation schools.

4.1. Design and method.

In order to sort out the relevant cooperation schools for the research first all so called schools were selected in a list of all primary schools. 35 schools were found. These are all the cooperation schools for primary education in The Netherlands in February 2013: 0,51% of all primary schools.

During March and April 2013 an online questionnaire was sent to the principals of these cooperation schools. Several questions especially tried to find out how the integrated and the restricted identity express public education.

17 principals (48,6%) had replied by answering the questions. The semi-structured questionnaire, with 25 questions, was divided into four categories: facts of the school, vision and identity, policy and choices, religious education. The categories of vision and identity and of policy and choices contain questions about the integrated school identity; the category of the religious education focuses on the restricted identity.

4.2. Some facts of cooperation schools.

Most of the 17 cooperation schools (9) started by merging in this century. In a relatively short period more cooperation schools started than in the years before 2000. There was a strong increase of this number in the last 4 years: from 2010 until May 2013 6 cooperation schools opened their doors.

15 schools are a merger between a public and a Protestant or (Roman-)Catholic school. No schools were found with another religious origin (f.e. Islamic, Hindu, Jewish).

4.3. Integrated religious identity.

By analyzing the data of the 17 schools two values appear to be dominant in the way principals interpret the religious identity of their school.

First the value of 'encounter' is a central feature. This is interpreted as a certain attitude towards differences within the school population and in society. One respondent writes: 'The thought behind a cooperation school is seeing the school as a place of encounter between different life views.'

Secondly: if all life views and backgrounds are equal and valuable every student and every teacher counts. Almost all schools therefore practice an open admittance policy for students and staff without selection based upon criteria concerning religion, culture, ethnicity or sexual preference.

All principals recognize starting points of public education in their identity and policy (see graphic below: fig. 1). Especially 'active multiformity' (15) is mentioned. Also the policy regarding the admittance of students and staff is recognized as a value of public education by most principals. Further research can focus on those few schools from which the principals

don't answer the question about the supporting of these values by referring to this policy of admittance: don't these principals lay down a policy of this open admittance or don't they relate this policy to values of public education?

Next to this it is also notable that not all respondents (8) refer to 'neutrality' when asked for values of public education in their integrated identity. Further research can point out if the respondents don't see their schools as neutral or if they don't connect this to an explicit value of public education.

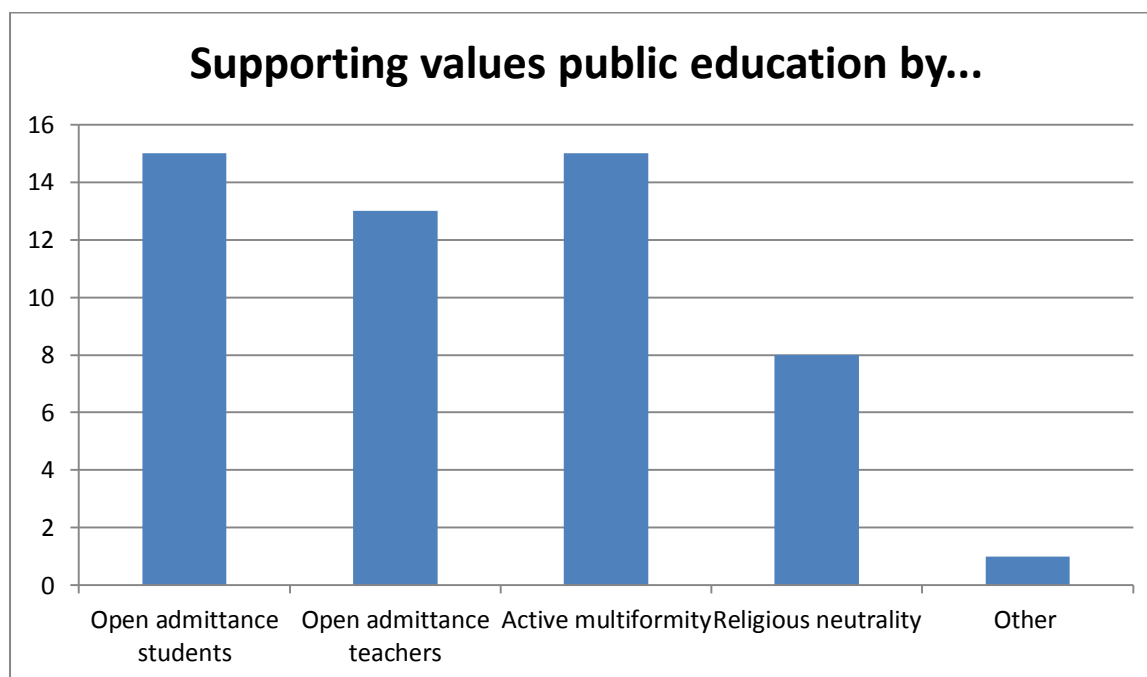


Fig. 1

4.4. Restricted religious identity: religious education

Dutch Constitution obliges the cooperation schools also to offer public education. Therefore the respondents were also questioned about the very concrete transfer of values of public education in religious education and the organization of religious education.

One specific question was asked about this expression: in what way do you offer religious education according to values of public education? As the graphic below (fig. 2) shows 9 principals refer to the lessons by which students are educated in different religions and life stances. Obviously this education is seen as a characteristic of public education by these principals.

Next to these lessons it is remarkable to see that 9 principals recognize values of public education in voluntarily religious education according to the Protestant or Catholic denomination. 4 respondents (also) offer voluntary religious education according to humanistic values. 6 principals see values of public education in offering lessons in public, secular education on a voluntary basis. 3 schools offer required public, secular education. Further research can tell us more about the content of this specific education and compare this content with other ways of offering religious education: do the respondents see this required public education as different from f.i. the education in religions and, more important, in what way do they claim to insure that non-government education is expressed in this required

secular lessons?

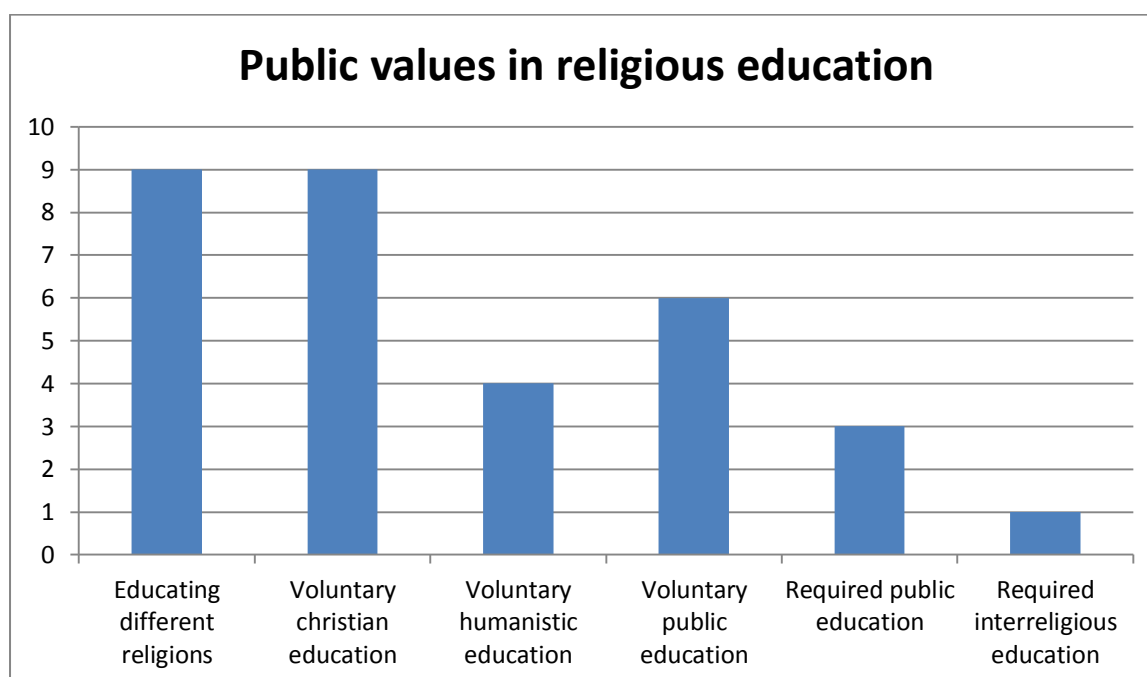


Fig. 2

We see that all respondents recognize values of public education in the offering of (some kind of) religious education in their cooperation school but also that there is a diversity of the organization of religious education according to these values.

But cooperation schools are not only obliged to offer public education: both public and non-government education have to be identifiable. But how is this done in religious education? Can non-government as well as public education be identified in (the organization of) religious education? One dominant result from the questionnaire can be seen in answering this question. Except for four schools religious education is segregated according to the religious origins of the merged schools.

As the graphic below (fig. 3) shows 11 principals indicate that ‘several times a week separate lessons in religious education are provided according to different religious backgrounds by a teacher who is related to this specific background.’

In these schools this teacher always is a group teacher, one of the staff members, and not a religious affiliated teachers who is sent by a religious group. Further research can find out what the respondents see as a ‘separate lesson’ according to public education.

Four schools organize religious education without the mentioned segregation. Further research can indicate in what way values of public and non-government education can be identified.

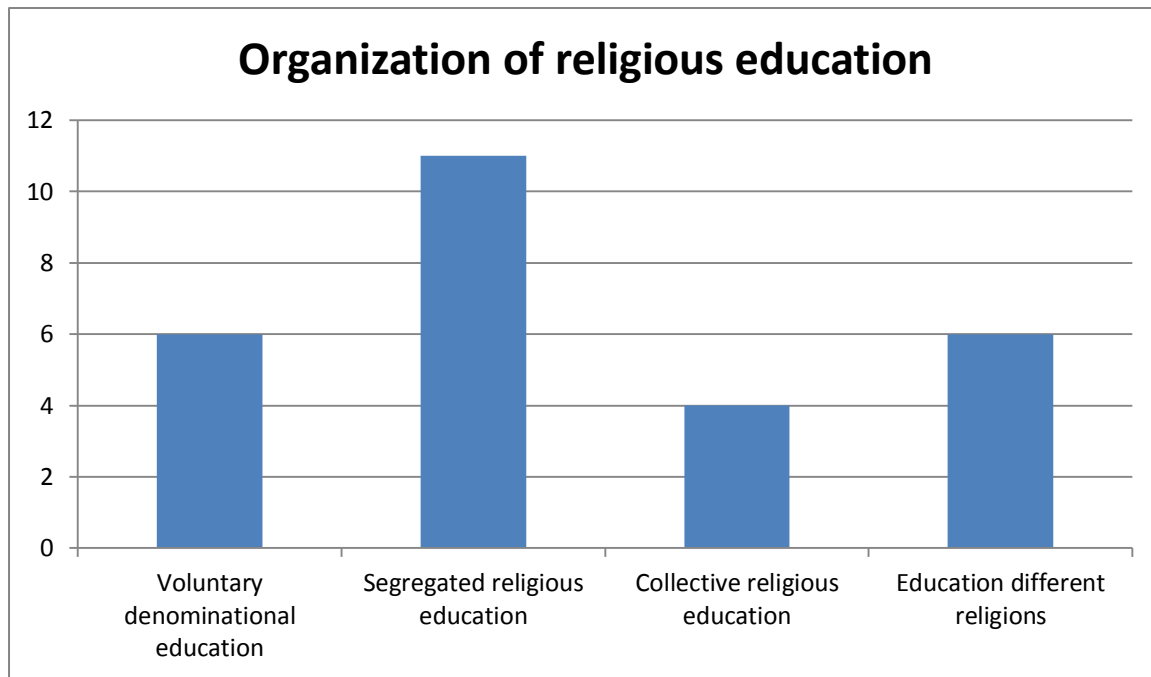


Fig. 3

The response also indicates that the religious identity of the cooperation school is expressed in concrete activities. In the questionnaire the following question was asked: ‘Can you indicate a decision or a reflexion in school practice in which the religious identity of the school plays or has played an important role?’ 13 respondents say they can and refer to concrete activities. For example the celebrations of especially religious feasts are mentioned. But the religious identity is also shown in lessons religious education, in the choice of themes in these lessons, in the selection of staff members.

Next to these activities we must mention that almost all respondents indicate that the religious identity is often or always discussed during another kind of concrete activities: the job interviews with potential new staff and the intakes with parents.

5. Conclusions and discussion.

A cooperation school formally is not a public school. But students at these cooperation schools do visit a school where values of public education are supported and where this education is offered. This is an important first conclusion, concerning the integrated identity. A cooperation school, like a public school, is accessible for all students and staff members. The respondents also indicate this accessibility as a key value of their cooperation school as well as a way in which public values are guaranteed. Next to this correlation between a cooperation school and a public school public education can also be identified because of the active multiformity and the neutrality. We can conclude that the respondents indicate that values of public education correspond with those of their schools. In this way there is no difference between a public school and a cooperation school. The adjustment in Dutch Constitution, concerning the receiving of public education ‘‘whether or not in a public school’ can be seen as a grounded adjustment towards cooperation schools.

Secondly we can conclude that the respondents see the religious identity of their schools especially expressed in concrete activities such as the celebrations of religious feasts and in religious education. Apparently the respondents interpret the integrated identity of their

schools as transferred in restricted identity.

The third conclusion concerns the restricted identity. The results confirm that public education, in the form of religious education, can be received at a cooperation school. But this education is very diverse. And, different from a public school, most cooperation schools offer religious education in another way and by the group teachers themselves; segregation of religious education according to the religious origins of the merged schools is a specific feature of most cooperation schools.

Further research can focus on the religious education according to public values. In the results so far there is no conformity concerning this education. And what can we learn from the few cooperation schools that say to provide public religious education for all students without the segregation? What can these schools tell us about the motivations and the ways in which religious education contributes to the dialogue between students (and teachers) with different kind of religious backgrounds?

A second focus for further research can be the policy of appointing teachers and the neutrality of the school. Not all respondents say these items are an expression of values of public education. What perception do they have of neutrality and do they select teachers based upon religious, cultural or ethnic background or sexual preference?

And thirdly we can investigate what the perception of non-government education in a cooperation school is. After all, this school is obliged to offer both public and non-government education. In the questionnaire no questions were asked about the status of (values of) non-government education other than those about the restricted identity in religious education.

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Educational Vocation of Korean American Church in the Public Sphere

Church has a responsibility to play a both prophetic and priestly role in educating the public for a righteous and humane society. Church needs to address the ways to play this role. Trying to find out one of such ways, this research explored two contributions from the experiences and practices of Korean American Church. (1) Korean American Church can bring the potential clue to transform the racial discrimination and to actualize the racial reconciliation from its own experiences and practices as an ethnic minority group in this society, which can bring a more multicultural public educational ecology. (2) Korean American Church can also carry the possible promise to overcome dehumanization and to recover the meaning of life through sharing Korean traditional spirit and practices of “we-ness,” which can also enrich the layers of moral character formation of the public. This research, with these contributions, would be beneficial for church, including KAC, to grapple with recapturing its role in the education of the public.

Church is...

Church is not to be separated from but rather to be proactively involved in lives of the public, including education of the public. Church’s role for the formation of the public is one of its pressing concerns especially in this unrighteous and dehumanized society where we are facing more young people and grown-ups who are alienated, lonely, mentally weak, depressed, and hopeless. Church has a responsibility to play a both prophetic and priestly role in educating the public for bringing the righteous and humane society. Church, then, needs to address ways in which it can play this role, overcoming the chronic tendency of domestication in its education.

As a constituting part of the entire U.S. society and its educational configuration, Korean American Church (KAC hereafter) also shares with all other churches in the U.S. the same commitment to and responsibility for the U.S. public and the formation of it. In this sense, I tried to find out one of the possible ways to play a prophetic and priestly role in educating the public from the experiences and practices of KAC. For this, I explored promising contributions of KAC to the education of the public. In doing so, I employed a literature-based methodology combined with an ethnographic methodology (one in-depth interview) while depending upon on insights from practices in KAC.

In this paper, I suggested two contributions as follows, through which KAC can bring positive impact upon the education for the public: (1) By sharing its experiences and practices with other ethnic minority groups, KAC can provide educational resources for transforming racial discrimination and actualizing racial reconciliation, which also can bring more multicultural public educational ecology. (2) By introducing Korean traditional spirit and practices of “we-ness,” KAC can bring public educational resources for prevailing and healing the negative effect of individualism in this society, which can also enrich the layers of moral character formation of the public.

To Transform Racial Discrimination, To Actualize Racial Reconciliation

The United States is regarded as a representative multicultural society. But in reality, racial discrimination is still the topic of this society. White European Americans have been the cultural, social, political, economic, and educational majority of this society and still they are. For a long period of time, assuming the sole ownership of this nation—sometimes consciously and other times unconsciously, white European Americans have overtly and covertly discriminated other ethnic people, such as African Americans, Native Indians, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans, including Korean Americans, suffered under various racial prejudices. But what is worse, these racial minority people have discriminated one another. Even sometimes, they seem to have considered white Americans as superior beings to non-whites, often putting such an idea into practice. In the process of discriminating and being discriminated by one another, various ethnic minority people, including Korean Americans, have developed antagonism towards one another.

Racial discrimination, seriously inhumane and unrighteous, still exists within this society. In order to bring racial reconciliation into reality, instead, the public needs to be fully educated about the seriousness of racial discrimination and the urgency of racial reconciliation. Both as a subject and an object of racial discrimination, and as a constituting part of this society, Korean Americans, including Korean American Christians, realize keenly the necessity of benefitting the public education for transforming racial discrimination and actualizing racial reconciliation. Since their experiences engendered appreciation for, sensitivity to, and openness towards racial/ethnic/cultural diversity, Korean Americans can better serve the U.S. public in educating racial issues than anyone else.

Especially, current KAC takes seriously its responsibility for educating the public about the racial issue. KAC tended once to connect Christianity not complaining about discrimination.¹ But now it comes to be well aware that the unrighteous and inhumane racial discrimination is not included in God's plan on human society, whether it might have been generated from experiential reasoning, from a critical historical event, from theological reflections, or from all of those. This awareness caused its active involvement in the practices of racial reconciliation. Hopefully, through sharing its stories of such practices with the public, KAC will bring public attention to the issue of racial discrimination and racial reconciliation.

There are examples of KAC's racial reconciliation practice. In harmony with other racial/ethnic groups, KAC supports and participates in the ministries of multi-ethnic churches.² Whether or not they possess self-consciousness of it, multi-ethnic churches with many Korean American members and ministers are already representing and performing a practice of racial reconciliation. There are also many cases that Korean American local churches are peacefully sharing a worship place with churches from various racial/ethnic backgrounds. In these cases,

¹ Elaine Howard Ecklund, "Models of Civic Responsibility: Korean Americans in Congregations with Different Ethnic Compositions," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* v. 44 n.1(2005): 21.

² Refer to Ibid., 18-27: There are many cases of this throughout the States. In this journal, the author also gives an example of this case within the church called "Manna").

members from both local congregations come to have better understandings and show higher respects for cultures of each other. Here are two more impressive stories of KAC's racial reconciliation practice: with African Americans and for Native American Indians.

Reconciliation with African Americans

KAC has created various practices for being reconciled to African Americans who are under a chronic hostile relationship with Korean Americans, which finally led "The Los Angeles Riot of 1992, the worst civil disturbance in America."³ Realizing that mutual understanding is the starting point of reconciliation, beneath the practices lied KAC's efforts to better understand who African Americans are culturally, socially, politically, economically, and educationally, and what are reasons of antagonism between Korean and African Americans.⁴ First, KAC has made efforts to organize African-Korean associations under its initiative while supporting other privately led organizations. Due to the devastating riot, many local Korean Americans were hurt psychologically and financially. People worried this riot would make the animus between Korean and African Americans severer. But rather, this brought recognition that racial reconciliation is the urgent task to both parties. Korean American local churches were prompt in dealing with this task. They built up "multiethnic coalition" for reconciliation under their initiatives such as "Black-Korean Christian Alliance" which is still active, and also supported other organizations, such as "Scholarships to African American Students, Trips to South Korea, and Korean and African American Human Relations Council."⁵

Secondly, some Korean American congregations have enjoyed joint worship services and fellowships with African American congregations. For example, "Camphor memorial United Methodist Church (which is African American congregation) and First Korean Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia [celebrated] their 25th annual worship service and fellowship on Sunday, April 28, 2013, from 3 to 6 p.m. at Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church, Philadelphia."

⁶ This joint worship and fellowship was originally designed from the thought that this might alleviate the mounted conflicts between Korean American merchants and African American

3 Edward Chang, *Los Angeles Riots and Korean-African American Conflict* (Seoul: Seoul National University Institute for American Studies Press, 2002), 1.

4 Refer to Ibid., 1-5. Scholars suggested antagonism between African and Korean Americans, might come from economic friction between Korean merchants and African American customers, lack of mutual understanding about histories and ideologies, and cultural differences. Here the author introduce "middleman minority theory of Blalock, Bonacich, Loewen, and Zenner, immigrant theory of Glazer, Moynihan, and Sowell, and Stewart's research on different view of inappropriate acts between Korean and African Americans.

5 Ibid., 32.

6 BCNN 1. "Black Church and Korean Church in Philadelphia to Celebrate 25th Joint Fellowship on April 28th. *Black Christian News Networks One*, April 22, 2013. Accessed August 29, 2013 <http://www.blackchristiannews.com>.

customers at Philadelphia at that time. Such an effort, giving the members an opportunity to share their life stories, cultures, and histories with each other, has been helpful to establish relationship between the two and to promote mutual understanding. And it is, for sure, an exemplary manifestation of Korean and African racial reconciliation.

Finally, in KAC, there are some Korean American ministers who serve predominantly African American congregations. A representative of such ministers is Rev. Peter Chin, who is serving as an interim pastor of Peace Fellowship Church in Northeast Washington. According to *The Washington Post*, August 25, 2012, Rev. Chin, “a Korean American pastor, being open-minded, builds relationships [with African Americans] in the predominantly African American community.”⁷ The article points out that it gave a good impression to African American neighborhoods for Rev. Chin to live within the community where the church he is serving is located. It is because African Americans have been “resentful of shop owners who benefit economically from their neighborhood while not living in them”⁸ Peter Chin is functioning as a model figure who contributes to Korean African reconciliation. What is better, he has actively communicated with the public about the racial issue in many ways. Here are some examples, such as posting his experiences in this community in his influential blog (peterchin.com), interacting with people through Tweeter (twitter.com/peterchin), uploading on *YouTube* his stories, and being featured in mass media programs. I do not know exactly whether he has an intention for racial reconciliation or not but I believe he might have it judging from his earnest comments on harmfulness of racial prejudices in his communication with the public.

*Making White European Americans Reconciled to Native Indians*⁹

KAC has involved in various ministerial efforts for Native American Indians who has been most discriminated from the mainline American society for a long time and to whom white European Americans need to be reconciled. Native American Indians and white European Americans are two main actors of the most painful story of racial discrimination in the U.S history. From the very beginning of the United States, Native American Indians should have confronted to harsh racism against them by white European Americans. They were deprived of their homeland and forced to move a certain designated region called the Reservation. They were compelled to turn down their own culture and religion, and forced to adopt European culture and Christianity. They were unjustly treated as inferior beings and considered as savage people since they were different from the European Americans. They have been subject to extermination and

7Obaro, Tomi. “For Korean American Pastor, Being Open Minded, Builds Relationships.” *The Washington Post*, August 25, 2012. Accessed August 30, 2013.
<http://www.articles.washingtonpost.com/local>.

8Ibid.

9For this section, I conducted a semi-formal in depth interview with Rev Taeil Lim, a Korean American minister for Hopi tribe at the Reservation, Arizona. It was done in Korean on Wednesday, August 28, 2013 at Yongin, Korea.

obliteration for a long time in this society. Unfortunately, churches and their missionaries took the lead of all of those.¹⁰

Even though increasing are reflections about racial issues for other racial groups and voices of repentance for other races, those for Native American Indians are still not enough in this society. White European Americans, including their churches, should not postpone repenting and offering their hand of apology and reconciliation to Native American Indians anymore. It is, however, very difficult for this to successfully happen. On the one hand, even for current white European Americans who are descendents of those who oppressed Native American Indians, the story of discriminating and oppressing them might be too painful to confront. On the other hand, Native American Indians do not trust on white European Americans due to the past memory of being severely oppressed and discriminated and the current miserable life reality as a result of the history of extermination. Here comes KAC's story of bridging the both parties.

Many Korean American ministers have served Native American Indians.¹¹ And many Korean American local churches have helped them by giving financial aids and sending short term mission trip teams to labor. Rev. Lim, a Korean American minister for Hopi tribe, said, "without the help from mission teams from KAC, literally, there would have been nothing to be possible in my ministry here...that much...their helps have been critical for my ministry in this place (interview script 9)." As a result of such ministries, Korean American community came not only to better understand the history, culture, life, and spirituality of Native American Indians but also to recognize the urgency of their being reconciled to white Americans for their own sake. Rev Lim points out that "they (Native American Indians) are so much dejected and have low self esteems due to their past and current experiences...and so it is really important to let them know that they are valuable and wonderful people...they have a lot of good things to teach this society, such as creation spirit and peaceful spirits...attitude for nature...no greed...(interview script, 4,6)." This can be expanded to the wider society when such ministries are publicly shared more and more, expecting racial reconciliation and mutual growth. Practically, with such ministries KAC is functioning as a mediator for racial reconciliation between Native American Indians and white European Americans. Here is the last exhortation from Pastor Lim, For authentic reconciliation, "white people have to understand them as they are and appreciate their value and dignity....most of all white people should repent their past and apologize to them (interview script, 10)."

*Being a wounded healer*¹²

10 On top of learning from the interview with Pastor Lim, for understanding the history of Native

American Indians, I referred to the book, Debo, Angie. *History of American Indians in the United States*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013.

11 One of them is my respondent, Rev Taeil Lim. According to him, even in his place, there are five pastors including himself from various denominations.

12 I did not use the term in the same way as Carl Jung used. Nor did I use it in the limitation of

All the stories of KAC above could be beneficial public educational resources for transforming racial discrimination and actualizing racial reconciliation. Those can lead the public into discussion on the issue. Those might be an igniting flame to bring larger involvement in political protest about racial discrimination. Those might be a catalyst for engaging a movement for system reform about racial discrimination. These might be an encouraging message for volunteer activities for racial reconciliation. All those together could function as a stepping stone for making the entire public educational ecology of this society more multicultural, in which all ethnic people and their cultures are considered equally valuable, accept and respect one another as they are, and mutually learn from one another. But for this, KAC has a prerequisite. It should throw away the victim mentality from its wounds of discrimination. Rather, it should work as a healing agent for this society of discrimination. It should be a wounded healer, who can heal the wounds from discrimination with sincerity in that it has experiences of being wounded from discrimination and thus knows the pain from such wounds better than those without such experiences.

To Overcome Dehumanization, To Recover Meaning of Life

The issue of dehumanization is one of the most painful distortions of our modern societies, including American society. Dehumanization made people more perplexed in searching for the meaning of life and suffered with meaninglessness. It can be fairly said that along with various kinds of social injustice from Capitalism and technological challenges, American society's chronic emphasis on individualism—once considered as a positive philosophy for overcoming collectivism, though—has taken part in dehumanizing its people and in making them suffered with loss of meaning of life. When all churches in American society wrestle with helping people restore their life meaning, as a part of the society, KAC also feels keenly the necessity of taking care of this issue. KAC can bring a potential clue to recover the meaning of life from its traditional heritage, “we-ness.”¹³

referring to an image of counselor in the pastoral care setting (suggested by Henri Nouwen or Donald Capps).

¹³KAC can also enrich the layers of moral character formation of the public by introducing some

Korean traditional ethical virtues. As well known, many important Korean traditional ethical values were influenced by Confucian ethics. Especially, we can pay attention to themes pertaining to familial relationship such as filial piety and sibling love. In Confucianism, “sibling love and filial piety are praised as two great values at the root of all benevolent actions [Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Simon Leys (Filiquarian, 2006), 5; re-quoted from Sinai Chung, “Mozing: When the Young Mentor the Younger,” in *Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World*, ed. Dori Grinenko Baker (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010), 77]” Although those might not be unique in Korean culture but universal in all other cultures, such ethical themes are uniquely intensified and practically actualized in Korean culture (and other Asian countries under Confucian influence). It would be significantly

We-Ness Culture: We-Spirit and We-Practice

Korean traditional culture's essential practice and spirit lie on "we-ness," on the contrary to American culture's individualism.¹⁴ In Korean language, the term "we" already includes "I-identity." Koreans have traditionally valued on such "we-ness" culture. "We" does not deny "I" in this culture. Rather, Korean people *harmoniously* center on "we" *as well as* "I." Koreans call such a traditional mindset "we-spirit." Beneath this spirit lies the Humanitarian ideal, the founding principle of Korea, which is "to benefit others."¹⁵ Because it fairly includes consideration and care for others in one's community, it often called "community spirit." But it is different from collectivism which focuses on community alone. Rather it aims at coexistence.¹⁶ Two key values of "we-spirit" are sharing and cooperation, because of which, Koreans often call "we-ness" as "together-ness."

Such "we-spirit" has been manifested through various kinds of "we-practices" in Korean society. We-practices are traditions through which Korean people have interdependently helped and cared for one another through sharing and cooperation. We-practices have been always experienced in Korean communities in farming seasons, for wedding and funeral, in the feasts of celebrating traditional holidays, and other situation that needs hands of neighbors. Some examples of "we-practice" are "Doore (a labor cooperation for farming and the ensuing banquet), "Pumasi (an individual labor exchange in turn for farming, wedding/funeral, and house works), "Gye (a kind of association, union, or guild, or a kind of private fund whose members chip in a modest amount of money and take turns to receive a lump sum share), and "Hyangyak (a kind of volunteer village code for helping the needy and keeping proprieties to one another) as well as various kinds of seasonal customs in which Korean people helped one another in cooperation,

meaningful in educating the public for us to focus on these themes when considering the seriousness of family destruction and deconstruction in our current society. Considering that such familial issue comes to our society partly due to the influence of individualism and expecting that two Korean traditional familial virtues can be expanded to and applied to the wider community, the two virtues might be valuable for the public of our society. When KAC, where such familial values are predominantly practiced, introduces these to the public appropriately, it can provide to the public influential teachings to enrich educational contents for moral character formation of the public (I did not include "matrimonial distinction" which is also one of the familial virtues from Confucianism because it should reinterpreted and altered in the feminist perspective).

14 Koreans call one's own mother as "our" mother while Americans call her as "my" mother.

15 Kyoungsook Lee, Jeason Park and Oksoong Cha, *The Roots of Korean Life Ethics* (Seoul, Korea: Ehwa Womans University Press, 2001), 48.

16Ibid.

while praying richness and well-being of the community together, sharing one another's possessions with the needy, and enjoying folk games after joint labor.¹⁷

In nature, such "we-ness" appreciates the value of mutual relationship and interdependence. It is about care for others. It is about an expression of love for neighbors that Christ taught us through his actual exemplification on the cross. And so, when properly introduced and shared, such "we-ness" can be a powerful public educational source for prevailing and healing the negative effect of individualism in this society—dehumanization and meaninglessness and for generating one's meaning of life again. And KAC, in which Korean traditional culture of we-ness, both spirit and practices (though altered in a modern way) has been thoroughly embedded, will play a key role for this.

Expectations

I expect that this research could be beneficial resources for the entire church in the U.S. society in recapturing its role for the education of the public especially in dealing with the issues of racism/reconciliation and individualism/life meaning restoration. I also hope that this research could give Korean American Church, as a member of this society, a chance to become more aware of and actively actualize its commitment to and responsibility for the U.S. public and the formation of it as well as to realize their own potentials for those.

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¹⁷Refer to Kwangsoo Yu and Yunho Kim, *Understanding of Korean Traditional Cultures* (Seoul, Korea: MJ Media, 2003), 32-38.

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What Has Columbine to Do With Jerusalem?

Anthropological and Sociological Insights from Manifest Tragedy Applied to the Hidden Violence of Bullying in Our Schools

Abstract

In the aftermath of school shootings, there is little hesitancy about including religious communities in the work of counseling, memorializing, sharing assembly space, etc. The author argues that this instinct reveals anthropological and sociological insights that could help the religious community to find a public voice in response not only to “manifest violence” but also to “hidden violence,” the paradigmatic case of which is bullying in the schools. The author challenges religious leaders to be more involved in anti-bullying efforts and makes suggestions for action as part of a whole-community response to the violence.

The world was horrified last December when twenty-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed 28 people, targeting Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where most of his victims were defenseless six- and seven-year-olds.¹ It was, perhaps, the most shocking school shooting in the popular mind since the tragedy at Columbine High School in April, 1999, an event that many of us watched unfold on live television and that has branded the name “Columbine” as synonymous with school shootings.² These are episodes of manifest violence.³ They capture the public’s attention and create media frenzies. They bring together whole communities for everything from caring for victims to engaging in political efforts to address perceived underlying problems. In these situations, the religious community is quite visible. I contend that violence, though, is a *daily* event in our schools and that the hidden, silent nature of much of it makes it that much more tragic. Bullying is the paradigmatic case here, and we would do well to take it seriously as a terribly destructive form of violence that demands our involvement as religious professionals not only *in media res* and in the aftermath but especially in prevention and detection. Our commitment to promoting peace, social justice, and human rights demands nothing less than a public response.⁴

¹Edith Honan, “Eight months after massacre, Newtown begins new school year,” *Reuters*, August 27, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/27/us-usa-shooting-newtown-idUSBRE97Q0GT20130827> [accessed August 27, 2013]. By emphasizing the shocking fact that twenty 6- and 7-year-olds were killed, I do not mean to diminish in any way the tragedy of six adult deaths at Sandy Hook as well, not including Adam and his mother.

²Dave Cullen, *Columbine*. (New York: TWELVE, 2009), 250, 272. Cullen notes that Columbine students do not like the association—for them, “Columbine” is their high school, not a tragedy.

³I make the distinction between manifest and hidden violence/tragedy to avoid presenting sensational acts of violence like school shootings as somehow more tragic than quotidian acts of violence such as bullying that are often normalized and thus even more painful because of the lack of acknowledgement that real harm is being done. In both cases, we are dealing with genuine human tragedy, the loss and/or painful diminishment of human life.

⁴The involvement of the faith community in manifest tragedies is important; however, as a matter of social justice, the daily forms of hidden violence demand our attention as well. Critics have maintained that the focus on school shootings is disproportionate and that it distracts attention and resources away from the more common forms of violence that are less sensational, and that, unlike school shootings, tend to affect minority and inner-city

Columbine: Lessons in Anthropology and Sociology

The tragedy at Columbine High School reveals two fundamental points: first, we are spiritual beings who seek transcendence, search for meaning, and need community;⁵ second, our schools (state, private, and religious)⁶ exist as part of a larger public that includes faith communities, and following the bureaucratic tendency towards specialization to such a degree that schools become islands without extensive contact with the larger community is both destructive and disingenuous.⁷ In response to manifest tragedy in a school, the wall between Church and State diminishes⁸ and cooperation abounds with negligible criticism. In 2009, after ten years of meticulous research, Dave Cullen published a definitive report on the Columbine massacre, providing an account sufficiently dense and with enough historical distance to allow for careful analysis.⁹ At Columbine High School, we witnessed religious organizations partnering with the school in sharing space and, quite literally, holding the community together; in providing counseling services; in holding prayer services for finding comfort, hope, meaning, and some degree of healing; and in memorializing, including burying the dead. In addition, it was not uncommon to see students at Columbine gathering together for prayer on their own initiative, or to hear that they prayed in the midst of the chaos.¹⁰ Survey data from 2007 indicate that this is not likely an isolated case, with only 14 percent of American respondents aged 13 to

communities more than suburban, predominantly white communities [see, for example, Katherine Newman et al, *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*, (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 48ff]. I hope that by turning our attention to bullying as representative of a larger genre of daily school violence we will firmly stake our ground as faith communities against all forms of violence, whether manifest or hidden, and avoid inadvertently becoming part of the problem of normalizing any form of violence at all.

⁵By “transcendence” here, I employ Robert J. Starratt’s second sense of the term, namely, “becoming a part of something larger than one’s own life.” Robert J. Starratt, *Cultivating an Ethical School*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 30-1.

⁶I use the term “state/government schools” to indicate what we normally call “public schools” in the U.S. in order to break open the term “public” to include *all* schools, indicating that schools, by their nature, are a public good and ought to operate as part of the community and not as islands apart from civil society. I am aware that the term “state schools” has the disadvantage to the American ear of conjuring up “state universities,” but it has the distinct advantage of resonating with the popular American legal phrase, “separation of church and state.” In any case, *all schools* are “public” in the sense I am using the term here. For this usage and for the idea that the school cannot educate well, including educating for non-violence, apart from the larger community, I am drawing from Parker Palmer. See Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of American Public Life*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), especially 43ff, 111.

⁷The reverse is true as well. Churches, for example, can operate in H. Richard Niebuhr’s “Christ against culture” mode, but my call in this paper is for religious organizations as such to break down walls and engage in public debate and action for the common good, in this case in the efforts against school bullying.

⁸Most cases of manifest violence do occur in government schools and so questions about the wall of separation are appropriate; however, when violence occurs in non-government schools, the issue is more about community cooperation than legal questions concerning the First Amendment.

⁹Historical perspective is important, as Cullen notes, because the initial reporting on tragic events is often flawed due to lack of information and perspective. Cullen writes, “...in the great media blunders during the initial coverage of this story, where nearly everyone got the central factors wrong, I was among the guilty parties. I hope this book contributes to setting the story right.” Cullen, *Columbine*, x. His extensive research is documented (and updated) on his websites, www.davecullen.com and www.columbine-online.com.

¹⁰Cullen, *Columbine*, 116-7, 227. Student Craig Scott, who survived the massacre but whose sister, Rachel, was killed, said “The number one thing that helped me get through was my faith in God.” (Craig Scott, interview by Oprah Winfrey, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Harpo Productions, Inc., ABC, unspecified date, 2002. Available on YouTube, 03:42, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTEZ4iiWJU> at time. [accessed September 10, 2013].)

24 reporting that religion or spirituality plays no role in their lives.¹¹ None of this amounts to a violation of the Establishment Clause, nor does it represent an “excessive entanglement”¹² between government schools and religious organizations.¹³ Instead, it reminds us of who we are as human persons and it challenges us to be more holistic and communal in our everyday approach to education. The insights gained in episodes of manifest violence should inform our approach to hidden violence as well, of which bullying is the classic case.

The Violent Act of Bullying: Matt’s Story¹⁴

When I first met Matt in 1998, he was a high school freshman on a leadership training seminar that I helped facilitate in Danbury, Connecticut. Alone in the conference room one evening, Matt shared a poem he had written. The connection between bullying, spirituality (in this case, *imitatio Christi*) and violence—both hidden and potentially manifest—could not be more poignant. It is worth reprinting here in full:

“Rage”

From the start you try to be their friend,
But it is no use they won’t accept you.
They taunt and tease and push you around
But you don’t fight back because it’s not what
HE would have done.
The Rage is great
But you hide it to keep your appearance
So when they look at you they see HIM
Then one day the rage is so great
You discover a way to end it all
And destroy yourself to rid the world of
this problem.
But you use your head and find that you are not the
problem, they are.
But is that what HE would have done?¹⁵

¹¹Eric Gorski and Trevor Tompson, “AP Poll: God vital to young Americans,” *USA Today*, August 24, 2007, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-08-24-3867343255_x.htm [accessed September 10, 2013].

¹²This is the language used in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971) as part of the Supreme Court’s famous “Lemon test” for determining whether the Establishment Clause has been violated.

¹³This is not to say that there were not abuses. Immediately after the Columbine massacre, students were proselytized by some Christian Evangelical congregations which saw the tragedy as the work of the devil and a consequence of students’ not having given their lives over to Jesus Christ (Cullen, *Columbine*, 120ff, 177ff). A man from out of state set up memorial crosses in an act of exploitation that he repeats throughout the country in times of tragedy (Cullen, *Columbine*, 194). Despite these unsettling situations when the wall is lowered, they do not seem to amount to a First Amendment breach since the agents were not school officials nor had the schools cooperated in the efforts. In fact, the overwhelming evidence from Columbine suggests that Church and State can cooperate without a violation of the First Amendment. Of course, if the line is crossed, the usual recourse to the courts remains open. That was the case when Columbine High School refused to allow religious language on memorial tiles in the re-opened school. See *Fleming v. Jefferson County Sch. Dist.* R-1, 298 F.3d 918, 934 (10th Cir. 2002), quoted in Robert D. Richards and Clay Calvert, “Columbine Fallout: The Long-term Effects on Free Expression Take Hold In Public Schools,” 83 B.U.L. Rev. 1089 (2003), 1090 n. 3.

¹⁴Matt’s story is re-told here with his permission. The narrative is constructed from conversations both in person and by telephone/email during the spring and summer of 2013, as well as from recollections of our initial conversation in 1998. I am grateful to Matt for his courage and trust in allowing me to share his story and poetry here.

Matt's ordeal began in sixth grade after having transferred to a new Catholic middle school. Although he had friends in the school and was never an outcast, Matt was singled out for bullying by three boys. He turned to the assistant principal for help, but the problem did not cease. Even after graduation the problem continued. One of the boys, Sydney,¹⁶ the worst of the three, followed Matt to high school. When Matt joined the swim team, the skimpy bathing suits and the shaving of body hair became new ammunition for Sydney, who was intent on embarrassing Matt in front of his classmates at every opportunity. He assaulted him with homophobic insults—though Matt is straight—calling him “gay,” which is one of the harshest and most embarrassing epithets in the high school lexicon (thus indirectly bullying any gay students within range as well¹⁷). Reflecting back on it, Matt wishes someone had told him, “This will pass. Maybe it will go on for a while, even through high school, but it will not go on forever. Things will get better.” Instead, he felt misery that seemed unending, and he lived in the daily emotional trauma of not knowing when the next attack would take place. Even being away from school was no guarantee of relief. In middle school, for example, Matt was harassed at friends’ birthday parties and once, in an excruciatingly cruel episode, he was bullied even at his own sleepover birthday party. The fact that his bullies were boys whom he originally had hoped to befriend intensified the pain, putting the salt of rejection in the wound of bullying.¹⁸ Understandably, Matt’s self-esteem plummeted and would take years to recover. As a result, he also had trouble with relationships. At his lowest point, Matt became suicidal and cut himself on a couple of occasions. As his poem witnesses, the suicidal thoughts turned to rage and revenge. He felt an inner conflict between his spiritual-moral life and this desire to end the torment “by any means necessary.” He even asked another student, who also had problems with Sydney, whether he wanted to “do something about it.” The other boy declined, and in the end, Matt never developed a plan of retaliation—a testament to his deeply held moral values. Pascal once said, “*comprendre, c’est pardonner*,” and Matt, now 30 and engaged to be married, has demonstrated the truth of this insight, preemptively pardoning two of the men who bullied him in light of what he has since come to understand about their own lives and upbringing. Sydney, however, acted inexplicably. Matt says he was just “a very mean human being.” When Sydney became paralyzed in a diving accident after high school, Matt says “it was hard to feel any sympathy,” though, as a man of deep compassion, he did not rejoice over it either. Significantly, Matt imagines that if Sydney were ever to apologize to him for those years of torment, he would forgive him. Although he has lost his faith, Matt continues to imitate Christ as he did in high school, enduring the cross and forgiving just as HE once did.

¹⁵Matt B., unpublished poem, “Rage,” ca. 1998, edited slightly for punctuation. The original is in my files.

¹⁶This is a pseudonym to protect the identity of the person involved, whom I have never met.

¹⁷These indirect assaults are known as “microaggressions,” and are defined as “the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group... Perpetrators are usually unaware that they have engaged in an exchange that demeans the recipient of the communication.” Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010), 5, 191ff. See also Klein in footnote 39.

¹⁸Newman discusses the particularly rough situation of being in a “liminal position” that may correspond to what Matt endured. This social position describes not the outcasts of a school but rather those who have a real possibility of being part of the “in” crowd but who suffer repeated rejection. See Newman et al, *Rampage*, 131.

Bullying Defined: Repeated Violence Against the Less Powerful

As we see in Matt's story, bullying is violence that strikes at the very center of one's being, sometimes leading to suicidal ideation. In the most tragic and rare cases, suicide and/or homicide does result, as it did recently in Lakeland, Florida when 12-year-old Rebecca Ann Sedwick jumped to her death after being cyber-bullied by over a dozen girls¹⁹; or in Greenwich, Connecticut where Bartłomiej "Bart" Palosz, 15, fatally shot himself on the first day of school after years of bullying.²⁰ Most often, however, students who are bullied suffer in silence. They carry the scars and the psychological complications well beyond high school.²¹ Adults sometimes treat bullying as a normal part of growing up, perhaps even seeing it as a positive event that toughens kids up for a harsh world. Late in 2010, after a year in which the hidden violence of bullying erupted as manifest tragedy following the successive suicides of Phoebe Prince (age 15, hanging), Billy Lucas (age 15, hanging), Seth Walsh (age 13, hanging), Asher Brown (age 13, gunshot), and Tyler Clementi (age 18, jumped from the George Washington Bridge),²² President Barack Obama rightly directed the nation saying, "We've got to dispel this myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage."²³ While learning to handle the occasional conflict surely is a healthy part of growing up, dealing with bullying is emphatically not. Bullying, by definition, is not just occasional teasing or inter-personal conflict. In a widely accepted definition from *The Journal of the American Medical Association*,

Bullying is a specific type of aggression in which (1) the behavior is intended to harm or disturb, (2) the behavior occurs repeatedly over time, and (3) there is an imbalance of power, with a more powerful person or group attacking a less powerful one. This asymmetry of power may be physical or psychological, and the aggressive behavior may be verbal (e.g. name-calling, threats), physical (e.g. hitting), or psychological (e.g. rumors, shunning/exclusion).²⁴

This formulation finds resonance with the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) definition: "Bullying is the repeated actions or threats of action directed toward a person by one or more people who have or are perceived to have more power or status than their target in order to cause

¹⁹Associated Press, "Bullied 12-Year-Old Florida Girl Commits Suicide," *Time*, September 12, 2013, <http://nation.time.com/2013/09/12/bullied-12-year-old-florida-girl-commits-suicide/> [accessed September 17, 2013].

²⁰Steven Yablonski and Matt Campbell, "Greenwich HS student commits suicide on first day of school," *WFSB: Eyewitness News 3*, August 28, 2013, <http://www.wfsb.com/story/23278527/greenwich-hs-student-commits-suicide-on-first-day-of-school> [accessed August 29, 2013]. For his sister's description of the bullying Bart endured, see Brittany Lyte, "Sister talks about Palosz, bullying," *ctpost.com*, August 30, 2013, <http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Sister-talks-about-Palosz-bullying-4773591.php> [accessed September 11, 2013].

²¹Paul R. Smokowski and Kelly Holland Kopasz, "Bullying in School: An Overview of types, Effects, Family Characteristics, and Intervention Strategies," *Children & Schools* 27, no. 2 [April 2005]: 105.

²²Clementi's death followed upon an incident of privacy invasion by his Rutgers University roommates regarding sexual activity with another man. While this incident does not meet the strict definition of bullying—specifically the lack of repetition over time—the tragedy was highly publicized and, in the public mind, combined with the other suicides to bring national attention to the issue of bullying in 2010. For example, Bishop Arthur Serratelli of Patterson, New Jersey wrote that Clementi's suicide was the result of "a clear case of cyber bullying" (Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli, "Death at Rutgers: In the Wake of Tragedy, a Way Forward," *Catholic Star Herald*, October 22, 2010, <http://catholicstarherald.org/index.php?view=article&catid=102:latest> [accessed December 10, 2010]).

²³President Barack Obama, "President Obama: It Gets Better," October 21, 2010, The White House Blog, 00:16, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/10/21/president-obama-it-gets-better> [accessed September 18, 2013].

²⁴Tonja R. Nansel, PhD, et al., "Bullying Behaviors Among U.S. Youth: Prevalence and Association with Psychosocial Adjustment," *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 285, no. 16 [April 2001]: 2094.

fear, distress or harm.”²⁵ The National Education Association (NEA) has spoken out forcefully, saying, “bullying... needs to be addressed as a matter of social justice; it is an affront to democracy and to our democratic institutions. Bullying deprives children of their rightful entitlement to go to school in a safe, just and caring environment...”²⁶ In her work, *Bullying in American Schools*, Anne Garrett quotes the National School Safety Center in California which “reports that bullying is the most enduring and underrated problem in American schools.”²⁷ In the face of such a pervasive problem relating to social justice and human thriving, it is surprising that what Ronald Hecker Cram wrote in 2003 appears still to be true: “More often than not, the church politely ignores the depth of the violence of bullying...”²⁸ I would extend that critique to other religious organizations as well, with one very public exception, the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, whose work in this area is exemplary.²⁹

“Something There is That Doesn’t Love a Wall”³⁰

The metaphor of a wall that separates Church and State has been with us since at least Roger Williams and more famously, Jefferson’s letter to the Danbury Baptists. The image does not serve us well in the field of education, though, for two reasons. First, the wall tends to become a medieval enceinte not only protecting against encroachment by the state on religious turf, and vice versa, but also establishing the school as a place apart, an outpost with only formal ties to the community.³¹ In this sense, the wall represents not merely a separation of Church and State, but, contrary to John Dewey’s classic vision, a separation between school and society. Second, the image of the wall belies the reality that the person cannot be divided: it is not possible to build a wall that separates the citizen or the student from the soul. In order for our education systems to be effective in nurturing the whole person and building up our democratic society, we must recognize the truth that is unveiled for us during manifest tragedies such as at

²⁵ Anti-Defamation League, under “BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING DEFINED,” <http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/bullying-cyberbullying/> [accessed September 17, 2013].

²⁶ Quoted in Anne G. Garrett, *Bullying in American Schools: Causes, Preventions, Interventions*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003), 59.

²⁷ Quoted in Garrett, *Bullying in American Schools*, 64.

²⁸ Ronald Hecker Cram, *Bullying: A Spiritual Crisis*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2003), 48.

²⁹ The ADL does not style itself a religious organization and may be better designated as quasi-religious. Its efforts include, but extend beyond, its historic mission of defending against anti-Semitism. For its exemplary work against bullying, see, for example, the resources available on their website: <http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/bullying-cyberbullying/>. Other religious organizations may be doing work as well, and I would be grateful to learn of the various efforts; still, the fact that the ADL’s activism has included a very public effort, including advocating for legislative change, and sponsoring highway billboards and the documentary film “Bully,” makes their work exceptional in my mind. For their own perception of the work they are doing, see the press release, “ADL Takes Lead in Nationwide Effort to Raise Awareness About School Bullying” at <http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/education/adl-takes-lead-in-nationwide.html#.Uji7Oj9LiFA>. This work is not without suspicion from the far right. One reason that anti-bullying efforts do not always make progress is that conservative critics see them as a façade for imposing a liberal moral agenda that includes such things, in their mind, as normalizing homosexuality. For a taste of this criticism in response to the ADL, see <http://rense.com/general86/evan.htm>.

³⁰ Robert Frost, “Mending Wall,” The Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing @ the University of Pennsylvania, <http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/frost-mending.html> [accessed September 5, 2013].

³¹ By “formal ties” I mean such things as funding and political oversight. In the material work of education, though, the links to the larger community are less obvious and schools often operate as silos. Even in cases where the school is the center of the community’s social/civic life, the actual operation of the school may still be done in relative isolation. The many public events that take place in the school building (sports, community meetings, drama events, voting, etc.) hide the fact that the material work of the school *qua* school is largely handled without much coordination with the larger community in many cases.

Columbine: the wall, as I have described it, is a sham. This is a point Jürgen Habermas makes philosophically: “When secularized citizens act in their role as citizens of the state, they must not deny in principle that religious images of the world have the potential to express truth. Nor must they refuse their believing fellow citizens the right to make contributions in a religious language to public debates.”³² The pluralism of world views, he indicates, should not lead to walls of separation but rather to channels of communication for the public purpose of learning from one another for the sake of the common good. Once we come to that conclusion, religious professionals will more readily join the public work of addressing hidden forms of violence, such as bullying.

“The Loving World Was There All the Time”

Being involved to prevent and detect bullying, and to intervene, counsel, and promote healing when bullying is occurring or has occurred requires more than just a youth group event or a sermon on the topic. It must be a sustained and multipronged effort so that students have no doubt that, as Columbine survivor Patrick Ireland put it, “the loving world was there all the time.”³³ Moreover, it will be a public effort, which means that *ad intra* programming and educational efforts will be combined with *ad extra* coordination and advocacy so that the religious voice is heard as part of a whole community approach to ending violence in our schools, an approach that is increasingly promoted.³⁴ Here are seven suggestions for such involvement:

- 1) Preach and teach. Bullying is too easily normalized. Adults and children alike need to hear the message from religious leaders that bullying is wrong and that we must stand up for one another, especially the most vulnerable. Following Cram’s advice, teaching empathy is the *sine qua non*.³⁵ Beyond our own walls, though, we must “go public” through exposure in local media, social networks, public forums, etc. There is an “aura of ultimacy”³⁶ around religious teachings that could add more weight to the anti-bullying cause. As Habermas puts it, “Religious traditions have a special power to articulate moral intuitions, especially with regard to vulnerable forms of communal life.”³⁷ To not employ this power would be a serious dereliction of duty.
- 2) Model. Since so much bullying is related to homophobia either through targeting of those who are gay³⁸ or perceived to be gay, or through the use of homophobic insults as we saw in Matt’s

³²Jürgen Habermas, “Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State,” in *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. Florian Schuller, trans. Brian McNeil, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 51.

³³Patrick Ireland was known to many as “the boy in the window” from the live coverage of his escape through the high school’s second-floor library window into the arms of SWAT team officials after having been shot in the head twice. The words are from his valedictory address at Columbine High School the year after the massacre: “The shooting made the country aware of the unexpected level of hate and rage that had been hidden in high schools... When I fell out the window, I knew somebody would catch me... That’s what I need to tell you: that I knew the loving world was there all the time.” Quoted in Cullen, *Columbine*, 302.

³⁴Joy D. Patton, “Community Organizations’ Involvement in School Safety Planning: Does It Make a Difference in School Violence?” *School Social Work Journal* 35, no. 2, [March 2011]: 18. See also comments by Abraham H. Foxman, ADL National Director, in “ADL Takes Lead in Nationwide Effort to Raise Awareness About School Bullying,” <http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/education/adl-takes-lead-in-nationwide.html> #Uji7Oj9LiFA [accessed September 17, 2013].

³⁵Cram, *Bullying*, 61ff.

³⁶Clifford Geertz, quoted in Thomas H. Groome, *Language for a ‘catholic’ Church*, (Kansas City, Missouri: Sheed & Ward, 1991), 35.

³⁷Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1, [2006]: 10.

³⁸I use the term “gay” expansively to include all those who define themselves in terms other than heterosexual.

case,³⁹ the religious community should be especially attentive to this reality. Many people believe that religious groups are culpable in promoting gay bashing.⁴⁰ If homophobic bullying seems to have implicit religious backing, then we have no hope of being partners towards its elimination. Because of the severity of the problem and the fact of public perception, religious leaders should redouble efforts to model a non-bullying posture. This is particularly important for religious groups, like my own Roman Catholic Church, that take moral stances that could easily be misinterpreted as homophobic, such as opposing gay marriage and gay adoption.

3) Communicate. Since we are working with the same students, religious educators should communicate with schools to the degree that confidentiality and good judgment allow. Katherine Newman makes a strong case for the danger of fragmented knowledge: evidence of a student who is in need of help may never be assembled in one place to create a full picture of the extent of the problem.⁴¹ We must open channels of communication towards the goal of identifying and helping those who are hurting (in both senses: the agent and the victim of harm).

4) Counsel. Schools should be aware of religious counseling services. It is no breach of the First Amendment for a guidance counselor to be knowledgeable about the variety of services offered in the community and to make them known to students as appropriate. Also, in our litigious and policy-minded age, bullying can easily be seen only in terms of “mandatory reporting.” While this is necessary to protect youths, it is not sufficient. Reporting of a “case” must be coupled with care for the persons involved, both the bullied and the bully. Emmanuel Levinas’ sense of ethical responsibility applies here. It is not supererogatory to go beyond mere reporting: it is a moral imperative.

5) Advocate. Cram makes a solid argument for recognizing bullying as a spiritual crisis, a cry for meaningful relationship by bullies that is ultimately frustrated by the violence they perpetrate.⁴² Religious leaders must continue to advocate for holistic and communal education systems that tend to the spiritual, moral, and social reality of students’ lives. Religious groups should be actively involved at every level of government and society to promote laws, policies, and programs that protect our young people.

6) Organize. Anti-bullying efforts will best be sustained by creating structures that help us to “keep our eye on the ball.” Community-wide standing committees for addressing bullying in our schools should be established that bring together dedicated stake-holders including students, parents, educators, religious leaders, political leaders, and others to plan, execute, and regularly evaluate the important public work of resisting violence in the lives of our youth.

³⁹This was also true for Walsh, Brown, Lucas, and Clementi. “A Harris poll in 2005 found that 90 percent of teens who self-identified as gay said they had been bullied in the past year.” (Quoted in *America*, “Bullying, A Deadly Sin,” November 8, 2010, 5). See also James O’Higgins-Norman et al., “Pedagogy for diversity: mediating between tradition and equality in schools,” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 14, no. 4, [November 2009]: 324. See also Jessie Klein, “Sexuality and School Shootings: What Role Does Teasing Play in School Massacres?” *Journal of Homosexuality* 51, no. 4, [2006]: 42ff.

⁴⁰“Nearly three-quarters of Americans (72 percent) say religious messages about homosexuality contribute to ‘negative views’ of gays and lesbians...” (Nicole Neroulias, “Americans Say Religious Messages Fuel Negative Views of Gays,” *National Catholic Reporter*, October 21, 2010, <http://ncronline.org/print/20890> [accessed December 12, 2010].)

⁴¹Newman et al., *Rampage*, 90ff. While she is looking at school shooters in particular, the same argument can be made for bullying.

⁴²Cram, *Bullying*, 48, 57.

7) Pray, and invite others to join us in public prayer. Rather than wait for manifest tragedies to bring the community together in prayer, as religious leaders we must “Dig the hole deeper”⁴³ and root our efforts in the divine power that sustains, purifies, and makes fruitful all our good work.

Conclusion

As partners in a public response to the violence of bullying, religious leaders can play an effective and unique role in society, breaking down walls in the community and refusing to make manifest tragedy the only occasion for recognizing the spiritual nature of the human person. If Cram is correct that bullying represents a spiritual crisis and a longing for greater connectedness, then the very fact that we take this action as religious people is already a concrete step towards eliminating the preconditions of bullying in our schools.

⁴³Stanley Kunitz, “My Mother’s Pears,” *The New Yorker*, May 17, 1993, 78.

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2013 REA Annual Meeting, November 8-10, Boston, MA

A new culture of learning: Public spaces, digital storytelling, and faith formation

Prepared for the REA annual meeting in 2013 / Boston, MA

Mary Hess / Luther Seminary

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Abstract:

How has the “new culture of learning” begun to transform public spaces, and in what ways might religious education practices be impacted by the shift? This paper draws on recent research funded by the MacArthur Foundation which lays an empirical basis for recognizing shifts in learning brought about by widespread access to digital technologies. In particular I will draw out implications from that work – which has mainly taken place in public school settings – for religious practice, communities, and education for public engagement using the work of adult learning theorists.

Paper:

In 2006 the MacArthur Foundation (a major philanthropic foundation in the US) launched a five-year, \$50 million digital media and learning initiative to “help determine how digital technologies are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life.”¹ While that particular initiative has ended, the Foundation’s work has continued in multiple efforts which have included research into diverse topics within digital culture including civic engagement, credibility, media and learning, libraries, media literacy, participatory learning, social media, virtual worlds, among others. Several major books and hundreds of scholarly articles have emerged from this research, spawning an entirely new focus of research – that of digital media and learning.² In 2011 Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown published a book entitled *A New Culture of Learning* which offered a brief, engaging and thoughtful overview of the field, and which contained a focused set of implications from this new area of study for higher education. In the rest of this paper I will draw primarily on their work to suggest ways in which our practices of religious education must transform if we intend to nurture religious identity which supports public engagement in just and constructive ways.

Recent empirical research suggests that there are several dynamics emerging – or at least newly visible - at the heart of digital learning cultures: a move from “teaching-based” to “learning-based” approaches; a shift from the public and private to the personal and collective; and a focus on tacit knowing which grows from inquiry-led approaches. These dynamics at one and the same time offer both new promise for religious education practice in public spaces, as well as extensive contradictions and obstacles to such practice. I will take each in turn, to define and explore them.

¹ Accessed on Sept 10, 2013: http://digitallearning.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7B7E45C7E0-A3E0-4B89-AC9C-E807E1B0AE4E%7D/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF

² A primary bibliography of this research is available online. Accessed on Sept 10, 2103: <http://dmlcentral.net/bibliography?page=2&sort=year&order=asc>

“learning-based in contrast to teaching-based”

There are several ways to describe what it means to move to a “learning-based” – or my preferred term, “learning-centered” – form of education. The distinction was described as far back as 1995 by Robert Barr and John Tagg, who published an essay entitled “From teaching to learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education.”³ The table they included with the essay has been reprinted multiple times, and notes a shift from what they labeled the “instructional paradigm” to the “learning paradigm.” Among the elements of this shift which they identified are:

| | |
|--|---|
| From | to |
| providing or delivering instruction | producing learning |
| assessing quality of entering students | assessing quality of exiting students |
| atomistic; parts prior to whole | holistic; whole prior to parts |
| covering materials | specified learning results [outcomes] |
| faculty as lecturers | faculty as designers of environments |
| knowledge “out there” | knowledge “in each person’s mind and shaped by experience” |

Their table is organized into sections by “mission and purpose,” “criteria for success,” “teaching/learning structures,” “learning theory,” “productivity/funding,” and the “nature of roles,” and contains far more than the brief excerpt I have offered here. The point to note, however, is that nearly 20 years later the paradigm shift they described has still not taken hold across the landscape of higher education. It may well be, however, that this shift *is* beginning to take hold in new digital learning cultures. Much of what has been observed in the empirical research funded by MacArthur is precisely such a transformation.

Young people observed in the midst of multi-player online gaming, newly emerging social networks, and other digital spaces enter those environments with a keen curiosity about what they can learn, for instance, rather than feeling that they must first be prepared prior to entrance. Even readers of this essay, who might have begun their schooling prior to the advent of digital tools, are probably users of personal computers, and as such, ever less likely to take classes on specific computer software before using that software. Indeed most people draw on their previous experience, that of their friends and colleagues, tutorials created by “amateurs” and posted on the web, and so on when they begin to use new software, or install the latest “updates” to their specific operating systems.

At the same time the quality of hardware available for everyday use has vastly improved, particularly in the areas of digital photography and videography. The distinctions that were once so clear between “amateur” and “professional” or “expert” and “novice,” for example, are becoming much more blurred. Multimedia recording equipment is often labeled as “prosumer” – a contraction of “professional” and “consumer” which denotes precisely this kind of blurring of the lines.

³ The essay, with its accompanying table is available online. Accessed Sept. 10, 2013: http://www.athens.edu/visitors/QEP/Barr_and_Tagg_article.pdf

“shift from public and private, to personal and collective”

There has been significant concern in the last five years in particular, over the risks perceived by the advent of digital technology as embodied in social networking. Much of that concern with regard to younger people has focused on the relatively open ways in which they regularly share information about themselves in these networks. Many have “viewed with alarm” pictures of young people with alcohol in their hands, or status updates that use problematic language or make offensive statements. The alarm has focused on people “sharing too much” in these environments, and the ways in which “the private” has increasingly been shared in “public.” What these critics miss, however, is that the underlying issue is not so much that young people are sharing things better left private, but rather that the negative edges of their behavior are becoming more visible. That is, the concern in these cases should not so much be that people are “making public” their views, but rather the problematic nature of the views and lack of respect they are making visible. Many scholars have pointed out, for instance, that the incidence of bullying has not so much increased, as it has become more visible.⁴

Digital spaces increasingly are spaces which mitigate against compartmentalization. That is, quite the opposite from the early concern that people would create multiple personas to inhabit digital spaces and lose touch with their “real” selves, in contrast digital spaces are increasingly becoming spaces in which you have to display personal integrity across multiple communities or you lose credibility. Trust may well become one of the most important currencies of this new environment, and trust is most often built through transparency and consistency.⁵

The second element of the concern over the “private and public” marks another element of this challenge with “trust” and has to do with too much sharing of information – such as personal identity markers, consumer tastes, and so on – which might then be available for consumer commodification. The concern would not exist, for instance, if people were not already legitimately worried about the history of ways in which personal information is being collected and used by both commercial enterprises and in some cases even governments to develop desires for consumption, provide a pretext or preparation for violence (as in the case of predators, trafficking, and so on), or support suppression of speech and other forms of political engagement.

There is a difficult paradox here: the dynamics and practices by which trust is developed, by which authenticity is inscribed in digital spaces, often require the sharing of personal information that previously would have been kept private. Consequently researchers are starting to speak of a shift from a “public/private dichotomy” to one of “personal/collective.” Here the decisions about which information to share and in which ways tend to be evaluated in terms of how such information contributes to collective agency, rather than to some abstract notion of “public-ness.” The examples that are most

⁴ A thorough investigation of these issues can be found in the report “Enhancing child safety and online technologies” published by the Internet Safety Technical Task Force, and the Berkman Center at Harvard University (accessed September 17, 2013: http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/ISTTF_Final_Report.pdf). A more accessible, ‘popular’ piece is “Bullying as true drama” by danah boyd and Alice Marwick, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/opinion/why-cyberbullying-rhetoric-misses-the-mark.html>.

⁵ Find footnote about about trust as the new currency

vivid in Thomas and Seely Brown's book come from social networking media such as *Facebook*, or from massively multi-player online games (or mmg's) like *World of Warcraft*.

The constant sharing of the ordinary events of one's days, of the "likes and dislikes" associated with *Facebook* updates, contribute to a massive database which has at one and the same time the paradox of becoming vastly more attuned to commercial commodification even as it supplants the previous mechanisms of commercialization. In the past, advertising for instance, could only be targeted towards more general demographic groups – perhaps people between the ages of 18 and 45, or people who watched NASCAR. Now it is possible for advertising to identify target groups in ever more specific ways, allowing for every more diverse permutations of "audience." But at the same time as advertising becomes more targeted, it also becomes less persuasive than word of mouth. Surveys suggest that only 22% of people "believe" in advertising, whereas more than 90% trust recommendations from people in their social networks.⁶

Thomas and Seely Brown draw from this data yet another implication: that when societies embrace the personal/collective dynamic they often shift from a "learning in order to belong" mode, to a "participate and belong in order to learn" mode, which closely tracks the shift noted in my earlier section from teaching-based to learning-based.

"shift from explicit to tacit forms of knowing"

Participating and belonging in order to learn brings to the fore the final element of the research to which I intend to point: a visible shift in learning from exploring explicit to tacit forms of knowing. When you have a stable body of information which persists over time in the form of specific content many people argue that you can "transfer" that information, or "deliver" it. These are metaphors for teaching and learning that Thomas and Seely Brown identify as being attached to "explicit" forms of knowing. Setting aside for a moment whether "information" is ever the primary goal of teaching/learning – I am ambitious enough to seek knowledge, or even wisdom – the distinction being drawn here is between "explicit" and "tacit" forms of knowing, with "tacit" forms emphasizing the unstable, rapidly changing, and fluid forms of knowledge that accrue from learning through participation (think of Polyani's articulation here). Thus the forms of learning which are heavily privileged in many digital environments stress drawing on tacit knowledges and emphasize learning through doing, through feeling.

Thus far three dynamics have been identified for a "new culture of learning": (1) a shift from teaching-based to learning-based practices, (2) a shift from a "public/private" split to a "personal/collective" distinction, and (3) an emphasis on tacit forms of knowing rather than explicit knowledges. At this point in their argument Thomas and Seely Brown are ready to offer their definition:

The new culture of learning is about the kind of tension that develops when students with an interest or passion that they want to explore are faced with a set of constraints that allow them to act only within given boundaries... (81)

⁶ The most often cited statistics here have been drawn together into compelling "video short" form by Erik Qualman: <http://www.socialnomics.net/2013/01/01/social-media-video-2013/>

In many ways this new culture of learning may not be all that new. I believe, instead, it makes visible, or retrieves, forms of knowing and learning that have been prevalent in other periods of history and, pertinent to the point of this paper, are particularly evident in religious communities. This is not the place to plunge into historical discussion, but I would like to lift up three paradoxical tensions that religious educators ought to be engaging in the midst of digital environments all around us, tensions that can spark our creativity and energy – or draw us into apathy or even despair.

For instance:

(1) The curiosity and passion of digital culture learners is often piqued by a desire to gain access to esoteric forms of knowing (eg. the more obscure the elements of a video game, the more fascinating for players). So on the one hand, mystery is deeply engaging to this generation of learners, and religious communities tend a variety of mysteries. On the other hand, religious studies scholarship and theological scholarship is often written in very abstract language, demanding years of study even to access the basic questions at the heart of the inquiry. The *promise* here is one of drawing learners into holistic and integrated forms of religious knowing which appreciate the tension of mystery, whereas the *contradiction* is one of making the study of religion so difficult as to be inaccessible to those who might find it compelling.

(2) A second paradoxical tension resides in the necessity identified within this new culture of learning for appreciating tacit forms of knowing. Religious studies scholars and theologians are often adept at methodologies that lift up for explicit engagement forms of knowing that reside in implicit, or tacit, learning. Yet at the same time much of the way in which religious practice is engaged and taught in various contexts has emphasized explicitly cognitive and doctrinal aspects of religious practice. Such classroom focus is “teaching-based” rather than “learning-based,” focusing on teaching “about” the world, rather than through “engagement with” the world.

Here the *promise* is one of making religious understanding accessible to generations of people who are increasingly being formed in digital cultures, while the *obstacle* is the possibility that at the very moment in which religious understanding is so needed in broader public spaces, religious scholars and educators may be sharing it in ways that isolate it outside of the learning frames most people use.

(3) A third paradoxical tension lives in the elements of digital culture which at the same time as they are deeply relational disrupt our “taken for granted” understanding of embodied presence. How might religious educators draw on the relational elements of digital learning while simultaneously emphasizing embodied presence in ways that invite practices of contemplation, ritual practice, collective action for social justice, and so on?

These paradoxical tensions emerge in part from increasingly accessible participatory tools that offer significant enjoyment and agency to those who use them. I have written elsewhere about three dynamics that I believe are shifting most dramatically in digital environments – authority, authenticity, and agency. Authority and authenticity have been explored at great length and significant depth in other research (see footnote below) but the shifts in “agency” – particularly as understood as the ability to produce something, to “get something done” – are less well understood.⁷ Clay Shirky and Yochai Benkler are perhaps two of the most articulate proponents of the research which identifies

⁷ See, in particular Clark 2005, 2011 and forthcoming; as well as Hess, 2008, 2010, and 2012.

this increasing agency in contexts well beyond that of education. Shirky writes of the “cognitive surpluses” people are drawing on to explore and create in digital environments, and Benkler writes of the “wealth of social networks” as a way to describe the power of human cooperation. And as I’ve already noted, Thomas and Seely Brown are clear about the participatory focus of learning in digital environments.

Engaging these paradoxical tensions in ways that support human agency as both created by and embedded within divine agency may well be the most challenging element of religious identity formation in the midst of our increasingly “digitally permeated” environments. All around us environments are drawing people into active participation, and at the more utopian end of the spectrum, touting their wide open opportunities for transforming our world. Yet, like most spaces outside of explicit religious cultures, there is no room for transcendent agency. The kind of deep humility that religious practice offers in relationship with transcendence is not often represented or invited in these digital spaces. Further, too much of the “participation” exists at the lower end of the “ladder of engagement.”⁸

What to do?

How might we begin to engage these dynamics, these spaces, in ways that invite broad participation and active agency in religious community? How do we engage the resistance to religious institutions that seems to be growing ever more rapidly? I am convinced that the answers to these questions reside in creating intentional invitations to creative “play” and “making” in religious communities with a deliberate theological overlay which contextualizes and embeds such forms of knowing in a deep recognition of God’s agency.

Why “play” and “making”? Thomas and SeelyBrown explore at some length the related elements of *homo sapiens*, *homo faber*, and *homo ludens*. Their argument is that we have focused too tightly on the “sapiential” elements of our humanity in various schooling environments, and not attended to what it is to “make” and “to play.” Meanwhile, theorists of gaming are pointing to the intensely enjoyable elements of online multi-player games, not to mention other kinds of “maker spaces.”⁹ If a new culture of learning really is about “the kind of tension that develops when students with an interest or passion that they want to explore are faced with a set of constraints that allow them to act only within given boundaries... (81)” then we have much to learn from the deliberate structuring of environments that occurs within game play. Here the work of Hayse and Detweiler is instructive in religious education, and in the wider philosophical field, that of Huizinga.

I will leave to you, the reader, to the exploration of these points in greater detail as you follow up citations. Here I want to note that there are several elements of creating that creative tension which have been well explicated by the theorizing of Robert Kegan

⁸ Using the keyword “ladder of engagement” at google will bring you to numerous graphic illustrations of the idea that participation in digital spaces begins in relatively passive observation, then “following” and “endorsing” before anyone begins to contribute or lead in ways that go beyond purely digital spaces.

⁹ For more on gaming and making, cf: <http://www.slideshare.net/ALATechSource/makerspaces-carnegie-public-library-bibliography>

in his work on adult learning, specifically his work on transformation of meaning frames. Kegan's framework for discussing a shift from third to fourth order meaning-making proposes one way to consider living in the constructive tension of these paradoxes, inviting the promise of transformative learning while avoiding the contradictions that can lead to premature ultimates.

In Kegan's theorizing "third order" meaning-making is structured around

cross-categorical thinking—the ability to relate one durable category to another... As a result, thinking is more abstract, individuals are aware of their feelings and the internal processes associated with them, and they can make commitments to communities of people and ideas (Kegan, 1994). Kegan and his colleagues (2001) noted that in this order of consciousness, "other people are experienced ... as sources of internal validation, orientation, or authority" (p. 5). How the individual is perceived by others is of critical importance since acceptance by others is crucial in this order. Support is found in mutually rewarding relationships and shared experiences, while challenge takes the form of resisting codependence and encouraging individuals to make their own decisions and establish independent lives.¹⁰

While "fourth order" meaning-making requires

cross-categorical constructing—the ability to generalize across abstractions, which could also be labeled systems thinking—is evident in the fourth order of consciousness (Kegan, 1994). In this order, self-authorship is the focus. Individuals "have the capacity to take responsibility for and ownership of their internal authority" (Kegan & others, 2001, p. 5) and establish their own sets of values and ideologies (Kegan, 1994). Relationships become a part of one's world rather than the reason for one's existence. Support at this stage is evident in acknowledgment of the individual's independence and self-regulation. Individuals are encouraged to develop further when significant others refuse to accept relationships that are not intimate and mutually rewarding.¹¹

Supporting movement from one form to another proceeds along a spiral path which Kegan identifies as being one of "confirmation, contradiction and continuity," with "confirmation" having to do with seeking deep understanding of the internal logic of a particular way of making sense in a specific social location. He believes that you cannot support transformation in constructive and generative ways without first entering into a form of deep empathy with a person. The next step – contradiction – arises either organically in the course of a person's journey, or might be introduced through the intervention of a teacher/coach, who draws attention to the contradictions that exist in a particular meaning frame. Kegan points out, however, that simply encountering contradiction is not enough for true transformation. The rupture of meaning that emerges is so unsettling that people find themselves fleeing into relativism or fundamentalism, both of which are essentially refusals to transform meaning-making, to move from cross-categorical thinking to cross-categorical construction. The final element necessary for a transformation to a new order of meaning-making is a process Kegan terms "continuity," by which he means a form of holding space which allows for the new structures of

¹⁰ This lovely and concise description comes from Chapter 10, "Development of Self-Authorship" in the book *Student Development in College, Theory, Research, and Practice* by Nancy J. Evans, Deanna S. Forney, Florence M. Guido, Lori D. Patton and Kristen A. Renn. Published by Jossey-Bass, as found in the Tomorrow's Professor #1110 (<http://derekbruff.org/blogs/tomprof/2011/06/17/tp-msg-1110-kegans-theory-of-the-evolution-of-consciousness/>). Accessed on 17 September 2013.

¹¹ Ibid.

meaning-making to consolidate. Such continuity can often be described as a larger community into which someone is invited, in which their previous form of making meaning is acknowledged and valued, while at the same time the new form is cherished.

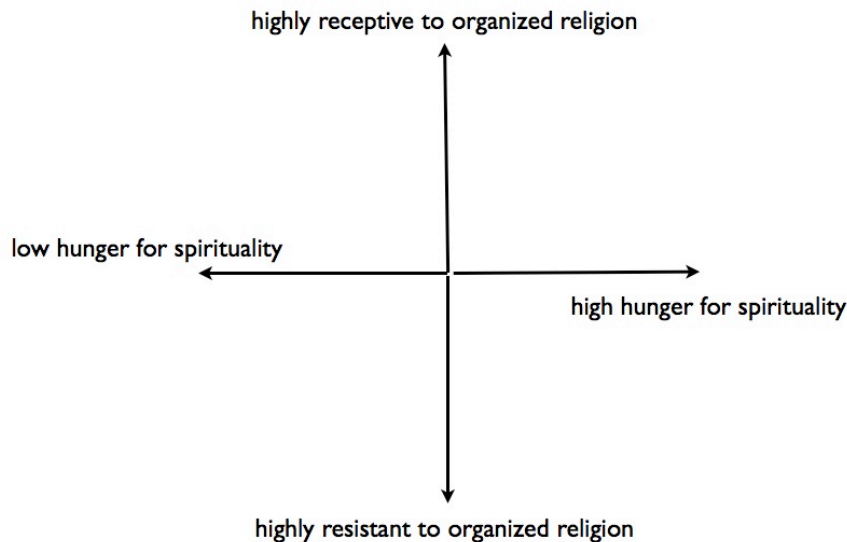
In my work with theological educators and digital spaces one example that comes to mind of this shift from one frame to the next, is the frequently heard complaint that digital spaces are disembodied and as such cannot be utilized for religious education. Of course, another assumption embedded in that argument is that religious education is by definition embodied. If both of those assumptions are true, by themselves, then the logical conclusion is correct – constructive religious education cannot take place there. But what if there are counter examples? What if there are ways in which digital spaces can be experienced as deeply relational and embodied, while at the same time there are examples of religious education environments which are *not* relational and embodied? Such examples would contradict the underlying assumptions and invite movement into a space that might truly be *constructive* of cross-categorical meaning, not simply reflective of it.

The need to provide continuity in such transformation evokes the need for a “holding space,” an environment that exists on both sides of the transformation. On the one side it is a space that supports cross categorical *thinking*, while on the other side of that transformation is a space that supports *construction* of cross categorical knowing. When someone exists in a frame of mind which can only *think* in cross categorical terms, rather than *construct* cross categorically, and that process of thinking is disrupted, when the underlying assumptions become no longer adequate to the spaces being encountered, when the reality – for instance – is that a digital space is experienced as more deeply embodied and relational than an in-person space, the resulting contradictions are so destabilizing that persons might be tempted to flee either into fundamentalism (“no digital space can hold religious formation”) or into relativism (“digital spaces and in-person spaces are equally problematic”). Scholars are beginning to note, for instance, that the struggle to embrace the deeply contradictory reality of religious institutions is often too much for people, who flee either into fundamentalist religious spaces, or flee religious spaces all together (the so-called “spiritual but not religious” stance).

Yet when there are bridges built to cross-categorical construction, when there is a wider, deeper, community into which one is invited, then meaning can be transformed and the “holding environment” allows the new frame to become solidified. Here, to keep with my earlier examples, there is a community which welcomes engagement in digital spaces and perceives *some* of those spaces as being capable of embodied relationality, and others as being distorting or even destructive of such relationality. That same community perceives some “in person” religious spaces as being quite “dis-embodiment” and provides theological arguments to support the distinctions.

John Roberto, in his wide attempt to invite religious educators to take seriously a number of inter-related dynamics that are emerging from the sociological literature on religious communities, has developed a form of “scenario-based thinking” which is yet another invitation to a wider “container” for imagining religious education. His framework posits a matrix with two perpendicular axes – one which marks a spectrum from resistance to receptivity with relation to religious institutions, and one which marks a spectrum from low personal hunger for spiritual engagement to high hunger for personal spiritual engagement. This matrix then offers a way to recognize that there

might be at least four scenarios in which people could be found: one in which they experience a high receptivity to religious institutions and a high hunger for spirituality, one in which there is resistance to institution yet high hunger, one of low hunger and high resistance, and one in which there is receptivity to religious institution but low hunger:



I have found this matrix particularly helpful in stretching the imagination of church-based religious educators, who have a tendency to fix their attention on the upper right hand quadrant of “high receptivity, high hunger” and so in the process miss three quarters of the people they could be engaging.¹² There are many other frameworks for creating such environments, the “art of hosting” practices among them, but for the purposes of this essay I will focus on the art of digital storytelling.

Digital storytelling as a form of faith formation

How do we design learning that is capable of attending to integrative religious practices within digitally mediated spaces? How do we create spaces that allow for, even support, transformation of meaning from third to fourth order frames? One short answer would be: digital storytelling in the service of faith formation. To unpack that phrase I need to note that when I write of “digital storytelling” I am specifically referring to the form of digital storytelling which has been nurtured by the Center for Digital Storytelling based in California and Colorado. The CDS “family of origin,” if you will, is community theater and improv. From those roots they have grown, with the advent of digital tools – first Quicktime, then iMovie and iPads – into a center which privileges, first, the creation

¹² Reference to Roberto’s work and free online chapter

and sharing of *stories*, and then from there, digital stories. This form of digital storytelling, then, is *not* a loose umbrella for any and every story to be found in any digital format. It is *not* shorthand for film and tv, or even much that can be found on *YouTube* or *Vimeo*. It is, rather, a community of practice which focuses on helping people to find their own voices, to hone stories from their own experience, and then to craft and share their stories using digital tools.

Such a process has several immediate advantages when engaged in the service of religious education and faith formation. To begin with, far too many spaces which people inhabit these days are structured by time constraints that privilege short attention spans and invite only superficial reflection. Listening for, honing and then digitally embodying a short story (most CDS stories are on the order of 3-5 minutes) not only creates an opportunity to slow down, it *requires* attentive, patient and thoughtful reflection. An entirely delightful side effect of this process is that people inevitably become more critical of other digital media they engage – there is something about “seeing what’s in the sausage,” so to speak, which invites critical engagement with other digital media.

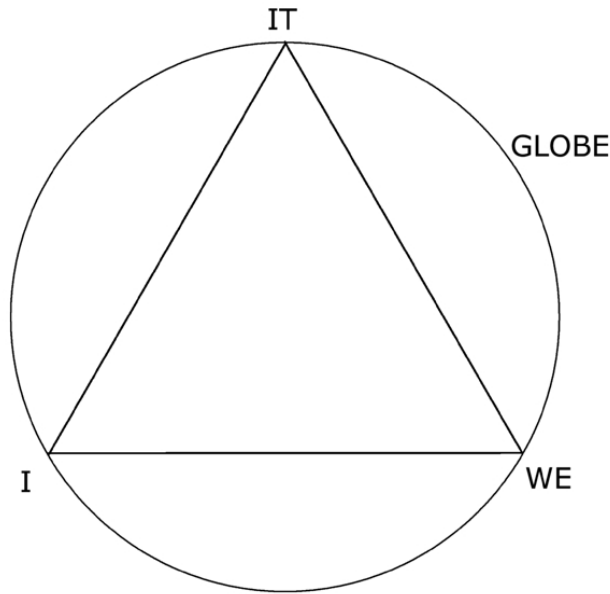
Further, as anthropologist and observer of digital cultures Michael Wesch has pointed out, the combination of “anonymity + physical distance + rare and ephemeral discourse” which is increasingly a part of the genre of vlogging (“video blogging” or short, self reflective video pieces) can lend itself “to the freedom to experience humanity without fear or anxiety.”¹³ He also notes that that same equation, paradoxically, can lead to “hatred as public performance,” although this more dangerous potential is less manifest in the form of digital storytelling described here. What occurs, instead, is a rich opportunity for the development of empathy. I have written about that process elsewhere, so here I simply want to note that there is enormous potential in digital storytelling for supporting people in developing from cross categorical thinking into cross categorical construction (Hess, 2012).

Additionally, work within Christian theological spaces – particularly that of communicative theologians, who build on Jurgen Habermas’ distinction between instrumental and communicative forms of action to define “living learning” as opposed to “dead learning” – offers particularly evocative theological framing for this process. Communicative theologians stress that the source of theological assertions must be identified; that the form, medium and content of communication cannot be separated; that theology is, by definition, a critical reflection upon, understanding of, and contribution to, a communicative event; and that all communicative events are fundamentally participatory.¹⁴

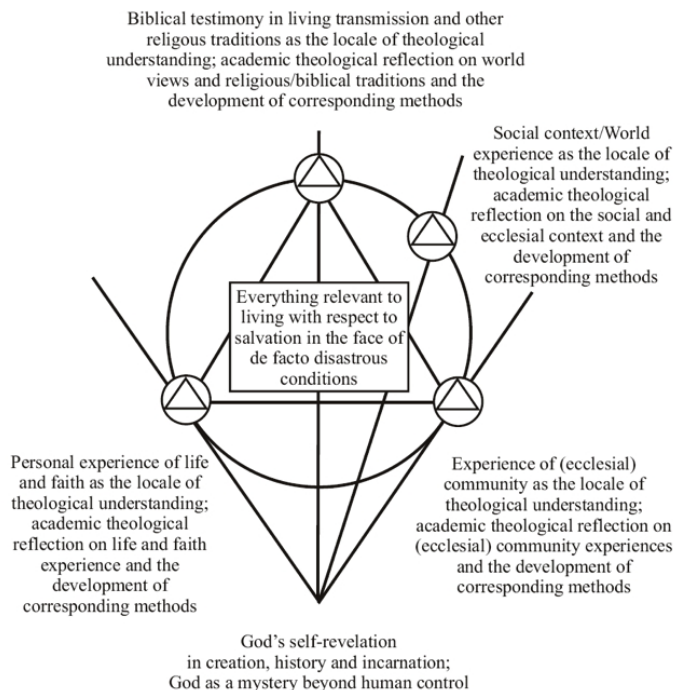
Communicative theology proceeds in embodied, relational ways which demand that the “I” and the “group” be interwoven with “the it” (or Logos) all within the context of “the globe.” These terms carry specific definitions and weight within communicative theology. One way to envision the process can be found in this diagram:

¹³ The most effective articulation of Michael Wesch’s argument is found in his 2008 lecture to the Library of Congress, “An anthropological introduction to YouTube,” available online: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-IZ4_hU, with this reference coming at about the time mark of 29:13.

¹⁴ insert reference from Hinze book



Theologians have expanded upon this diagram, which was first articulated in Ruth Cohen's description of theme-centered interaction, by annotating the various nodes of the dynamic process as follows:¹⁵



¹⁵ Ruth Cohen is the founder of the process of small group learning titled "theme-centered interaction" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theme-centered_interaction). A theological introduction to communicative theology is Scharer, Hilberath 2008, from which the second of these two drawings is found (#).

Understanding theology in this way demands that communication be seen as the very heart of the process. God's self-communication within God's own self (communicative theology is deeply Trinitarian) is seen as necessitating communication and relationship with all of Creation. This articulation of theology very specifically foregrounds communication, and embeds it in a deliberately pedagogical (or perhaps it would be more appropriate to call it a deliberately "andragogical") form of engagement. By demanding that the *process* of doing theology be an intimate element of any theological *expression*, communicative theologians have returned to and retrieved *apologetics*, in the deepest sense of that word, grounding such theology experientially in a holistic rather than purely cognitive approach to speaking of and with God.

Digital storytelling offers a lively instance of such a "communicative event" with the bonus of offering a moment which can be returned to, and which can be widely shared. Perhaps the single most useful element of *digital* stories, as opposed to stories told in physical proximity, is precisely this ability to return to the same story over and over again, in multiple contexts and from multiple perspectives. The danger of "context collapse" is mitigated here by embedding the story in the midst of theological reflection (Hess, 2012). Even when digital faith stories are *not* engaged within theological frames – as, for example, when someone stumbles upon a story in isolation at *YouTube* or *Vimeo* – it usually carries enough power in itself to invite genuine curiosity and click-throughs to lengthier contextualization. A good example of such would be the Episcopal Story Project (<http://episcopalstoryproject.org/>). You might stumble upon one of the individual stories from that project, but even in that case you are drawn beyond it (for example, <https://vimeo.com/47482587>).

Each of these frameworks provides one element, or perspective, for seeing why the practice of digital storytelling as a form of faith formation is so fruitful in current contexts. In particular digital storytelling creates a space in which the pleasure of creating with digital tools meets the embodied design of storying faith, and emerges with a public voice which resists the "context collapse" which Wesch identifies. This is digital storytelling of a particular sort, however, not the commercial form which has become so prevalent in commodified media, but rather the intentional practice of storying which demands the relational discernment of story circles, and the contemplative practice of multi-layered digital design, both of which must occur before a digital story is ever published to be shared widely.

Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown have persuasively argued that the new learning culture is "about the kind of tension that develops when students with an interest or passion they want to explore are faced with a set of constraints that allow them to act only within given boundaries." They argue for *homo faber* and *homo ludens* not to be separated from *homo sapiens*. Digital storytelling offers this kind of playful and yet serious space, and the work of communicative theologians provides a profoundly theological frame for such serious play. In doing so the opportunity to "re-member" and to "re-weave" God's agency into our storymaking, to lift up the generous creativity which God pulls through us is awakened.

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School Worship, John G. Williams, and the Idea of Childhood Piety at the BBC

This paper uses historical methodology to attempt reconstruct the contribution of one leading mid-twentieth century Christian religious educationist, John G. Williams, to the early years of broadcasting at the BBC, and later to religious education in English schools. It seeks to expound Williams' idea of childhood piety based upon his correspondence, his publications and broadcasts, analysing these against the backdrop of the work of the French historian Philippe Aries and others who have sought to trace changing notions of childhood in the Modern period. The legitimacy, nature and purpose of worship in schools – and the character of adult-child relating in spiritual formation – form the critical backdrop to this historical case study.

Background and Outline for the Paper

During the first part of twentieth century the new technology of radio came to be used as a means of religiously educating children and young people at home and in school. In so doing a particular idea of the religiously educated child in the broadcast space, a liturgical framework for this piety within broadcasts, and a pedagogy of religious educational broadcasting, was articulated by broadcasters, and came to be exhibited in broadcast worship for children. Such ideas and practices – informed as they were by pre-existing notions of childhood piety, trends in Sunday school teaching (increasingly shaped by the new psychologies of learning), and developments in religious education – reflected discourse and practices around the, now compulsory, act of school worship in England in the post-war period. The Rev'd John G. Williams, is of note in this context because his career bridges both religious broadcasting and religious education and he was of influence upon both. This paper will outline Williams' understanding of children's piety in his broadcasting and in published work, comparing this with challenges to his approach from the later prominent religious educator, John Hull, in his 1975 book, *School*

Worship: an obituary. Consideration is given to how ideas of childhood piety changed over time (between the 1940s and the 1970s) and across the boundaries of broadcasting and religious education, arguing that these mutual histories maybe informative of the other, in a changing religious context.

The paper will begin by describing the ethos of broadcasting, specifically the emergence of religious broadcasting as part of the the civilising mission of the BBC, which dominated the early decades at the BBC from 1922-. Outlining the shape of early religious broadcasting for children, the relationship of this to adult religious and school broadcasting, the paper will move to focus specifically upon contribution and significance of John Williams (amongst others) to this character and style of religious broadcasting for children. Williams' idea of childhood piety and adult-child relating in the context of broadcast religious formation will be elucidated and critiqued. Moreover, how schools and religious educators responded to the post-Second World War situation, in which school worship became for the first time compulsory, critical questions concerning the legitimacy and purpose of worship across the intervening years to the present will be evidenced and discussed. In particular, the critical climate of the 1960s and 70s, and the publication of John Hull's *School Worship: an obituary* will be reflected upon in light of the contrast between Williams' and Hull's advocated approaches. Additionally, that media and religious educational history may be informative of the other, specifically their respective role in shaping the public knowledge of religion, will be argued for.

I

In 1975 the highly influential religious educationist, John Hull, published his modernizing critique, *School Worship: an obituary*. In this volume Hull fiercely criticised existing and commonplace practices of worship in English maintained schools, which he regarded as: 'aggressively nurturing', 'un-educational', 'un-Christian', 'one of the worst features of religious education, and one of the most prominent reasons for the failure of

Christian nurture in the state school'.¹ He reserved his sharpest criticism of the *status quo* for the sometime religious broadcaster, John G. Williams', work *Worship and the Modern Child*, a book which for Hull epitomised the outmoded approach no longer tenable. Despite this critique, Hull called for a redefinition of corporate, compulsory, school worship, rather than its abandonment. In contrast to the purportedly 'indoctrinatory' approach taken by Williams, Hull held up the ideal that school worship could become a gathering which would: 'widen the pupil's repertoire of appropriate emotional response', 'encourage a reflective approach to living', 'demonstrate the values which are not controversial and upon which democratic society depends', and 'provide some experiences and understandings of what worship is so that the way of worship, along with other life styles, will remain an option for anyone who wishes to follow it'.² Such assemblies would 'not seek to secure commitment, nor to profess faith but to deepen understanding and facilitate choice'.³ Whether Hull's revisionist critique was fair to Williams I shall return to at the end of this paper.

II

Religion was a feature of British broadcasting from the outset, part of the BBC's 'civilising mission', the first religious broadcast being an act of worship from Whitechapel in London, on Christmas Eve, 1922, the year the British Broadcasting Company (as it was then called) began.⁴ Indeed, the BBC had as one of its core purposes the Christianising of the nation, not least due to the influence of its first Managing Director, the Scottish Presbyterian, John Reith, 'a young man to whom religion mattered a great deal'.⁵ Reith hoped that religious broadcasting would succeed where the churches had not in making religion of appeal to the masses, with a resultant revitalising effect on church attendance. Likewise, children's services were broadcast monthly from the 19

¹ Hull, John (1975) *School Worship: an obituary*. London: SCM Press, p.93.

² Hull, John (1975) *School Worship: an obituary*. London: SCM Press, p.118-119.

³ Hull, John (1975) *School Worship: an obituary*. London: SCM Press, p.136.

⁴ Bailey, M. (2007). 'He Who Hath Ears to Hear, Let Him Hear': Christian Pedagogy and Religious Broadcasting During the Inter-war Period. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. (University of Westminster, London), Vol. 4(1): 4-25, p.6.

⁵ Wolfe, K. (1984) *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation 1922-1956: the politics of broadcast religion*. London: SCM Press, p.3.

September, 1926. It was believed that these would have a similarly positive effect on the religious temper of the nation, listened to as they were by both children and families not affiliated to Sunday Schools.⁶ Broadcasters decided that the best mode of broadcasting to children was a dramatic presentation of scripture, and a style of service which would involve both a mix of child as well as adult voices. *For the Children*, beginning in 1929, was a combination scripture and drama, co-ordinated by Basil Yeaxlee and members of the Sunday-School Movement.⁷ In 1930, E.R. Appleton's dramatized *Joan and Betty's Bible Story* joined this early diet of Sunday religion for children, each programme timed to ensure it did not clash with the traditional Sunday-School hour.⁸ Religious educational broadcasting to schools was slower to get off the ground for a range of reasons, professional and denominational. Even after establishing a Central Council for Schools Broadcasting (CCSB), qualms that the use of religious broadcasts in schools might infringe teachers' liberty of conscience – because using such broadcasts would be tantamount to an approval of religion – were expressed by the *National Union of Teachers* and the *Association of Assistant Masters*.⁹ As a result, it was decided that religious educational broadcasts would only be for those fifteen or over, who it was understood would have requisite knowledge and maturity to 'appreciate the issues'; and it was affirmed that 'religious debates should be kept away from the classroom, at least in the broadcasts themselves'.¹⁰ It was as early as 1927 that the idea of a broadcast non-denominational act of worship for schools.¹¹ However, it was not until the Second World War that this idea should attain sufficient backing from the public, the churches, and broadcasters themselves to be given serious consideration. This was the background against which John G. Williams came to be appointed a religious broadcaster to children.

⁶ Briggs, A. (1965) *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom (Volume II): The Golden Age of Wireless*. Oxford: OUP, p.247.

⁷ *The British Broadcasting Corporation Fourth Annual Report*, 1930, p11.

⁸ Wolfe, K. (1984) *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation 1922-1956: the politics of broadcast religion*. London: SCM Press, pp.101-102.

⁹ Wolfe, K. (1984) *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation 1922-1956: the politics of broadcast religion*. London: SCM Press, p.105.

¹⁰ Wolfe, K. (1984) *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation 1922-1956: the politics of broadcast religion*. London: SCM Press, p.106-107.

¹¹ Wolfe, K. (1984) *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation 1922-1956: the politics of broadcast religion*. London: SCM Press, p.104.

III

John Gordon Williams, briefly a school teacher, then an Anglican cleric, trained for the ministry at the low-church Ridley Hall, Cambridge, serving curacies at S. Luke's Bermondsey (1932-1934), then Holy Trinity, Rotherhithe, where he built a reputation for devising imaginative children's worship, before joining the BBC in May 1940, just at the moment when the Corporation was seeking to respond to the 'new crusade' for religion in schools initiated by a leader in the *Times* of February 1940.¹² Williams went on to prove his indispensability, particularly by his involvement as a script writer and broadcaster of the five-minute *Epilogue* to the, by then established, children's programme, *Children's Hour*; the broadcast *Schools Service*, which began in the autumn of 1941;¹³ and later innovations, such as radio's *People's Service* – which included the singing of popular hymns and a sermon – and *Silver Lining*, a religious broadcast designed for the sick and housebound. For a decade, until 1950, as well being a leading religious broadcaster, Williams became the voice of children's religious broadcasting. Where other broadcasters were regarded as having a 'regrettable tendency towards variety-like vulgarity', Williams' was deemed direct and non-condescending.¹⁴ Some of Williams' broadcasts of the time were later published as *Children's Hour Prayers* (1948), *Listen on Wednesday* (1949) and *Switch on for the News* (1951). In addition, Williams produced a steady flow of books on popular spirituality, from the 1930s through to the 1960s. Taken

¹² Wolfe, K. (1984) *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation 1922-1956: the politics of broadcast religion*. London: SCM Press, p.216; Parker, S.G. (2010) 'Teach Them to Pray Auntie': Children's Hour Prayers at the BBC, 1940-1961. *History of Education* Vol. 35 (5), pp.659-676; Parker, S.G. (2012) Reinvigorating Christian Britain: the spiritual issues of the war, national identity, and the hope of religious education. In Parker, S.G. and Lawson, T. *God and War: the Church of England and armed conflict in the twentieth century*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp.61-79.

¹³ BBC WAC Central Council for School Broadcasting, Religious Service Suitable for Schools Minute Book, 1940-1945. A note from 25 July 1940 describes the tone which it is hoped the Schools Service will adopt. It should be: 'a model of beauty, dignity, reverence and simplicity, heard every week throughout the country. An act of corporate worship by thousands of children praising, thanking and praying to the Father of All... instruction should be directed not to the personal spiritual improvement of the individual child but to his understanding of the meaning, beauty and purity of the various elements of the corporate act of worship...not to individual action, or to any form of exhortation leading to action, for example, regular prayer or regular attendance at church etc., but to heightening the effect of the service itself, that is let the service speak for itself, don't let anyone intervene between the service and the child. Truth and beauty are great and will prevail, perhaps, unaided by the expositor.'

¹⁴ BBC WAC R11/26/1 File 1 Children's Hour Religious Programmes, 1940-1961 Epilogues and Prayers 1940-46, Geoffrey Dearmer to J.G. Williams, undated 1941.

as a whole these constitute a volume of guidance for adults engaged in fashioning children's spirituality and reflect Williams' idea of childhood piety.¹⁵

Williams' early broadcast *Epilogues* (which were bi-weekly during the war years); some later published verbatim in *Children's Hour Prayers*, ranged across themes in the Church's year. In these, Williams described himself as principally addressing young people between 11 and 15, conscious that younger children might be able to listen without 'feeling too much out of their depth' and that the older ones may 'listen with some profit'.¹⁶ He explained his approach in the broadcasts as one conscious of the 'intellectual doubts and queries' of young people, growing up in a scientific age in which 'the language of religion is rapidly becoming the language of a completely alien world'.¹⁷ In a somewhat counterintuitive way, Williams used radio to evoke 'a simple awareness of God and the claims of religion' and 'to encourage a habit of prayerful reflection' whilst at the same time complaining of the 'incessant noise and pace', which offered to fill 'every leisure moment with distraction' of modern culture.¹⁸ The liturgical shape of Williams' *Epilogues* was typically framed around an attention grabbing opening statement, elaborated upon in a personal story, with a reflection and prayer appended. It would be told in an unfussy conversational style, use direct personal experience, be honest about doubt, but reassuring in tone. The *Epilogues* were neither religiously radical nor contentious, the appeal to the listener perhaps lying more in their reference to real events and experiences.

Williams' principles of adult-child communication on religion were outlined in a series of articles published in the journal *Religion in Education*, later elaborated upon in the volume critiqued by Hull, *Worship and the Modern Child*. Essentially Williams' advice served to style the character of the relationship between adults and children in the context of informal religious education in the domestic setting, as well as the church and school

¹⁵ Williams also published: *God and His World* (1937); *The Life of Our Lord* (1939); *God and the Human Family* (1958); *Hungry World* (1961); *Thinking Aloud: Broadcast Talks* (1963); and *God in the Space Age* (1963).

¹⁶ Williams, J.G. (1948) *Children's Hour Prayers*. London: SCM, p.10

¹⁷ Williams, J.G. (1948) *Children's Hour Prayers*. London: SCM, p.11

¹⁸ Williams, J.G. (1948) *Children's Hour Prayers*. London: SCM, p.11

context. Across these articles, Williams' uses a series of everyday observations about children, which for him determine how children should be addressed on matters religious. His observations are not particularly profound, nor do they state any overt scholarly influences. However, his epigrammatic remarks allude, in summary, to a childhood characterised by a will to maturity; an expectation of authenticity in relating, adult-to-child; and the importance of adult role-models in religion. For Williams, priority is given to (religious) experience over rationality in younger children, the order of which is gradually reversed as children mature. Williams focuses upon the importance of the mother as the principal agent in children's religious formation. To elaborate, Williams observes that 'children possess an all-consuming ambition to be grown up. Peter Pan, he observes, is a monstrous abnormality' and 'in this desire to be grown up they will always imitate the behaviour of the grown up people whom they most admire.'¹⁹ By this, Williams was not arguing that childhood itself does not exist, rather that the child's will-to-mature, and desire for equal standing with adults, be taken seriously. Secondly, for Williams, early childhood is a critical time of religious education, particularly the child's relationship with its mother. It is not 'just a simple question of giving them religious instruction', in their early years (which for Williams is infancy to ten-years-old) what matters is not what they learn about religion, but 'what they come to feel about it'.²⁰ The divine, for Williams, is to be encountered first of all in a child's primary relationship, in ordinary life and exploration, then in the church. The example of parents (especially the mother), as a believer herself, is of greater influence upon the child than anything else. Williams argues: 'a child's very first impression of God will be derived from his relationship with his mother'.²¹ Thirdly, religion must be perceived by the child to be a thing that grown-ups do. For Williams, 'a child is capable of religious *feeling* before he is capable of a religious *thought*,'²² and it is this 'feeling' that lays the foundations of religious experience and religious knowledge: 'our aim from the earliest age onwards must be to surround him with a healthy and happy atmosphere of religion'.²³ Prayer should be a common act, something adults and children do together, not children alone.

¹⁹ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion I, *Religion in Education*, 18:3, 83.

²⁰ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion I, *Religion in Education*, 18:3, 83.

²¹ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion I, *Religion in Education*, 18:3, 84.

²² John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion I, *Religion in Education*, 18:3, 85.

²³ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion I, *Religion in Education*, 18:3, 84.

When it comes to understanding complex religious ideas, ‘never mind if he (sic) doesn’t understand, who does?’²⁴ Fourthly, as the child grows, Williams observes, ‘he begins to realise that the world is not as comfortable and friendly as he once thought...He is no longer the centre of his own secure little universe. Things are against him and he begins to know fear.’²⁵ Williams offers the following advice: ‘try at every point to meet a child’s fears and problems by giving him a sense of security in the face of an increasingly hostile world. If he gets the impression that God is hostile it will be all up with his religion’.²⁶ Equally, on death, heaven, hell and sex, Williams advises that responses be ‘within the limits of his (sic) understanding...[and such] that will satisfy his need for security and not disturb his trust’, but the answers must be ‘strictly true’: ‘we should never tell him (sic) anything that he (sic) will have to unlearn later’ even if filtering out the more complex ideas for now.²⁷ Moreover, Williams urges honesty with children on difficult questions, else ‘when he (sic) finds you have deceived him...he will not only despise your authority, but may even be inclined to despise all authority.’²⁸ Following the principle that children desire to be treated as equals, Williams contends that children’s deepest emotions should be taken seriously, and responded to with candour and without condescension. The role of adult is to be a spiritual guide to the child, helping the child to construct a realistic view on life, even if one which protects them by filtering out the more complex and postpones the difficult realities for the present. Having focused entirely upon the parent-child relationship as crucial to early religious education, in his final article in the series Williams turns to the question of the child and church attendance. Fifthly then, Williams argues that children cannot know what it means to be a Christian without church attendance being normalised for them, with the ultimate objective of church membership.²⁹ Inducting children into church attendance at a very young age, first as an experiential activity; then, preferably for Williams (as someone heavily influenced by the interwar Anglican Liturgical Movement) a Sung Eucharist, worship should be something done together with adults. Arguing that ‘our most powerful influence over our children is

²⁴ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion I, *Religion in Education*, 18:3, 86.

²⁵ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion (II), *Religion in Education*, 19:1, 15.

²⁶ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion (II), *Religion in Education*, 19:1, 16.

²⁷ John G. Williams (1951): The child's first steps in religion (II), *Religion in Education*, 19:1, 16 and 17.

²⁸ John G. Williams (1952) The child’s first steps in religion (II), *Religion in Education*, 19: 1, 17.

²⁹ John G. Williams (1952) The child’s first steps in religion (III), *Religion in Education*, 19:2, 56.

not what we say, but who we are,’ Williams concludes that ultimately ‘a child’s religion is largely a matter of the will not the emotions’.³⁰ ‘It is a psychological error’, Williams cautioned elsewhere, ‘to lay undue stress on a child’s immaturity. He may come to associate religion with the limitations of childhood, which provides a reasonable excuse for abandoning it when he gets older’.³¹

Leaving the BBC in 1950 to become Field Secretary of the Church of England National Society and its Schools’ Council, for three years Williams was able to utilise his reputation and experience of broadcasting at a time when – during the post-1944 Education Act period – schools were still adapting to the, now legal, requirement of a daily act of collective worship in English and Welsh schools. It was wisdom drawn from the likes of Williams that became instructive of how to do this, in, for example, his pamphlet *Leading School Worship* (1953) and his more extensive volume *Worship and the Modern Child* (1957 edn) each serving as manuals of advice to adults on how to lead worship with children authentically.

In the post-war period, the BBC responded to the 1944 mandate by continuing to broadcast its Religious Service for Schools, reporting on this and other interim developments to the Church of England’s Commission on Religious Education in Schools (chaired by Ian Ramsey, the then Bishop of Durham) much later, in 1967.³² Extending the original provision of a single broadcast (begun in wartime with Williams) to two in 1961 (a ‘Religious Service for Primary Schools’ and a service for secondary school pupils called ‘An Act of Worship’), the liturgical pattern of worship typically consisted of music before and after the service (usually classical), a modern folk song accompanied by guitar (popular with children), hymns (from the published BBC Hymns for Primary Schools), a dramatic ‘Interlude’, and a prayer (including the Lord’s Prayer). This packaged ‘BBC religion’ for children was put unevenly to use according to data collected for a report on religious education by the Institute for Christian Education, and

³⁰ John G. Williams (1952) The child’s first steps in religion (III), *Religion in Education*, 19:2, 59.

³¹ John G. Williams (1956) Religious Education: the Church of England and her children. *The Expository Times*, 67, 358.

³² BBC WAC R103/323/2 The School Broadcasting Council for the United Kingdom: Evidence for the Commission on Religious Education in Schools, 1967.

published in 1954. As a case in point, in the Birmingham area, few grammar schools used it; almost a third of secondary modern; less than one per-cent of Infant schools; but almost 20 per-cent of Junior schools did.³³ Even so, those that did use the service indicated its value, one school reported children's voluntary attendance at broadcast services, another that children enjoyed listening to it at home when away.³⁴

Even today, much of the tone and content of broadcast school worship has a profoundly Christian flavour, especially in the choice of music and songs. This fits with the character of current legislation, but belies the generally liberal and inclusive character of religious broadcasting overall. Why school worship has shown remarkable resilience to liberalising trends requires more detailed investigation. Moreover, as the modern era has progressed, and schooling increasingly governmentalized, so to an increasing degree the state – and public service broadcasting – have supplemented (perhaps even in some respects supplanted) the churches in educating (and religiously educating) the masses. This shift in the locus of religious education, the intersection between the churches, media and religious education, require further investigation in order to fully appreciate their mutual histories.

IV

Returning to John Hull's critique of Williams, these were three-fold. First, Hull critiques Williams' assertion that worship is not 'possible outside the provision which God has made within the sacramental life of his Church' and that therefore 'in school worship the claims of the Church must always be kept clearly in sight'.³⁵ Secondly, Hull critiques Williams' view that 'worship is the most powerful medium of all for communicating dogmatic truth...more powerful than the direct instruction of the classroom...teaching, that sink[s] most deeply into the subconscious mind and become the foundations of 'faith''.³⁶ For Hull this is nothing short of the indoctrination Williams' himself opposes.

³³ *Religious Education in Schools: the report of an inquiry made by the research committee for the Institute of Christian Education into the working of the 1944 Education Act* (1954). London: SPCK, pp.106-108.

³⁴ *Religious Education in Schools: the report of an inquiry made by the research committee for the Institute of Christian Education into the working of the 1944 Education Act* (1954). London: SPCK, p.107.

³⁵ Williams quoted in Hull, John (1975) *School Worship: an obituary*. London: SCM Press, p.92-93.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Finally, Hull rails against the compulsory nature of collective worship which forces ‘the uncommitted young person, who has no choice but to be there’.³⁷ Space does not permit a fuller discussion of the differences of opinion between Williams and Hull on school worship. Needless to say their principled positions – not least in an increasingly plural religious context – touch on persistently contentious issues. Notwithstanding the differences about what is appropriate in the school context, there are however many similarities between Williams’ and Hull’s ideas on religious education, particularly in the domestic sphere. Both Williams and Hull (after Rousseau) idealise the child as naturally innocent, ‘not yet contaminated by the false values and standards that prevail in our western civilization’, only corruptible by the poor counsel of the grown-ups around them who ‘create the future for the child’ rather than enable the child to devise its own.³⁸ Likewise each imagines that the emergent individual is motivated to an authenticity of adulthood that can only materialize within a context of free-inquiry: as John Hull expresses it, it is by: ‘enriching children’s vocabulary and, through conversation [that]...children [learn] to grapple...with the issues and experiences involved in God-talk’.³⁹ In religious education and worship, both Williams and Hull espouse the view that the child’s interests and questions arising from their growing experience be given pre-eminence. For Williams, the listening child and the worshipping child is a child active in its own spiritual meaning-making.

The line in the sand Hull drew in *an obituary* needs to be seen in the context of the broader revisionist discourse about the nature and purpose of religious education which he was at the centre of, and which are characteristic of the long 1970s.⁴⁰ In *an obituary*, Hull extends the discussion around the educational legitimacy of religious education to

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ J.G. Williams (1957 edn), *Worship and the Modern Child*. London: SPCK, p.5; John M. Hull (1975) *School Worship: an obituary*. London: SCM Press, p. 107.

³⁹ Hull, J. (1991). *God-talk with Young Children: notes for parents and teachers*. Birmingham: CEM, p.4.

⁴⁰ Parker, S.G. and Freathy, R.J.K. (2011) ‘Context, Complexity and Contestation: Birmingham’s Agreed Syllabuses since the 1960s’, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 32: 2, 247– 263; Parker, S.G. and Freathy, R.J.K. (2012) ‘Ethnic diversity, Christian hegemony and the emergence of multi-faith religious education in the 1970s’, *History of Education*, 41: 3, 381–404; Freathy, R.J.K. and Parker, S.G. (2013). ‘Secularists, Humanists and Religious Education: religious crisis and curriculum change in England, 1963-1975’, *History of Education*, 42: 2, 222-257.

include school worship. However, in doing so one wonders if he was differentiating too strongly between religious education in the home and religious community and the school, especially as the characteristics of religious education he espouses elsewhere, most notably in *God Talk With Young Children* starkly contrast with the more critical tones of *an obituary*.

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Coming out religiously Life Orientation in public schools

Abstract

In the post-pillarized society of the Netherlands, RE still is organized according to religious dividing lines. RE in confessional schools is compulsory Christian RE; in public schools, taking a neutral position with regard to religious traditions, RE is an optional subject, taught to pupils on parents' request. Nowadays, due to processes of modernization, globalization and individualization, the position of religion in society changes and subsequently its position in classes. That's why in public schools principals and teachers reflect upon their positionality regarding (religious and secular) worldview education. In this contribution we present our findings from document analysis and from (focus group) interviews with principals and observations in public schools, resulting in a plea for 'Life Orientation *for all*' as a compulsory subject in all schools for all pupils.

Introduction

A century of 'pillarized' education has resulted in a compulsory subject called 'Godsdienst/Levensbeschouwing' (Religious Education) in Christian (Catholic and Protestant) and Islamic primary schools. In public schools, being strictly *neutral*, differentiated confessional RE (GVO; 'Godsdienstig Vormings Onderwijs') is offered as an optional subject on request of the parents - this being a parent's right. In everyday school life this results in a selected group of pupils is separated from their classmates to attend the optional RE-lessons. The optional lessons RE/GVO aim at "informing children about Christianity (and other religions) and the Bible. By way of telling stories, making use of symbols and rituals, children gain insight in 'the world of faith'. Religious literacy facilitates children to reflect upon their own world view."¹ These classes are not covered by the school's responsibilities. This confessional RE is organized by external bodies, who bear the responsibility for their RE teachers' education. In a similar way as RE/GVO, 'Humanistisch Vormingsonderwijs' (HVO, Humanistic World View Education) is offered as an optional subject during school hours. HVO aims at "facilitating the development of values that are central in pupils' life orientation. They learn to make choices and to be responsible for their actions and the consequences; they are encouraged to communicate about what they think, experi-

¹ www.pcgvo.nl

ence, their will power and their actions. In HVO lessons children do not learn what to think, but learn to value thinking and reflection in itself.”² In everyday practice either RE/GVO or HVO is chosen and resulting from parents’ preferences only these two subjects are offered in public schools as an optional subject. Next to the above described different forms of RE, in all primary schools an objective informative subject is included in the curriculum called ‘Geestelijke Stromingen’ (GS; Religious and Philosophical World Views).³

At 56% of the public primary schools one or more types of RE (Christian, Islamic) or Humanistic World View Education is offered (for approximately 15% of all children). On 30% of the public schools the registered claim for denominational RE, Islamic RE or Humanistic Life Orientation could not be met.⁴

In these days the role of religion in the public domain is fiercely discussed. Decreasing membership of religious communities and an increase in interest in spirituality is noticeable.⁵ This development in society is reflected upon in public schools, which challenges the views on education with regard to ‘life issues’ as an essential and self-evident subject in the curriculum.

In this contribution we draw upon our empirical research, an analysis of policy documents and the interaction with principals of a foundation of 64 public primary schools in the harbor city of Rotterdam. Our case study shows how public schools in a metropolitan context explore possibilities to cope with this historically generated dilemma of ‘neutrality with regard to religion’ versus ‘the need for enculturation in a context of religious diversity’. ‘Coping with’ in this case shows itself as: actively pioneering, exploring and discussing possible ways to teach pupils to live together in diversity.

In general

People have to deal with existential questions, like ‘How do I cope with the loss of a family member?’ or: ‘Which training and what kind of profession should I choose?’. Asking these questions, and as a teacher in the classroom responding to them, is independent of a confessional or neutral identity of the school. Existential questions we see as an anthropological constant, to be dealt with by each teacher, in public schools as in any other school.

In spite of high working pressure and the urgency of maximizing learning performances, each teacher pays attention to a question of a pupil that might hide an important or even an existential issue. Differences in responding to pupils’ questions are easily observed, in all schools. Possibly, religiously affiliated schools (65% of the Dutch schools: Protestant, Catholic or Islamic schools) use a more explicit framework to explore with the pupils this type of questions, but self evidently such schools are not more confronted with pupils’ (existential) questions and they do not have an ex-

² www.humanistischverbond.nl

³ Zoontjes, Paul (2003). Bijzonder en openbaar onderwijs. In: Ton Bertens e.a. (red.), *Recht en religie*, Ars Aequi.

⁴ Aarsen, E.K., R.G.H. Hoffius, B. Verberne (2007). *Godsdienst en humanistisch vormingsonderwijs; Onderzoek naar huidig lesaanbod en verwachte vraag*. Leiden: Research voor Beleid.

⁵ Donk, W.B.H.J. van de, A.P. Jonkers, G.J. Kronjee, R.J.J.M. Plum (red.) (2006). *Geloven in het publieke domein. Verkenningen van een dubbele transformatie*. Amsterdam: University Press.

clusive approach to elaborate upon them. A teacher in a *public* school should in a similar way be sensitive to the importance of pupils' questions and subsequently take the decision if and how to pay attention to the question(s) raised.⁶ How to assess on the individual level? How to relate individual assessments to the collective identity of the public school? These are the questions we focus on in this contribution.

Identity of public schools

'Identity' in the Dutch educational context is strongly related to a school's religious affiliation. The idea that only religiously affiliated schools do have an identity was corrected by a study of Braster.⁷ In his dissertation Braster shows that 'neutrality' of public schools is an illusion and that a public school always has had a certain preference be it that this preference changes over time: from the more or less 'christian school following the Reformation' (*nota bene*: we are talking in those days about *public* schools⁸ to a school where commonly accepted social and christian values and virtues are taught, to a strict neutral school from the second half of the 19th century. Braster shows convincingly that the latter interpretation of neutrality has been very important in the course of the 20th century, with the (side-) effect that attention to religious traditions and beliefs was considered a taboo. On the basis of his historical analysis Braster concludes that the identity of the public school seems like a chameleon, the 'chameleon-hypothesis'. In his analysis, one quarter of the public schools represents an 'unbiased market-place' of philosophies and religions, as one would expect from the idea of 'active pluralism'. The vast majority of public schools adapts largely to contextual factors, like e.g. the context of the school (neighbourhood). Braster distinguishes a public school with many migrant children, making multiculturalism to a core issue, or a public school in a conservative Christian context (like the so called 'Bible Belt'), that pays a lot of attention to Christianity and national cultural festivities. So, different public schools have different identities. These differences show similarities with the differences in identities of confessional schools. A protestant school in the inner-city of Rotterdam differs profoundly from a protestant school in the Veluwe-region, which is part of the 'Bible Belt'.⁹ The pillarized structure of the Dutch educational system is under debate.¹⁰

⁶ Todd, Sharon (2007). Teachers judging without scripts, or thinking cosmopolitan. In: *Ethics and Education*, 2:1, 25 — 38.

⁷ Braster, J.F.A. (1996). *De identiteit van het openbaar onderwijs*. PhD thesis. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.

⁸ Ter Avest, Ina, Cok Bakker, Gerdien Bertram-Troost & Siebren Miedema (2007). Religion and Education in the Dutch pillarized and post-pillarized educational system: historical background and current debates. In: Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime (Eds.). *Religion and Education in Europe; Developments, Contexts and Debates*. Münster/New York/München/Berlin: Waxmann.

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¹⁰ Ter Avest, Ina, Cok Bakker, Gerdien Bertram-Troost & Siebren Miedema (2007). Religion and Education in the Dutch pillarized and post-pillarized educational system: historical background and current debates. In: Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime (Eds.). *Religion and Education in Europe; Developments, Contexts and Debates*. Münster/New York/München/Berlin: Waxmann.

Ter Avest, I. & S. Miedema (2010). Noodzaak tot recontextualisering van onderwijsvrijheid vanuit (godsdienst)pedagogisch perspectief. In: *Tijdschrift voor Onderwijsrecht & Onderwijsbeleid*. September-December 2010, p. 77-88.

Heading towards ‘Religious Education for all’

in documents:

In public schools, in the context of the plural Dutch society, many questions are raised about the school’s identity and more specifically about the way to establish a relation between optional confessional RE, the compulsory subject ‘Religious and Philosophical Worldviews’ and teachers’ ways to respond to pupils’ existential questions. The question is whether ‘*active pluralism*’ should result in the public school as a ‘market place’ of diversity, or as a ‘meeting place’, a place where pupils, teachers and parents learn to live together, respecting differences.¹¹ All policy and decision making should be related to a well-thought vision on diversity, being aware of the fact that whatever position taken it always is contested.

In the following we mention some observations, based on the analysis of recent policy documents of umbrella organizations of public education (‘Vereniging voor Openbaar Onderwijs’, VOO, Foundation for Public Education, and ‘Vereniging van Openbare en Algemeen toegankelijke scholen’, VOS/ABB, Foundation of Public and General Education). Next to that our observations are based on our involvement in coaching and research activities the Rotterdam foundation for public education.

In the publication “*Levensbeschouwing: juist in het openbaar onderwijs!*” (Life Orientation: right so in public education!) of VOS/ABB, it is indicated that philosophical and religious education of the pupil is an important task of the public school. Reference is made to Grimmitt’s distinction of ‘teaching *in*, *about* and *from* religion’ to clarify the organization’s point of view.

In this document the option ‘*into*’ is reserved to characterize Christian and Islamic RE. In this document it is stated that RE can not be the school’s responsibility, but should be cherished and maintained because of the realization of ‘active pluralism’. The option ‘*about*’ focuses on the transfer of phenomenologically based knowledge about different secular and religious worldviews. Teaching about the variety of religious and secular worldviews should be taught in the subject ‘*Geestelijke stromingen*’ (Religious and Philosophical Worldviews).

Finally the document of VOS/ABB pays attention to the option ‘*from*’. On this point recent policy making in public education is innovative: a plea is made that *all* children should learn to recognize, acknowledge and discuss philosophical and religious worldviews and experiences under the guidance and responsibility of the school’s (!) class teacher. The aim is socialization into the Dutch multicultural and multireligious society.

in teacher education

At teacher training colleges there is an option – in order to become qualified for teaching in religiously affiliated primary schools - for student-teachers to enroll in courses for an additional diploma RE. In addition to that at some teacher training colleges such a program has been developed for teaching in *public* schools, focusing on the specific neutral/active plural character of public schools. The public school, being ‘neutral’ in a context of diversity, requires that a teacher is aware of the meaning of

¹¹ Skeie, G. (2001). Citizenship, identity politics and religious education. In: H.-G. Heimbrock, C.T. Scheilke & P. Schreiner (Eds.), *Towards Religious Competence. Diversity as a challenge for Education in Europe*. Münster: LIT.

‘neutrality’ in the school, as well for her/him self, and is trained to reflect thereupon. This changing approach is illustrated by an interesting document concerning the competencies of teachers, in particular those teachers teaching at public schools (in: ‘Daarom! Openbaar onderwijs verbindt’, *That’s why! Public education brings children together*). This document includes an informative instrument for self evaluation.¹² The document raises the following interesting points:

- (...) the acknowledgment that religious and philosophical traditions are determined by cultural components; that they play a role in the mutual encounters of children and teachers, and that they therefore deserve attention (p. 3);
- (...) the observation that ‘views on life and religion’ are pictured as one of the five core values of public education (p. 6);
- (...) the remark that a public school teacher must be prepared and equipped to reflect upon his/her own life orientation and relate this to an own professional identity and work concept;
- (...) the additional comment that individual reflections are expected to be related to the corporate, collective identity of their public school (p. 19).

In short: philosophies of life and religion are taken seriously and acknowledged as being of fundamental influence. At the same time traditions are understood as differentiated in itself and perceived as dynamic constructions.

in public schools

In dialogue with the board of governors of the above mentioned Rotterdam foundation of public schools, and well informed by the results of quantitative research (inventories), observations, interviews with teachers and focus group interviews with pupils, and in close cooperation with ten pioneering public primary schools, we present the following points of attention (re)thinking RE in public schools.

Principals and teachers are not happy with the situation that for the optional classes in RE (Christian and Islamic, GVO) and Humanistic World View Education (HVO), children are separated according to their parents’ wish for confessional or humanistic education. From a pedagogical point of view principals fear that this way of organizing separated RE/HVO paves the way to segregation. Besides, principals are not happy with the pedagogical strategies of (most of) the RE and HVO teachers. Next to that, and as far as principals and teachers know about it, they state that there is insufficient monitoring on the content of RE/HVO by the organizations that are responsible for these classes. RE/HVO classes give principals and teachers a feeling of not being in control of (part of) their pedagogical task. They believe a school should support the personal, moral and (religious or secular) worldview development of *all* pupils.

As a response to present days’ feelings of uncertainty regarding the (religious or secular) worldview development of *all* pupils, in public schools a variety of solutions is explored. These innovative responses were developed by principals and teachers in an informal process of ‘action research’, in the context of their own school. Below we present three different ways of public schools in Rotterdam responding to their task of qualification, enculturation and subjectification¹³ of all pupils as future citizens of a multicultural society.

¹² www.openbaaronderwijs.nu

¹³ Biesta, G. (2012). *Goed onderwijs en de cultuur van het meten*. Den Haag: Boom Lemma Uitgevers.

philosophy with children

Principals and teachers favoring this solution make space in their curriculum for classes in Philosophy, for all children, during school hours. Characteristic for this approach is the teacher's attitude of 'listening to the voice of the child'.¹⁴ Using the techniques of Philosophy a variety of themes can be explored, amongst them the theme of religious and secular worldview traditions. In these schools Christmas and Easter, as well as the King's birthday and Liberation day, are celebrated as Dutch festivities; time is scheduled for these festivities in the curriculum. Ramadan or other religious festivals are not scheduled in the curriculum, although a class teacher may pay attention to Ramadan in classroom conversations.

education in encounter

Sharing what is in common in the different religious and secular world view traditions is the aim of this approach. Often this approach is accompanied by a method for the development of 'social competencies' and a training of pupils in mediation. The focus is on getting to know 'the other' and learning to live respectfully together. The classes in Encounter are given by a specialized teacher (a theologian) in close cooperation with the class teacher. The class teacher by way of her presence during the Encounter classes shows to the pupils her interest in the subject. Next to that being there enables the class teacher to refer to themes and situations that were explored during the Encounter classes, for example during classes Citizenship Education.

differentiated classes

A third group of 'solutions' to the experienced urgency with regard to RE/HVO is found by organizing differentiated classes in different periods during the year: a period for Christian RE, a period for Catholic RE, a period for Islamic RE and a period for Humanistic HVO. Also in this solution principals and teachers are convinced of the fact that separating children for different classes is unacceptable from a pedagogical point of view since the school has to prepare for living *together* in the context of a divers society. The different classes in different periods are given for all children, preferably by a specialized teacher.

In each of the above presented solutions the role of the teacher, be it a specialized teacher or the classroom teacher, is pivotal. To respond in an adequate way, the teacher has to be competent in acting 'on the spot',¹⁵ and that a teacher must have reflected upon her own positionality with regard to existential questions and the variety of coping mechanisms different people have developed – either or not in dialogue with (religious and/or secular) worldview traditions.

In conclusion

Structural attention is needed for pupils' worldview development as an aspect of identity development – in all schools, be it religious affiliated schools or public schools.

¹⁴ McKenna, U., J. Ipgrave, R. Jackson (2008). *Inter Faith Dialogue by Email in Primary Schools. An Evaluation of the Building E-bridges Project*. Münster: Waxmann.

¹⁵ Todd, Sharon(2007). Teachers judging without scripts, or thinking cosmopolitan. In: *Ethics and Education*, 2:1, 25 — 38.

Principals mention the following aspects that need attention for the implementation of 'life orientation' for all pupils during school hours.

In the first place principals are not sure whether teachers are well enough personally prepared and professional equipped to take their new role in 'Life Orientation *for all*' and fulfill the pedagogical task of facilitating the worldview development of all their pupils – irrespective of and respecting the different cultural and religious backgrounds of the pupils. A point of attention is a lack of knowledge of world view traditions, next to the fact that (most of the) teachers themselves have not (yet) reflected upon their own positionality with regard to the variety of religious and secular worldview traditions. Their own 'coming out religiously' is 'work in progress'.

An other aspect is the lack of development of teachers' competence of dialogicality – with colleagues, pupils and parents. Coaching on dialogicality is preconditional for the implementation of 'Life Orientation *for all*'.¹⁶

Last but not least (most of the) teachers lack knowledge about the theoretical aspects of worldview development, and subsequently they lack a repertoire of actions to facilitate that development, answering the actual developmental need of the pupil and scaffolding the pupil to a 'next-to-the-comfort-zone' phase of his or her (religious or secular) world view development.

Taking as a starting point that commitment to a (religious and secular) world view is at the base of one's positionality in all domains of life, we plea for 'Life Orientation *for all*' as a compulsory subject for *all* children in *all* primary schools. To prepare teachers for this pedagogical task, in the curricula of teacher training programs 'coming out religiously' should be prioritized.

¹⁶ TerAvest, Ina & Cok Bakker (2009). Structural Identity Consultation: Story telling as a Culture of Faith Transformation. *Religious Education*. 104.3 (May), 257-271.

TerAvest, Ina, Cok Bakker & Siebren Miedema (2008), Different schools as narrative communities; Identity narratives in threefold. In: *Religious Education*. 103/3, p. 307-322.

Children ‘coming out religiously’: Power and the acceptable limits of choice in Ireland’s education system

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Abstract

This empirical paper examines, from a critical sociological perspective, the dimensions of power through which children come to identify religiously in and through schools in the Republic of Ireland. The data presented is taken from a major qualitative study titled *Making Communion: Disappearing and Emerging Forms of Childhood in Ireland*. The Irish Research Council funded this project.

The specific focus of this paper is the power-laden constitution of subjects of religious ‘choice’. The paper examines the subtle ways in which various groups and individuals: children, working class and racialised minorities, are subject to preconditions about ‘choice’ of religious identity.

It is argued that the discourse of coming to ‘choose’ religion reifies religion and religious identities as foundational, static truths with universal, rather than particular or negotiable tenets. We find that while it is frequently legitimate for adults to regard children as not capable of religious choice or ‘real’ religious identification, the classed codes and racialisations through which authentic religiosity is produced is far more subtle, yet no less exclusionary in school contexts. Two conclusions are drawn. First, the universalizing concept of ‘choice’ by itself produces hidden inequalities and cannot alone regulate school access in a fair manner. Second, I argue that curricula must offer the opportunity to explore the power dynamics through which religious identifications are essentialised and delimited in generationed, classed and racialised ways.

The Irish education context

In recent decades, formal affiliation to the Catholic Church across the island of Ireland has declined, and questions of what constitutes belonging to ‘Irish’ society have altered course, due in no small part to globalisation processes (Inglis 2007; O’Connor 2008). Ireland is not unique in having to negotiate such changes. However, the *de facto* operations of its school system makes Ireland unique in terms of what it means to grow up in state-funded education, and to ‘come out religiously’. Ireland’s elementary schools are not state-controlled: the state supports various patron bodies in the establishment of their own schools. While appearing to be inclusive and adaptable, historically, this ‘deregulated’ education provision has been most advantageous to the Catholic Church (Akenson 1970; Inglis 1987). Despite declines in Catholic religious observance, 91% of elementary/primary schools funded by the state remain under Catholic patronage. They retain the legal right to hire and fire certain teachers and enroll certain children over others, in accordance with their stated ethos.

While reticent about change, the politics of Catholic Church and wider state educational reform have led certain bishops to agree that *some* Catholic schools be divested to the state, so that alternative patrons, such as the popular Educate Together multid denominational school movement, might take their place. The 2009-2012 report of the advisory committee to the state *Forum on Patronage and Pluralism* has made a number of recommendations, which focus particularly on allowing parents in certain areas to express what choice of patron they would prefer for their local school (Coolahan et al. 2012). This circulation and embedding of the discourse of ‘school choice’ and ‘religious preference’, and what it means for children, is a key focus of the current study. In short, the argument is that ‘choice’ becomes a marketised, bureaucratic governing technology beyond issues of religious identity *per se*, that delimits the field of what can be recognised and validated as religion and religious identity.

Conceptualising ‘coming out religiously’

The period since 2007 has seen a resurgence in communications media debate over the place of the religious in Irish primary education (Irish Independent 2007; O’Toole 2009; Sheridan 2012). 48 hours after his appointment as Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD announced that he would be ‘pressing on with’ the establishment of a Forum on School Patronage

As an immediate priority. The focus of the forum will be on identifying the methods and processes by which schools can be transferred from Catholic patronage in order to create greater diversity and choice (Quinn 2011).

Twinning modernist and mercantile themes, and subsuming the former under the latter, public debate has developed a legacy of privileging the metaphor of ‘free school choice’ as a minimalist guarantee of equality of access for parents since the 1960s (O’Sullivan 2005). The modernist nation-state management of ‘religious and belief systems’ is the hallmark of the subsequent Forum Advisory Group’s report (Coolahan et al. 2012). The

‘balancing of rights’ is described as a matter of the orderly functioning of democracy in the report, with frequent deployment of a universal interpretation of international human rights discourse. The report recommends that the state divest some schools away from this church in favour of other patrons in a phased manner. It alludes to the politics of class interests and school geographies, by explicitly noting that belief systems may not be the foundational preoccupation of (Catholic) families in their orientation towards education. It also includes research with young people on their experiences of religion, ethics and education. However, it persists in locating the power of that divesting ‘within’ families and their choices: parents were recently surveyed locally on their preference of patron, symbolically using ‘parent power’, via the state, to transform local school spaces (Coolahan et al. 2012).

Research on religious agency in childhood and youth that draws predominately on relational, subjective and socio-economic/materialist perspectives has become a quickly growing social research focus in recent years. Such work questions privatised, adult-centric accounts of religious identification in childhood that present children as passive recipients of petrified knowledge (REMC 2008; Hopkins et al. 2011). Hemming and Madge (2012) conceptualise child religious identity as four-fold “(1) affiliation and belonging; (2) behaviours and practices; (3) beliefs and values; and (4) religious and spiritual experiences” (2012: 40). This approach attempts to situate intersections of ‘religious identity’ within the micro and macro-politics of wider identification processes. More specific empirical examples include Devine (2009) and Moinian (2009). From a cultural-materialist perspective, Devine (2009) analyses the ways migrant children and families in Ireland develop social and cultural capital through ‘Arabic’ weekend schooling and Nigerian Pentecostal churches. Devine (2009) notes how certain children may overtly contribute to the process of family ‘capital accumulation’ in education by acting as interpreters for parents, a practice which somewhat subverts the traditional intergenerational ordering of home-school and adult-child relationship. This interaction of meaning-making, symbolic and material resources emphasises the importance of capitals and the ways they are deployed to define ‘religiosity’ and difference in specific spaces of struggle such as the school (and schoolyard), church, and home/neighbourhood. Moinian’s (2009) account of five Swedish-born children of Iranian parents is a useful case which demonstrates further complexities of children’s religious becoming. She notes how their experience of ‘Swedish’, ‘Iranian’, ‘Muslim’ and other spaces (home, school, peer cultures and leisure activities) to a large degree explain their rejection of a coherent identity; in order to explain themselves, the ‘insist on a non-identity (human being, just me!), an incomplete and ongoing construction of self’ (Moinian 2009: 45). While I agree with Moinian’s reading of the children’s agency/meaning-making, it is also arguable that the possibility of ‘being a complex child self’ may be closed down by the impossibility of interpellating such a self in adult-centric discourse. The children’s individualised erasure of their multiple positioning across different spatial orders (“I’m just me!”) may have greater costs than for them, than for those children who approximate unitary imaginings of ‘Swedishness’.

What does this complexity mean for ‘coming out religiously?’ The assumption of normative criteria admissible under ‘being religious’ often cites one of two discourses. On the one hand, it can suggest an overly-rational individual subject who freely ‘chooses’

to follow a prescriptive, static set of religious values, without reference to the technologies of discipline (materially and culturally situated religious symbols, rituals, spaces) that produce *certain* subjectivities as truly religious (or Catholic, Muslim, etc.), and not others. On the other, it can suggest uniformly dominated subjects of (religious) ideology, without reference to the relative material status and social influence that different people exercise within a given religious group. Instead of suggesting that there is a core to citizens that is lacking in children (i.e. essentially incapable of making religious meaning), or present in them (i.e. they are entirely rational ‘choosers’ of religious identity), we can think about a decentred child subject who is actively constituted in and through *particular governing rationalities/discursive practices* through which they are afforded and take up particular subject positions (Kitching 2014). My argument is that the hidden limitation of the technology of ‘choice’ is that it often produces children as passive recipients of petrified religious/moral knowledge from adults who somehow embody universally religious (e.g. Catholic) truths.

The Making Communion study

The research was conducted during the 2012-2013 school year with children, young people, parents, and older community members in rural, town and suburban areas of Ireland. It was funded under the Irish Research Council Collaborative Projects Scheme 2012-13. Fieldwork took place in a range of Catholic and multi-denominational (ethnically and religiously homogenous and heterogeneous) school settings, and also in the offices of an outreach and campaigning organisation run by members of the Travelling Community. While focus group and individual interviews were conducted with young people and adults, a range of qualitative strategies was used with the children at the center of the study: those of ‘Communion’ age (7-8 years old). This included talking to children during role-play, examination of digital videos and photos, drawing, mapping localities, and creating comic-strip stories.

Using ‘choice’ as a metaphor for religious identification: 4 limits of the discourse

The data (not included in this paper but discussed at the meeting) demonstrates the embedding of a concept of rational, individual ‘choice’ through the discursive practices of both adults and young people. ‘Choice’ was presented as a metaphor for how one comes, or *should* come to identify with a particular faith or set of values in modern Ireland. Rather than assume the discourse of ‘choice’ unilaterally enacts religious freedom, the analysis shows four dimensions of power through which it can be worked to legitimise and realise particular ways of ‘becoming religious’ in childhood, and to suppress others, or even render them unthinkable.

1. Interviews with parents, teachers and young people constantly articulated the discourse of an acceptable age limitation on ‘choice’ of religious identification. Across schools, it was largely unthinkable for children to ‘choose’ to identify religiously. But the metaphor of choice did not capture the complexity of child religious identifications, and it concealed at times, the ambivalence of adults’ identifications. The child-level data echoes Hemming and Madge’s (2012) conceptualisation of child religious identity as multi-faceted. Far from a notion of choosing to ‘be or not be’ religious, both adults and children placed differential emphases on affiliation and belonging, beliefs and values, behaviours

and practices and religious and spiritual experiences in situated ways. But as points 2-4 suggest, it was more controversial to discuss other limitations on choice that might complicate its decontextualised, ahistorical rationality.

2. The discourse of choice worked to delimit the possibilities for how children ‘come out religiously’ in terms of how it *re-centralized the status of Catholic schools* and Catholic culture in the areas we visited. Despite the limited alternatives available, Catholic schools were frequently regarded as schools ‘of choice’ both by parents and Catholic school staff. Schools operating under other patrons often had to adapt the strategies they used (e.g. after school classes) to suit Catholics above other communities.

3. For certain immigrant (particularly Nigerian) parents, it was not possible to openly discuss race politics with the school or religious institution. Such politics led some to convert their children to Catholicism, while attending Pentecostal church, in order to belong to the dominant Catholic school community and the wider legacy of cultural Catholicism in Ireland (Inglis 2007).

4. Echoing McGrail (2007), classed codes of respectability operated through the manner in which families should present their children for Communion (e.g. dress, behaviour in church etc.), causing tensions between clergy and community regarding the expression of complex forms of religious identification in consumer societies.

Implications

The paper’s analysis of the dimensions of power through which child and various adults’ religious identities are produced ‘troubles’ Taylor’s (2007) notion of coming ‘out’ to an ‘authentic’ religious/other identity. It traces the tension of how notions of authentic religiosity suggest their opposite: inauthentic, or illegitimate aspects to identification. Such ‘illegitimate’ aspects may include a confrontation of social class, race and adult-child dynamics in the composition of school populations. From a social justice perspective, it is vital to confront the complexities of how children ‘come out religiously’ through state-sponsored education, both in policy and pedagogy.

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Inviting Young Adults to Come Out Religiously,
Institutionally and Traditionally

Abstract

In recent years, sociologists of religion and research organizations have compiled a picture of the sense and sensibilities of young adults. This paper focuses on three major facets of the portrait generated from the research: young adults are 1. spiritual , not religious, 2. anti-institutional, anti church, and 3. apathetic, if not dismissive, of tradition. The paper offers a counter argument, a critical and constructive educational response and correction to each facet of the mosaic. It advocates the re-appropriation of the religious, the institutional and tradition as indispensable for reopening access to young adults to participate in our social and public spaces.

Today’s youth and young adults and people of my (Silent) generation are not, in post-modern rhetoric, radically other, strange, foreign or alien to one another. We do share a common humanity, but, at the same time, in some ways, we are, in the words of Oliver Brennan, cultures apart (Brennan 2001). Something is lost and something is gained on both sides of this apartness ...for each generation.

Developmental life-stages can be understood as a never-ending process of loss and gain, or, in language I would prefer, of dying and rising. For each generation, something is relinquished, and something (hopefully) resurrected into new forms of life – if the developmental passages are successfully negotiated (Whitehead, E&J. 1979).

The thesis of this paper is a rather simple one. Its modest claim is: all wisdom is not in the present. He or she who forgets the past forfeits the future. This is a core educational premise and presupposition...and needs to be kept in mind in our ministry and education with youth and young adults today. Two educational principles follow from this premise: 1. we must meet (young) people where they are, and 2. we need to invite and lead them out to where they can become.

This viewpoint is in accord with the educational philosophy of Neil Postman in his book, Teaching as a Conserving Activity (1979). Postman proposes what he calls a thermostatic theory of education. A thermostat, he explains, is a mechanism for triggering opposing forces. Its job is to make what is too warm cooler and too cool warmer. A thermostat, in short, releases a counter argument. One might say, it is in a dialectical relationship with its environment (19). For Postman, it is an apt metaphor. “Education”, he writes, “is best conceived of as a thermostatic activity. From this point of view, education tries to conserve tradition when the rest of the environment is innovative. Or, it is innovative when the rest of the society is tradition-bound ... The function of education is always to offer the counter argument, the other side of the picture. The thermostatic view of education is not ideology centered. It is balance centered. Its aim at all times is to make visible the prevailing biases of a culture” (19-20). “Our culture,” Postman asserts, “is overdosing on change”. “We know very well”, he notes, “how to change but we have lost the art of preservation. Without at least a reminiscence of continuity and tradition, without a place to stand from which to observe change, without a counter argument to the over whelming thesis of change, we can easily be swept away”(21). Schools, and churches, then, ought to serve as society’s memory banks...putting forward the case for what is not happening in culture. Postman’s argument is conservative, but it is not what passes for (or masquerades as) conservative in some political or ecclesiastical circles today i.e. superficial right wing zealotry. On the contrary, his position is deeply (radical) conservative.

In that spirit, this paper is “conceived of as a thermostatic activity”. It offers a counter argument over against what I perceive as some of the losses, flaws or distortions in contemporary youth and young adult culture, especially in relation to the life of our Christian churches. However, do not mis-read or understand me too quickly here. This is not a jeremiad against young people. It is simply to make the argument that some corrections (or restoration of balance) need to be made... and when they are, young adults may have a better opportunity to grow in wisdom, age and knowledge before God and humankind in our social and public life.

In recent years, sociologists of religion (e.g. Christian Smith 2005; Robert Wuthnow 2007) and other research organizations (The Pew Research Center 2008, 2010) have offered a portrait of the sense and sensibilities of young people. This data is invaluable. Ministerially and educationally, it warrants serious consideration and response. This paper focuses on three facets of the portrait that consistently appears in nearly all the studies. The portrait that has emerged is: young people are 1. spiritual, not religious, 2. anti-institutional/ anti-institutional church, and 3. apathetic or dismissive of tradition. We can distinguish these three elements, but, in practice, they overlap, intertwine and are inter-related.

The paper’s thesis is: these three characteristics if true – even in a rough form – need educational correction. We will take each up in turn.

1. Spiritual, Not Religious

What are we to make of the mantra: “I’m spiritual, not religious” ...so associated, but not exclusively, with millennials? This sentiment is increasingly common in modern Western society. It postulates that individuals should fashion their unique relationship with God, mediated only through their own human experience, without belonging to any religious form or structure. Data paradoxically shows: people’s private prayer life is growing although the impact of religion on their lives is diminishing (Gallup and Lindsay; Roof).

“I’m spiritual” has come to connote a journey of self-discovery, the fashioning of a coherent inner “spiritual self” without formal religious affiliation. This search for a coherent inner “self” is meant to sustain one through the upheavals of life’s personal passages. This journey of self-discovery creates a space for attending to one’s inner growth, on one’s own flexible terms, and of one’s own choosing. The goal is to arrive at a sense of one’s own uniqueness, authenticity and truth. This journey may be undertaken within a given religious system, but where the mantra currently prevails, the quest tends to be pursued in an autonomous and eclectic fashion without any formal religious affiliation.

On the other hand, being “religious” often connotes today being “rigid”, “uptight”, “dogmatic” “close-minded” (Roof). Institutional church, with its creeds, codes and clerical hierarchical structures, seems too confining for many. They do not wish to make the commitment required by active membership in any organized religion. What has emerged here is the uncoupling of the spiritual from the religious. Robert Wuthnow captures this shift when he notes: traditional spirituality dwelt in the settled patterns of received truths and time honored traditions. This has given way, he writes, to a new “spirituality of seeking” in which people negotiate and construct their own (spiritual) meanings(3-4). In this regard, William Dinges observes, “For many contemporary Christians, ‘care of the soul’ has become divorced from any meaningful or compelling connection to a disciplined community or to an organized historical tradition. [It] has assumed an eclectic and do-it-yourself quality. Spirituality has become an element in the culture of ‘preference’, a ‘life-style’ choice...The spiritual quest is a purely individual task divorced from institutional loyalties and commitment and devoid of any form of hierarchical control or social inheritance”(218). This shift creates a new dualism or split and presents immense challenges for our churches. It also calls for new ministerial and educational strategies. But first we must understand the origin of the split ... and the current infatuation with the spiritual.

Spirituality, as we’ve observed, is undergoing a widespread renaissance. The interest is phenomenal and touches multiple levels in our society. On the academic level, there has been a resurgence of interest in historical figures, Christian mystics, such as Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, Hildegard of Bingen, and Ignatius of Loyola. Among popular audiences, books on spirituality regularly hit the best seller list and have their own section in every large bookstore. TV audiences can tune in daily to Oprah, Suzie Orman or Deepak Chopra for discussions on how to integrate the spiritual with love, sex, marriage, work and monetary success. A growing number of persons are engaging in mind-body practices such as yoga, meditation, Tai Chi and Zen mindfulness exercises. Is this interest in the spiritual just a passing fad? Does it offer people rich resources for navigating life’s challenges or is it illusionary? Or is it a mix of both? And where did this eruption of the spiritual come from?

The new spirituality addresses the novel situation of the present. There is a hunger, a quest (in people’s lives) beyond the material. In this sense, the quest for a spiritual life can be seen as a genuine prophetic protest against a dehumanizing culture and some meaningless forms of religion. Anthony Giddens views this quest as a prime manifestation of late modern culture. In their private lives, people are increasingly cut off from the bonds of traditional social institutions (e.g. extended family and local communities) where they are free to do whatever they want. In the public sphere, they are dominated by highly impersonal bureaucratic (economic, political, health care) institutions. Where can people feel anchored today? They face the challenging task

of individually constructing some kind of coherent “inner self” that can sustain them through the upheavals and turbulences of modern life. Giddens writes: they “are forced to negotiate life style choices among a diversity of options” (5). And more and more people are going about this task without the benefit of membership in traditional religious institutions. Why? Because it is not a credible and meaningful option for them. This sends them outside institutionalized religion to have their spiritual thirst quenched. And the new spirituality attempts to respond to their deep yearnings.

Spirituality today, in all its multiple forms, is seen as the great unifier. It is based on the notion of holism. The vague all inclusive meaning of the term is seen as an advantage. Moran and Harris writes: “the driving force behind the emergence or re-emergence of the spiritual is the desire for a unifying idea. There is a deeply felt need for something that would overcome the fragmentary character of contemporary life”(106). Dualisms abound: body-soul, religious-secular, human-nature, science-religion, East-West. The “new spirituality” holds the promise of healing the world’s splits. However, caution is needed here. A premature jump into unity may be illusionary. Glittering generalities may be deceptive. The vague all inclusive meanings of spirituality can float into abstractions in spite of some of the creative and well-meaning practices that function under its canopy today.

However, with its current amorphous meaning spirituality can mean just about anything – except, of course, religion. There is fuzziness, a Disneyland, cafeteria style choosing, an eclecticism to some forms of contemporary spirituality – a little piece of Zen, a dash of Yoga, a sprinkling of Oriental meditation mixed with some elements of the Jewish and Christian tradition. It can simply become another consumer item for self-fulfillment: a form of “The Gospel according to ‘Me’ ” (Critchley and Webster). Luke Timothy Johnson notes, “a great deal of what calls itself spirituality these days is more psychic self-grooming than engagement with the Holy Spirit of God” (Johnson, 30). William Dinges, agreeing with these sentiments, writes: “in the context of a cultural setting dominated by an ethos of therapy and narcissisms, spirituality has also been readily conflated with psychology... religious symbols in such a milieu are readily transformed into therapeutic ones. Faith is reduced to another mode of self-help therapy or a tool-kit mechanism for meeting psychological needs related to individual affirmation, personal growth, personal fulfillment, or the perennial American quest to reinvent the self”(219). This is one of the dangers in the new spirituality. This can lead to disastrous escapism and spirituality devoid of firm roots. And this is the result of the divorce of spirituality from religion – and why it is in critical need of religion and its set of religious practices.

Religion, with all its flaws, can act as a wise restraint upon our spiritual drive, and, at the same time, nourish us with centuries of (external) religious practices. We have a living Christian tradition of the contemplative life, spiritual classics and spiritual guides to direct us on the way. The Christian religion, at its best, offers an embodied spirituality rooted in the concrete, and imbedded in the particularities of our own human experience. It is radically incarnational and profoundly historical as it directs us in justice to repair the world. If personal spirituality is to be both sustaining in the long run and transformative of the larger society, then, it needs to be imbedded in a larger religious institution which provides a core/master narrative and rituals that offer an interpretative framework for one’s life from birth to death. In other words, our internal spiritual quest (for a coherent self) has to be linked to a historical tradition, to a disciplined community life, and to a just and peaceful concern for all creatures both human and non-human.

This can open access to young adults to come out religiously to participate in our social and public spaces. What is critically needed in our time, then, is a reconciliation of the spiritual and religious. They ought to be natural allies not divisive competitors. The spiritual is the life-blood of religion and religion gives form, direction, nurture and boundaries to enrich the spiritual life. They can co-exist in healthy tension with each other. When they are genuine partners (in wisdom and grace) our young adults can reframe their mantra to: “I’m spiritually religious and religiously spiritual.” However, before they utter this refrain, they’ll need to confront their anti-institutional propensities. We turn now to engage this element in their life portrait.

2. Anti-institutional, Anti-Church

Hazel Motes, the male protagonist of Flannery O’Connor’s novel Wise Blood tries to found a new church, one without Christ. It will, he said, be a church “where the blind don’t see and the lame don’t walk and what’s dead stays that way.” It will offer some of the usual ecclesiastical practices (e.g. preaching and rituals), but also redemption without Christ. Half a century earlier, Oscar Wilde wrote of his desire to found “an order for those who cannot believe: the Confraternity of the Faithless.” The members of Wilde’s confraternity would not believe in the creeds and dogmas of the church, and not in Jesus, as the Christ. Motes and Wilde imagined or hoped, in their very different ways, that the Church’s gifts (of grace) might be received without creeds, without the cross, and without the sacraments. That hope has not died in our time (Griffiths, 2012). In fact, it has re-emerged in startling numbers today in the lives of millions of people – a significant number of whom are young adults.

According to a recent 2012 report by the Pew Forum on Religion and the Public Life, titled ‘Nones’ on the Rise, the number of people who claim no religious affiliation has increased from slightly more than 15% to just under 20% of all U.S. adults (33million). The survey found that 30% of US adults under 30 have no religious affiliation, compared with only 10% over 65. The drop occurs across such demographic divides as age, levels of education and income. Various theories are set forth to explain the exodus from organized religion: postponement of marriage and parenthood, the growth of secularization, and “political backlash” against the perceived entanglement of the churches with right-wing conservative politics. In its February 2008 survey, The Pew Research Center found that Roman Catholicism has experienced the greatest net losses. One out of every three adult American who were raised Roman Catholic have left the church. If these ex-Catholics were to form a single church, they would constitute the second largest church in the nation. J. Patrick Hornbeck II (and his colleague Tom Beaudoin) contend that this “deconversion”, “disaffiliation”, “disengagement” is one of the most theologically and sociologically significant phenomena in contemporary U.S. Roman Catholicism (Hornbeck 2011; Beaudoin 2011). This pattern of loss, according to Peter Steinfels, may well be the wave of the future, and represents advanced signs of a young adult generational loss (Steinfels 2010). However, lack of affiliation or engagement, the study points out, does not mean lack of spirituality operative in their lives.

Still, the trend, and the reasons behind it, ought to make us sit up and take notice. Today young adults, Harold Horell notes, are more critical of religious institutions than past generations. They are suspicious of “organized” religion, even going so far as to claim that, for some, the suspicion borders on apathy. For many millennials, institutional religions are not responding adequately to

changes in the world. Religious officials in positions of authority are, at times, perceived as hypocritical, judgmental, and out of sync with shifting attitudes on sex and marriage. Institutions - religious institutions - are perceived as cold, dogmatic, impersonal, and empty structures. Millennials, on the other hand, looking beyond religion, seek a personal faith and more authentic ways of connecting with God, self, and others (Horell 2003). They are deeply ambivalent about institutional churches being the soul source of ultimate authority. Religious institutions have little relevance for their religious identity and their subjective spiritual quest. This is a conundrum for the churches and a huge challenge for parish ministry and religious education.

Where do we begin with an educated response? First, the church's failure to live up to its mission and ministry must be forthrightly acknowledged – when and where warranted. The wide array of issues raised by young people (the sex abuse of children, some church teachings, policies and practices) should not be seen necessarily as simply rebellious, but rather as a genuine yearning for new forms of authentic religious life. On the other hand, it is this very yearning and search that can make them vulnerable to the influence of charismatic leaders and cults.

Religion, in its ecclesial form, has an organizational problem - its form, design, polity, sexual and cast arrangements. But, the renewal and revitalization of the church, Brad Hinze notes, begins with lament – to mourn and grieve its failures. Lament, he writes, can serve as a catalyst for a prophetic critique of the church and society (Hinze 2011). Here we can stand in solidarity with our young adults.

But, once again, caution is needed here. In terms of my own affiliation, Roman Catholic institutional life – at every level – needs reform, refashioning/redesigning, if the yearnings and searchings of young people are to be creatively and adequately addressed. However, that is very different than being anti- institutional or dis-engaging from institutional religion. Gabriel Moran writes, “I do not deny that religions are the source of superstition, violence and misogyny. They can also be a discipline of life, a comfort to the suffering, a source of moral courage, and a hope for a transformed world” (Moran 2011, xii). Institutions (political, economic, ecclesial) are at the center of contemporary society. They are indispensable for civilized living today. Their absence would spell chaos or/and accelerate an even more radical individualism. It is as simple as this: there is no Christian tradition without an institution to preserve it, as well as a (local) community to live it (Tilley 1994:193). We can distinguish between both. But we distinguish not to separate but to bring them back into a dialectical creative relationship. Enduring religions have both institutional and communal elements. A significant characteristic of a community is that it is gathered – face to face – where personal relations are valued and nurtured. The Catholic Church as parish, the Protestant church as congregation, is gathered and local. But the Catholic Church as institution, and the Protestant church as institution, is worldwide – spanning out over diocese, nation, and globe. Institutions house and carry traditions – preserving the insights of their charismatic founders. If a religious community, (e.g. the Jesus community), wants to retrieve and make accessible the wisdom and charism of its founder, it has no option but to routinize itself and codify its tradition. Tilley writes, “The structures which emerge to ‘carry on’ and ‘develop’ the traditions inaugurated by the founder are religious institutions. It is these institutions which make possible a transmission of tradition to second-and third-generation disciples of the leader, whether those disciples are distant from the leader in time...or in location” (1994:187). Churches, mosques and synagogues are these institutional life forms

where people learn a tradition, practice a tradition and are shaped into a cumulative (religious) tradition.

Of course, how the institution is constituted, its form, shape, design, patterns of power, how it is managed, its inclusivity or exclusivity, can affect the viability of the tradition, peoples' spiritual experiences within it and their religious development or disillusionment. We've all experienced battles, or certainly are aware of them, at the parish, diocesan or Vatican level. Our institutions can be obstacles to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, but that should not be cause to dismiss them and drop out of them. Rather, we should take it as an invitation to care for them by renewing them and reforming them so that they contain, conserve and transmit its treasure in earthen vessels. Vibrant (priestly and prophetic) religious institutions play a critical role in the development of a person's religious life, conversion to a tradition, deconversion and/or reconversion to another tradition, and can provide a decisive shift in the shape of one's religious experience and practice (Tilley 1994:195-204). Anti-institutional religion is one of the biases of modernity. We need to offer the counter argument in late modernity that hospitable forms of institutional religion are internal and external to an intelligent religious way of being in the world in the 21st century. It is our religious and educational responsibility to invite our young adults to come out into wholesome and healthy institutional forms of religious life. After all, private, non-institutional religion does not exist.

3. Apathetic to Tradition

We turn now to the third facet in the portrait of young adults in the contemporary religious landscape, namely, the demise, even dismissal, of a strong sense of tradition among some, but not all, young adults.

Progress, perpetual change, interruption, permeability is the linguistic currency of late modernity. But there is no tomorrow without tradition. In many ways, our lives are governed by the given and the inherited. As William Faulkner wrote in, *Requiem for a Nun*, "the past is never dead. It's not even past". We witnessed this in the community response to the Newtown, CT killing of 20 children and 7 adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. The funerals and burials – over a two week period - took place in Catholic, Congregational, Mormon and United Methodist houses of worship, among others. They were held in Protestant mega churches and in a Jewish cemetery. A black Christian youth group traveled from Alabama to perform "Amazing Grace" at several services. This was religious belief in action, faith expressed at its deepest and to its fullest. The ancient rituals facilitated deep mourning. They comforted, consoled. They enabled people to cope. They healed. They were the indispensable practice of tradition.

Fortunately, tradition continues to supply us with wisdom about living and dying so that each generation does not have to begin anew or rely solely on its own insights. It resists the belief that we think only for ourselves. We grow from our past and only flourish when we are in touch with that past. As GK Chesterton wrote, tradition is "an extension of the franchise by giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors" (1959:48). It is a democracy of the dead, as well as of the living. Jaroslav Pelikan writes, "By including the dead in the circle of discourse we enrich the quality of the conversation" (1984:81). The teacher's job (catechist, teacher of religion, youth minister, preacher, social justice minister) is to show people how to live (and die)

according to the best lights/wisdom of the tradition. The tradition, however, will not make our life-decisions for us, but it provides a privileged vantage point from which we can do so.

Tradition, of course, can become life-less and degenerate into traditionalism. It can be made into a strait-jacket or dead weight. We see this in certain areas of the church where tradition is affirmed but in an uncritical way. However, the attempt to overthrow tradition, to dispossess or deconstruct it (as is prevalent in some postmodern academic circles, e.g. Beaudoin 2008, 136-154) rather than reform it, by asking critical and creative questions of it, is disastrous. Pelikan asserts: “tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living... and it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name” (65). In fact, our traditions cease to be authentic when they become fossilized. Margaret Steinfels writes, “A tradition is not a browned and dried-up certificate of deposit in the bank of knowledge, but a locus for questioning, a framework for ordering inquiry, a standard for preferring some set of ideas over others; tradition is the record of a community’s conversation over time about its meaning and direction. A living tradition is a tradition that can raise questions about itself” (2013:8). Tradition to be alive, then, has to be in constant change. And when it is, the alienation or fracture some of our people (young and old) feel over against it can be healed. Tradition is a sustained argument over time. It is a never ending subversive process. It is a fundamental resistance to stasis. Tradition, literally, is the process of handing on. And a religious tradition is a process of handing on an enduring set of practices: the handing on of a pattern of attitudes, beliefs and practices – including vision. What the tradition presents is a way of life. It provides a pathway on how to behave – how to conduct one’s self – and how to think. This, in turn, acts as social glue, bringing cohesiveness to a people and fashioning their individual and collective identity (Tilley 2000).

The Acts of the Apostles describe the life of the early Christian community in a way that is fundamental for the church of our time: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The handing on is of this integral way of life. We see here vital components of our tradition: constant renewed study, liturgical worship, catechesis to foster growth in faith, practical love of God and neighbor – service to the poor, widow and orphan. At its best, this is a magnificent vision and sacramental way of life, and an inexhaustible resource of enlightenment, inspiration and wisdom. Our young people need to be found worthy to inherit it. The loss of a sense of tradition goes back to the eighteenth century. Modernity was a revolt against tradition. Late modernity has to offer the counter argument.

Finally, religious educators and youth ministers are trustees and mediators of our traditions. Dwayne Huebner writes, “Teachers are called to be trustees of ways of life that would decay and be forgotten were it not for them” (1987:20). Their task is to maintain “the liberating quality of the various traditions” by guarding against their fixity and stereotyping. “The teacher”, Huebner also notes is a mediator between the young person and the tradition. On the one hand, the teacher re-presents the tradition to the student in such a way that it can be a factor in the young person’s narrative...On the other hand, the teacher is called to bring to the surface the present, those dimensions of the young person’s past and present that have some bearing on the tradition”(23). This is the vocation of all teachers – parents, preachers, school teachers and ministers in education. Their responsibility is to facilitate the passing on...the passing on of a living and vital tradition – so that our people, young and old and those yet to be born, will be

conscious participants in the tradition, not unconscious victims (Pelikan: 53). Education is this passing on – it is tradition.

The thesis of this paper has been that, at this time, our educational efforts, should be directed towards: re-connecting and re-integrating the spiritual and religious; offering our young people an institutional church life worthy of their allegiance; and, gifting them with renewed, re-invented religious traditions appropriate for our time and for each generation. Our people, young and old, deserve no less. My proposal, then, has been fundamentally conservative, in the sense of conservation. This, Hannah Arendt reminds us, “is of the essence of educational activity”. “Basically”, she writes, “we are always educating for a world that is or is becoming out of joint”. The educator’s task is to mediate between the past and the future. With our eyes glued to the past, to educate is to allow those in our midst to see that they are altogether worthy of our ancestors (Arendt 1961:192-194). This is the surest guarantee that our young adults will come out and accept the invitation to participate in and contribute to repairing our social and public world.

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RELIGION TOPIC OR SUBJECT?
On the place of religion in the school's curriculum

Abstract

This paper makes a plea for treating religion as a discipline to be taught in school as a separate subject. For that matter, the paper starts by discussing the ongoing secularization of religious education in terms of the gradual loss of religious learning content. A process which is certainly evident in the Netherlands and which probably takes place in other Western countries as well. Next, the overall educational value of discussing religion in school is defended in part by comparing recent developments in the Netherlands with recent developments in France. A comparison which shows that learning about religion cannot be limited to learning mere religious facts, for instance as part of other school subjects, if discussing religion in school is to have general educational value. Against this background, then, a brief outline of a pedagogical approach is presented, which aims to enhance the students' ability to examine religion in an independent and critical way using concepts and thinking skills derived from the academic study of religion.

Introduction: the secularization of religious education in the Netherlands

The issue I want to address in this paper relates to a phenomenon I would like to describe as the secularization of religious education in school. Speaking of the secularization of religious education is not new. For instance, discussing current developments in religious education in Europe, Williame (2007a) also refers to the secularization of religious education as the deconfessionalization of religious education. But that is not what I mean. What I have in mind is a tendency towards the loss of religious content. That is to say, religion and religious traditions serving less and less as the learning content in religious education. No doubt, this latter tendency is closely related to the deconfessionalization of religious education, but it is not the same. Therefore, this loss of religious learning content deserves our separate attention.

The deconfessionalization of religious education is widespread in Western Europe. Although in many countries religious education may still be officially (de jure) confessional, in practice (de facto) it is actually non-confessional. This is, for instance, the case in the Netherlands where religious education is only taught in denominational schools under the responsibility of the churches, but where the aim of religious education is no longer the transmission of faith. The latter has become virtually impossible as a result of the massive decline in church membership and church attendance in the Netherlands, which also had a profound impact on the student population of denominational schools.¹ And the Netherlands are no exception in this respect (Davie 2000, pp. 82-97). Throughout Europe religious

¹ Despite the pervasive secular character of Dutch society the majority of schools in the Netherlands are denominational, which harbor approximately 60 percent of all students in primary and secondary education. As a result, especially the student populations of mainstream Protestant and Catholic schools consist in large part of youths with no religious background. For a brief explanation of the Dutch educational system and the relationship between public and denominational schools see Vermeer (2013, pp. 85-87).

education deconfessionalizes, if not officially than at least in practice, because secularization makes it increasingly difficult for religious education to assume its traditional task of the transmission of faith.

Of course, this deconfessionalization of religious education also led to a reconsideration of the aim and content of religious education. In the Netherlands this resulted in an approach known as worldview education or worldview formation, which aims to help students to develop a personal worldview or philosophy of life (Vermeer, 2013, pp. 87-89).² Today this approach is widespread in Dutch denominational schools and is also endorsed by religious education teachers in the Netherlands, because, I assume, many of them are attracted to the idea of contributing to the formation of students and dislike the idea of mainly transmitting knowledge. But the consequence of this development towards worldview education has been, that information about religion and religious traditions nowadays hardly serves as a learning content. To illustrate this, in one of the most widely used textbooks for religious, i.e. actually worldview, education in Catholic and mainstream Protestant schools only five out of eighteen chapters are about religion. The other chapters discuss existential themes mostly without relating these themes to religion.³ Now, it is especially this latter phenomenon I have in mind when I refer to the secularization of religious education and which I, in the remainder of this paper, want to critically assess.

Why religion is important in school

As mentioned already, my concern is not the deconfessionalization of religious education, but the loss of religious learning content. Due to the gradual transformation of religious education into worldview education in the majority of Dutch denominational schools, Dutch students hardly learn anything about religion. But what is wrong with that? Why is paying attention to religion in school still important in this secular age?

In my opinion, a serious consequence of the way religious education today is practiced in the Netherlands, is that it hardly contributes to one of the core aims of education; viz. helping students to acquire an understanding of the world they live in. For, the latter is not possible without acquiring well-structured knowledge about religion. From both a global and a local perspective knowledge about religion is important. Although religion may perhaps languish in the West, this is certainly not the case on a global scale (cf. for instance Davie, 2002; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Religion is widespread across the globe and is of personal significance to billions of people. Atheists and agnostics are a minority compared to the overall number of religious believers in the world and in various parts of the world religion has a profound impact upon cultural, social and political life. Global facts that warrant the attention paid to religion in education. And this is especially so in this day and age of globalization and information-technology in which people, and thus also children and youths, are confronted through the media with religious happenings, turmoil and conflicts all over the world on a daily basis. To put it simply, one cannot read the newspapers without some basic knowledge and understanding of religion and religious traditions.

However, paying attention to religion is not only necessary to help pupils understand global developments, but local developments as well. In most West European countries the

² Only in mainstream Protestant and Catholic schools has religious education developed into worldview education. In more orthodox Protestant and Islamic schools, which only comprise 4 to 5 percent of all schools in the Netherlands, religious education is still confessional and aims at the transmission of faith and at strengthening commitment to a specific religious tradition.

³ The textbook I am referring to is called 'point of view', or 'Standpunt' in Dutch. The chapters on religion are about Christianity, Judaism, Islam and God. The other chapters are about existential topics like: friendship, identity, nature, sexuality, beauty, death, relationships et cetera. For those who can read Dutch, more information can be found on the publisher's website: www.damon.nl.

composition of the population has changed dramatically during the past decades due to the strongly increased influx of non-Western immigrants. In the Netherlands, for example, due to immigration the number of Muslims rose from 54.000 in 1971 to 944.000 in 2005; an increase of 1648 percent in just 35 years (Becker & De Hart, 2006, p. 34)! This not only made Islam the third largest religion in the Netherlands, but it also resulted in a growing visible presence of Muslims in Dutch society. But how are students to understand this if their knowledge of, in this case, Islam is only sketchy and fragmentary?

In sum, my concern thus is that students increasingly become religious illiterates incapable of understanding an important dimension of the world they live in. A case in point in this respect is a recent development in France. At the end of the nineteenth century school and church became separated in France, which gradually resulted in the removal of religion and religious education from the curricula of French public schools. But by the late 1980s the question reemerged if the teaching about religions traditions should not again become part of the curriculum of French schools. The principle of *laïcité* had been that ‘successful’, that whole generations of French pupils had become completely ignorant about religion and thus were unable to really understand the history of modern French society, its artistic and literary heritage and its legal and political system (Willame, 2007b, p. 92). So by the end of the twentieth century, religion was again reintroduced in French schools. A development which shows that discussing religion in school is important and has general educational value also in a predominantly secular context.

Religious education is more than teaching about religious facts

Arguing that discussing religion in school is important is, however, not the whole issue. Related to this issue is also the question if this requires a separate subject. As such the educational value of discussing religion in school is not contested in the Netherlands. Due in large part to the growing cultural and religious diversity of the Dutch population, as from 2006 the following core aim ‘cultural differences’ is compulsory in the lower grades for secondary education in the Netherlands: “The student learns about resemblances, differences and changes in culture and worldview in the Netherlands, learns to relate this to his own and others people’s way of life and becomes aware of the significance for Dutch society of having respect for other people’s opinions and way of life.”⁴ A core aim which is further elaborated by stating that attention should be paid, among other things, to the world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism. Hence, this core aim not only offers room for discussing religion in Dutch schools, the fact that it is compulsory also shows that the importance of paying attention to religion is as such acknowledged by the state. But the state does not tell schools *how* this should be done! Consequently, in most Dutch schools religion is not a subject but a topic. Of course, it once was, and formally still is, a subject in denominational schools, but due to the aforementioned secularization of religious education this latter subject has now evolved into a kind of worldview education mostly devoid of religious content, while in public schools religion is only fragmentary discussed as part of other school subjects; like: history, geography, literature or social science.

The question if religion should be discussed in school, and which in many European countries is still answered in the affirmative, thus is only part of the problem. A subsequent issue concerns the way this should be done; i.e. does it require a separate subject? Again the French case is instructive here. The reintroduction of religion in French schools also triggered the discussion regarding the *way* in which religion should be taught in school. And although

⁴ In Dutch secondary education 58 core aims are compulsory, which are classified into 7 domains: Dutch, English, mathematics, man and nature, man and society, art and culture and physical movement and sports. The core aim cultural differences is aim 43 and is part of the domain man and society.

this discussion has at present not yet resulted in the creation of a separate subject, it also shows that teaching about religion cannot be restricted to just presenting objective religious facts. In his summary of this discussion, Willaime clearly shows that the teaching of religion in school should be in accordance with the educational mission of the school, which implies that it contributes “(...) to the formation of a deontology of intellectual conduct, including objectivity, procedures of verification and applying proof, free examination and critical reasoning” (Willaime, 2007b, p. 98). In this way, the French case not only shows that discussing religion in school is necessary, but it also shows that this should be done in view of an educational aim that is reminiscent of the ideals of liberal education. That is to say, education should not only transmit cultural knowledge, like knowledge of different religious traditions, but it should also encourage students to develop a personal stance with respect to this cultural knowledge. Especially the latter can be considered an important educational aim, also with respect to religious education, as it aims to enhance critical rationality and personal autonomy which liberates students from the constraints of their immediate cultural environment (cf. for instance Hobson & Edwards, 1999).

Religion as a discipline

By referring to recent developments and discussions in the Netherlands and France, I have tried to show that religion not only deserves to be taught in school, but also that this teaching cannot be reduced to the teaching of mere religious facts. The current Dutch situation in which also the learning content of religious education is increasingly secularized and students only acquire information about religion in a fragmentary manner as part of other subjects, makes me worry about the future of religion in Dutch schools. In this respect, I find the French developments more promising, but I doubt if the educational aim that is envisaged by the teaching of religion in French schools is really feasible without establishing religious education as a separate subject.

As I explained elsewhere (Vermeer, 2012), for students to acquire an understanding of religion it is necessary that religious education is treated as a discipline. By this I mean that they should learn to think and act as a religious scholar, which in turn requires that students acquire general concepts and thinking skills that are used in academic disciplines like religious studies and theology. Although this perhaps may sound strange to religious educators, it is very common in other school subjects. Moreover, it is what makes these subjects independent subjects as part of the school’s curriculum! For instance, history is not about teaching facts, but about learning to reason about the past in order to come to a better understanding of the present. And in order to be able to do this, students, for example, learn to pose historical questions, to use sources as well as discipline-bound concepts and meta-concepts. Likewise, in physics students learn about the properties of force, light or sound and learn to perform small-scale experiments. So, in school students learn about the past or they learn about the physical world by learning to perform the role of the historian or the physicist. Similarly, I believe, students can only learn about religion if they learn to perform the role of the religious scholar or the theologian. The latter, for instance, involves that students acquire general concepts that are used in the study of religion, like holy, sacred, ritual et cetera, learn to approach religion from an ethnographical perspective or become familiar with the basics of hermeneutics and biblical criticism.

Of course, I am aware of the fact that this plea for a more ‘scholarly’ approach to religious education is very ambitious and to some extent even unrealistic; at least it is considered from the perspective of the actual practice of religious education in the Netherlands. Still, it is an approach worth considering, because it has three major advantages. First, it prevents the teaching of religion from being sketchy and fragmentary and allows for a more profound

study of religion in school. This not only helps students to come to a better understanding of religion, but it also enhances their ability of the free examination and critical reflection on religion, which are, as we have seen, important educational goals. Second, treating religious education as based on a specific academic discipline also offers it a clear structure and a legitimate place in the school's curriculum. It prevents religion from being discussed in the margins of other subjects in an incoherent way, because the teaching and learning of religion is based on the structure of a scientific discipline. And, finally, this scholarly approach also enhances the students' cognitive and intellectual development. Students internalize basic concepts and thinking skills, originating in this case from academic disciplines like religious studies and theology, as cognitive, mental tools which enable them to interpret, understand and reflect on a variety of religious phenomena in various settings and situations in an independent way (Vermeer, 2012, pp. 337-339).⁵ Thus they not only acquire knowledge about religion, but they become able also to produce and gather knowledge themselves.

Conclusion

In this short and tentative paper I tried to explain why, in my view, religion should be a full-blown subject in school with a firm basis in the academic study of religion. Only discussing religious topics as part of worldview education or another school subject is not enough, I believe, for students to acquire a systematic understanding of religious phenomena and religious traditions. And the latter again is necessary if students are to understand the world they live in. On a global scale the world is still a religious place, which also affects the local situation of students in Western countries; no matter how secular this local situation may be. Helping students to come to terms with this global and local situation is an important educational goal, which requires that religion is thoroughly and systematically discussed in school. The secularization of religious education, understood in this paper as the loss of religious learning content, thus not only poses a serious threat to the future of religious education as an independent subject, but it also hinders the overall education of youngsters as such.

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⁵ As mentioned already, a more detailed elaboration of my proposal to understand religious education as a discipline aiming to promote scholarly religious thought can be found in Vermeer (2012). But to be honest, my ideas are not new. Already at the beginning of the seventies similar ideas were put forward by the Dutch theologian and educationalist Van der Ven (1973), who, in the footsteps of cognitively oriented educationalists like Bruner, Taba, Wheeler and Gagné, made an almost similar plea for a 'science structure curriculum' with respect to religious education in school (cf also Vermeer, 2004).

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“Coming Back Home:

**An ethnographic study of teenagers active in church-based youth ministries
and their pathways into active congregational life as emerging and young adults”**

Abstract. This paper seeks to discuss the findings of an ethnographic research project studying church-active young adults who were also church-active adolescents and became reengaged in the life of local congregations. It analyzes their stories seeking to understand the reasons for their investment in congregations as adolescents and today, noting distinctives in their stories of adolescent experiences that increased the likelihood of meaningful adult investment in congregations. It explores periods of non-engagement in congregations often experienced by emerging and young adults. Finally, it seeks to offer insights for the Church through deeply listening to and analyzing the stories of young adults.

“Coming Back Home” details and analyzes an ethnographic study of teenagers active in church-based youth ministries and their pathways into active congregational life as emerging and young adults. Twelve church-active young adults who were church-active as adolescents were interviewed, seeking insight into church experiences that made it easier for these young adults to reconnect with a church. Interviews were recorded and analyzed through multiple phases of listening and note taking. Responses grouped into four areas: identity entanglements, still small grown-up voices and vocations, the sacramentality of real relationships, and faithful fallowness and the way back home. We will focus on these later in this paper.

The impetus for this research study was deeply personal. For many years, from 1987 – 2006, I served as a professional in the field of youth ministry in local congregations, at camps, and at the judicatory and denominational level. I still do, though my work is much broader these days. During those years, I encountered hundreds of passionate adolescents who loved God and earnestly sought to live into the emerging vocations to which they understood God was calling them. I was privileged to be a companion on their journey, with some for just a little while, and with others for a while longer. I saw in these youth the emerging shoots of the grown-ups they were becoming, full of grace and hope.

In most cases, they moved on to colleges far away, and I followed their continuing journeys with great interest, although often from afar. In every case where they would permit it, I would offer introductions to colleagues in the area and congregations with which they could connect. Sometimes the distractions of college life or the allure of new freedoms got in the way of connecting with a congregation during college. Sometimes hurtful or careless interactions with congregations and ministries were to blame. More often, sometimes years later, I heard from these grown-up youth that they had grown hardened against the possibility that the God of their youth even existed. But these were youth whose lives I had shared deeply for a time. I had

heard them give voice to their faith commitments. I had heard them and watched them live their faith in prophetic ways. I could not help my skepticism that their professed agnosticism was a cover. My deepest hunches, or maybe fears, told me something went wrong during their adolescent years or after that kept them from living as faithful disciples of Jesus in the grown-up world in the ways I had observed during their adolescence. A desire to create more effective youth ministry that better prepared adolescents for the transition to adulthood was the first impetus for this study. “Where have all the flowers gone . . .,”¹ I asked with deep sadness about those emerging adults. “And why?”

Every Christian denomination finds itself today wondering: “Where have all the young adults gone? Why don’t they come to church?” Merely observing the ages of those present in a typical mainline Protestant worship service affirms the reality that young adults are present in worship and active in congregations at a far lower percentage of the congregation than most other adult age groups. Their rate of participation is far lower than the percentage of people in their age-range in the general population. If we look deeper for emerging and young adults active in leadership in congregations, we find even fewer.²

Speculation abounds regarding the reasons for this observed phenomenon. It often takes the form of judgment and blaming: “If the park district wouldn’t schedule soccer on Sundays, those young families would be in church.” Many middle and older adults remember becoming involved with a congregation as young adults with their children, and that there were many other young adults involved in the congregation they joined. “So what’s with this current generation?” they ask. “Why aren’t they coming to church?” Quietly amongst themselves, older members often ask a far more practical question about where the energetic, able-bodied members will come from who will take over from them the work in the church that they have continued doing far past their interest and physical ability to do it.

Well-meaning congregations renovate their nurseries and remove the pews from their sanctuaries. They hope to attract young adults is with “contemporary worship” – ostensibly the traditional worship service re-packaged with praise and worship music from the 70s played on guitars and keyboards. Some try contemplative services with “smells and bells” because the literature says “it’s what the young people today are looking for.” Coffee shops and casual dress, as well projected lyrics and ‘relevant’ preaching attempt to draw young adults. Parenting programs, including “mother’s day out” style programs seek to do the same. Worship services at alternative times and in alternative locations were a popular strategy for a while. These strategies mostly missed the mark, sometimes drawing older Baby Boomers, but not the current young adult generation. Each of these strategies – and dozens more like them – has failed far more often than they succeeded, taking as evidence the ongoing absence of young adults from congregational life.

The complicated and evolving period of transition from adolescence through emerging adulthood and into young adulthood – and, in particular, the meaning-making or faith aspects of this transition – creates the space and material for this research. In asking the foundational

¹ Pete Seeger, “Where have all the flowers gone?” Fall River Music, 1961.

² My observation about young adults’ absence from congregational life is corroborated by Arnett’s research with emerging adults in which 58% of emerging adults surveyed said religious beliefs were “very important” or “quite important,” yet those same emerging adults identified at a rate of 65% that attendance at religious services was only “somewhat important” or “not at all important” to them. Nearly half reported that they attend religious services “about 1-2 times a year or less.” Cf. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: the Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

question of the research – “What experiences from adolescence make it more likely for a young adult to be actively engaged in a faith community?” – I mean to hold up a mirror to local congregations. There are new insights to be gained from listening deeply to the narratives of the lives of a handful of faithful young adults who are engaged and living out their Christian vocations in and through the local church. In hearing their stories and experiences, and reflecting together on how they have made meaning of those experiences, I hope to offer some food for thought to share with progressive mainline congregations, particularly those in the upper Midwest United States where this research was conducted, as they seek to understand something of the faith lives of young adults in their midst.

To set the stage for the place of faith in emerging and young adulthood, I turned first to research into the faith lives of adolescents. The large scale National Study of Youth and Religion, a quantitative study with a qualitative component undertaken several years ago attempted to get at the religious lives and thinking of youth, and provides a good starting point for asking these questions. This study, detailed in the book, *Soul Searching* by Christian Smith and Melissa Lundquist Denton, found that 44% of teens attend church weekly and another 16% attend religious services two to three times a month. They would attend more often if it was entirely up to them: 47% and 20% respectively. What the study indicates, based on these percentages, is that more than half of mainline Protestant teens are in church more than half the time.³

Smith and Denton further observed that, while adolescents may intend to be more involved in congregations, they are inarticulate about what they believe.⁴ In *Soul Searching* and later works, the beliefs of study participants are characterized using the term “moralistic therapeutic deism.” Essentially, this term refers roughly to the following set of beliefs: a Creator God exists who gives order to the world and watches over humans, and that God wants people to be nice to each other, be happy, and have good self-esteem. God doesn’t necessarily get involved in the everyday lives of most people except as a problem solver. In addition, all good people go to heaven when they die. This set of beliefs, Smith and Denton observe, seems to be the tacit creed of the majority of the teens they interviewed.⁵ In the face of these results I wonder: how are the youth surveyed formed by the services they attend, however often they attend them? What is the content of the faith they claim, and how does it affect them? The study found that half of mainline Protestants surveyed said faith was very or extremely important. For faith to be as important to them as those surveyed report, it is striking that the authors report that most youth were incredibly inarticulate about their faith.

The survey seems to suggest that mainline Protestant congregations do a less than adequate job of helping adolescents know and experience the God in whom they claim to believe. They also fall short of helping youth experience and know a sophisticated and complex God who can grow and change as they grow and change. The absence of young adults from communities of faith raises real questions about the adequacy of the God the church is teaching.⁶

“Then what happens when these youth get to be young adults? Why aren’t we seeing them in church?” would be the likely response of people in the pews of many mainline Protestant

³ Christian Smith and Melissa Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴ Even allowing that “being articulate” isn’t the only or best measure of having faith, the study still seems to indicate that youth aren’t getting much help from the churches they attend more than half the time in knowing how to express or live out the faith that they say is so important to them.

⁵ Smith and Denton, 164-65.

⁶ Smith and Denton, 166.

congregations. Barna research cited in *The Christian Century* suggests that faith is still important to young adults: 80% say faith is very important, three-quarters claim to have prayed in the last week, and nearly 60% claim to have made a personal commitment to Jesus. They just don't attend church regularly: just 30% say they've attended church in the last week – the same percentage as have donated anything to a church in the last year or read the Bible in the last week.⁷ These findings aren't limited to one end or the other of the theological spectrum.⁸

This is further elucidated in Jeffery Jensen Arnett's research which identifies that attendance at religious services as a child or adolescent seems to have very little impact on the lives of faith of emerging adults. One emerging adult described the challenge to her faith that came during a college class in theology when her eyes were opened to the critical academic study of religion instead of the more devotional and dogmatic faith she was taught in church: “. . . I'm going, 'Wait a minute. These Catholics have lied to me my whole life.'”⁹ This response and others like it make me wonder about the content and quality of the religious education these emerging adults received as children and youth. The young female study participant's response makes me wonder: if we could hear about the faith this emerging adult respondent is rejecting, perhaps we would affirm that we don't believe in that God either.

Arnett identifies the emerging adult urge to make decisions for themselves as another reason for the minimal role of congregations in the faith lives of emerging adults. “. . . to accept what their parents have taught them about religion and carry on the same religious traditions as their parents would represent a kind of failure, an abdication of their responsibility to think for themselves, become independent from their parents, and decide on their own beliefs.”¹⁰ He observes from survey and interview responses that this “rugged individualism” softens when emerging adults become parents – it seems they are more likely to be motivated by their children than their parents to adopt a religious tradition and practice within it.

Through analysis of my interviews with church-active young adults who were church-active in their adolescence, I found coalescence in their responses around four areas: (1) identity entanglements, (2) still small grown-up voices and vocations, (3) the sacramentality of real relationships, and (4) faithful fallowness and the way back home.

In speaking of identity entanglements, I mean to indicate something that goes beyond the role faith typically plays in the identity formation of an adolescent. Entanglement is the term I choose to reflect a deep sense of comingling of identity, something that is not easily separated or sorted out. I recognize that this term can carry with it some negative connotations in some contexts; however, I have chosen to reclaim the word because it is uniquely descriptive of what I found present in some very healthy ways in this study. The word describes an interconnectedness, an “all-in-ness”, that is difficult to capture with other terms that could be

⁷ Then what happens when these youth get to be young adults? Why aren't we seeing them in church? That would be the likely response of people in the pews of many mainline Protestant congregations. Barna research cited in *The Christian Century* suggests that faith is still important to young adults: 80% say faith is very important, three-quarters claim to have prayed in the last week, and nearly 60% claim to have made a personal commitment to Jesus. They just don't attend church regularly: just 30% say they've attended church in the last week – the same percentage as have donated anything to a church in the last year or read the Bible in the last week. Cf. Kristen Campbell, “Young Adults Missing from Pews,” *The Christian Century*, 121:3 (February 10, 2004), 16.

⁸ These findings aren't limited to one end or the other of the theological spectrum. If *The Christian Century* represents a more liberal-leaning perspective, then for a more evangelical perspective, see Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus, But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

⁹ Arnett, 176.

¹⁰ Arnett, 177.

used to describe a deep intermingling of identity. Kenda Creasy Dean lifts up research from the National Study of Youth and Religion that observes “. . . participating in any identity-bearing community, religious or otherwise, improves young people’s likeliness to thrive.”¹¹ The findings of my study seem to reflect, with thick, rich description typical of ethnography, what other research has indicated.

In my conversation with Bill and others, I heard about what I came to term “still small grown-up voices and vocations.” Bill told about his adolescence as a battle with the unfairness he found in the prevailing culture, causing a bumpy ride through various counter-cultural expressions interspersed with escape through alcohol and other chemical means. He struggled with bouts of depression. Taking action on justice issues because of his faith had been an important part of his pre-adolescent years and he saw it as part of who he was. After the bumpiness of his adolescent years, Bill describes in this way the time when things inside him started to get sorted out: “I came home to myself then.” So central to his identity was the idea that people of faith work for justice that he reconnected with something essential about himself through intentional work for justice while he was still in the morass of floundering to form an identity.

As a result, Bill felt motivated to connect with other people of faith seeking justice. He wasn’t really looking for a church, but he knew that was a place to find others who cared about justice. He found his way to the first congregation of his young adulthood: a downtown congregation in the large Northwest U.S. city where he lived, a place where he became involved in justice ministries and volunteered with at-risk youth (like he had been). With a detour through a year of seminary to develop the tools he needed to think theologically and articulate his passions, eventually this preoccupation with justice helped Bill find his vocation as an attorney in advocacy and justice work.¹²

The story above from my interview with Bill illustrates the central place vocation formation can take as adolescents seek to assemble an identity and how vocation can provide a landmark in the midst of their young adult remaking of meaning. Finding voice and vocation plays an important role in the lives of adolescents as they mature. Adolescents are ‘trying on’ identities in their search for one that fits. Most youth have not yet claimed their voice or inner authority, yet this is typical developmental work that begins to take place during adolescence.¹³ The church potentially in some cases, but regretfully in others, provides the content for the shaping of a vocation. These church-active youth saw how the church, even with all of its foibles, continued to provide a sense of meaning and direction.

Brian Mahan, in his book, *Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose: Vocation and the Ethics of Ambition*, describes vocation as the thing that runs counter to simple ambition as a person forms a sense of what they are uniquely gifted to do in the world. Mahan notes that while the most common life script says if you get into Yale Law School, then you go to Yale Law, there are alternative scripts for life that allow for one’s sense of call to override ambition. The counter scripts value connecting one’s deepest passions with one’s gifts and observing the response

¹¹ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20.

¹² Interview recording with Bill, March 27, 2009, between minutes 28 and 29.

¹³ Mary Field Belenky, Bythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 54.

within oneself. Vocation, according to Mahan, “is less about discovering our occupation than about uncovering our preoccupations.”¹⁴

Kenda Creasy Dean, in her book *Practicing Passion*, puts it another way: “Adolescents are searching for something, for someone, ‘to die for,’ to use Erik Erikson’s haunting phrase: a cause worthy of their suffering, a love worthy of a lifetime”¹⁵ In my study, I heard young adults reflect on the powerful effect it had on them to realize that God needed them to do something in the world. I wouldn’t characterize what I saw as something ‘to die for’ though – to me it seemed more accurate to say they were yearning for something to live for, something worthy of the investment of their lives.

A third coalescence I heard from participants was around an idea I came to call the sacramentality of real relationships. In my interviews with research participants, I was struck by the number of times, having asked about church people who had been important to them when they were teenagers, I heard stories of unnamed faithful grown-ups who companioned these youth or simply offered consistent presence in their lives as they grew in faith. Even more interesting to me was that these stories of faithful companions and ‘presencers’ continued as study participants described the churches of their young adulthood. This represented a significant continuing factor between the two periods and became something to which I paid close attention.

In their book, *Lives to Offer: Accompanying Youth on their Vocational Quests*, Dori Grinenko Baker and Joyce Ann Mercer describe a posture critical for ministry: companioning. In their book, it has to do primarily with ministry with adolescents, but I find that it applies more broadly to ministry in other periods of life. Companioning has to do with more than just “being there” and sharing the stuff of life, but rather involves intentionally journeying together, being on the move, going somewhere on purpose.¹⁶

Finally, I found that I heard again and again in my interviews about the periods when participants were not active in churches, a time in which I heard incredible faithfulness in the midst of what seemed like fallowness. Some chose this time away while others were de-churched as the congregations they had chosen changed in ways untenable to them, and vice versa. While it might seem to some that this time away from church represented a period of decreased spirituality and faithfulness, I heard in their stories a deep and genuine faith in a God with whom they were in relationship all along. This may have been a fallow period for them in terms of active participation in a congregation, but it represented in several cases a period of growth that produced a more honest and richly textured spirituality. There was, indeed, faithfulness in the fallow time.

These findings led to three key recommendations for Christian education and youth ministry. First, the church needs to pay attention to nurturing faith at every life stage. Since this research suggests that the faith of youth is strengthened by the presence of genuine, faithful grown-ups journeying with them, practices that deepen faith across the life cycle are important. Church folks may be tempted to ask, “Faithful following? What does it really matter anyway?” This study seems to offer a response worth paying attention to.

¹⁴ Mahan, 183.

¹⁵ Dean, *Practicing Passion*, 2. She quotes Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 233.

¹⁶ Baker and Mercer, 19-20.

Second, youth need journey partners who engage and model the lifelong work of meaning making and vocational discernment, who take seriously their partnership with God on behalf of neighbors. In short, youth ministry must go beyond silly games, thin theology, and serving soup. Finally, the church must create hospitable space for successive generations, recognizing the organic and adaptive nature of the body of Christ. Rather than reject them back when they seem to be rejecting the church by attending sporadically or staying away, I share this challenge: resist the temptation to ‘reject them back’ when you feel rejected by them. To congregations concerned about young adults, I offer: do unto *young adults* as you would have them do unto you.

Epilogue

I offer these words of epilogue as a reminder that we share this journey of faith, young and not-so-young, and that we need one another across the vast and diverse spectrum of creation in order have of hope of understanding what it means to be in the image of God.

*Teach your children well, their father's hell did slowly go by.
And feed them on your dreams; the one they pick's the one you'll know by . . .*

*And you, of tender years, can't know the fears that your elders grew by.
And so please help them with your youth; they seek the truth before they can die . . .*

*Teach your parents well, their children's hell will slowly go by.
And feed them on your dreams; the one they pick's the one you'll know by . . .*

*Don't you ever ask them why; if they told you, you would cry.
So just look at them and sigh, and know they love you.¹⁷*

¹⁷ Graham Nash, Nash Notes, “Teach Your Children Well,” recorded by Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young, *4 Way Street*, 2002.

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A “theotic” religious education for the Christian West:

Orientation of the practitioner’s relationships with God, self, others, and the whole created order to the divine image

Theosis could help to foster some important emphases within the religious education efforts of the Christian West. A concept attended to more thoroughly in the Christian East, *theosis* emphasizes union with God. It is infused with the hope filled notions of the goodness of creation and a positive human anthropology. A *theotic* religious education would be incarnational, calling on its practitioners to commit to a grace-filled, community centered effort reorienting themselves to the divine image within as they commit to working toward the restoration of relationships with God self, others, and the whole created order.

Theosis; a term often interchangeably used with divinization, is a multi-faceted concept initially formed during the early centuries of Christianity. Over the centuries the idea has metamorphosed and has come to have different emphases within various Christian communities. The author will first attempt to lay the groundwork for a working definition of the term *theosis* itself, and explore foundational elements within it. This effort plays out before a backdrop of expectation-- that implications for religious education efforts within Christian communities (and perhaps other communities of faith) will reveal themselves. One such implication is that reaching beyond the catechetical echoing of a rational faith, integrating *theosis* could help to shape a more relational, holistic, and incarnational approach to religious education. A “theotic” approach would more fully integrate the idea of the lifelong transformation of individuals as they strive for the restoration of all the relationships in which they find themselves; those with self, others, the whole created order, and ultimately with the triune God.

Theosis reaches beyond an emphasis on the end of the soteriological process, the goal defined in Roman Catholic theological and catechetical texts as the *beatific vision*. It would be accurate to say that the union of the believer with the triune God is the hoped for result or an “ultimate goal” of *theosis*. However, *theosis* is simultaneously an orientation and infusive path- a continually graced effort of the believer toward this goal. This idea was at least implicitly emphasized within the Christian East. In recent years in response to an increased interest in the concept of *theosis*, this implicit emphasis has become more explicit and more thickly described. Norman Russell is representative of these efforts. In his *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis*, Norman Russell proposes a working definition of *theosis* as follows:

Theosis is our restoration as persons to integrity and wholeness by participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit, in a process which is initiated in this world through our life of ecclesial communion and moral striving and finds ultimate fulfillment in our union with the Father- all within the broad context of the divine economy (Russell 2009, 21).

Russell’s indication that union with God is *initiated in this world* discloses two emphases which may be seen as integral to a discussion of *theosis*. First, since union with God is initiated in *this world*, the world is of necessity a good place. A corollary idea is that human beings, created in the image of God, are capable of the participation Russell describes. The story of the goodness of creation, and how human beings were created in the image of God living in perfect relationship with God and each other, is recounted within the first book of the canon of Hebrew Scriptures and is revered by both Jews and Christians. The essential goodness of creation is reiterated in the creation narrative which reports for us that, after each “day”, God paused to reflect that what had been created was indeed *good*. This essential goodness is definitively affirmed in Genesis 1:31 where “God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.” John R. Sachs comments on the importance of remembering the goodness of creation as a corrective to those who consider the material world intrinsically evil and dichotomized from the spiritual realm. Sachs recalls the struggles of early Christianity in its first few centuries against gnosticism which saw “liberation from the created world and its evil materiality” as the goal of human life. In his work *Christian Vision of Humanity*, Sachs succinctly advances that “the world is a good place to be. It is precisely where God places us and it is where God wishes to be in relationship with us” (Sachs 1991, 15).

Within the created world are human beings, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27,

5:1, Wisdom 2:23). The time after the creation of the human race is portrayed allegorically as a time of perfection for human beings as they live true to their own image in perfect union with God and in proper relationship with each other and the whole created order. For humanity, this abode of perfection is justifiably designated *paradise*. However, just as the first chapter of Genesis narrates the creation of humankind in the image of God and its ensuing perfect relations, the second chapter tells how both image and relationships became disordered. The relational rift ensues after human beings turn away in pride from the God in whose image they were created. In the pursuit of an existence perceived as better than paradise, they decide to heed the voice of the arduously tempting snake rather than the voice of God, which they previously had clearly heard, understood and followed.

A major tenet of Christian theology is the incarnation. Through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, human nature and relationships are restored. Christ is God's ultimate re-identification with humanity as God's Self reaches out to restore human nature and humanity's once perfect relationship with God by means of God's own self-emptying act of *kenosis*. Athanasius, defender of the Council of Nicaea, is a clear patristic representative of the centrality of the incarnation and its importance for humankind. In his *On the Incarnation of the Word*, Athanasius posits that through the incarnation, Christ "was made man so that we might be made God" (Athanasius 1954, 107). Through *kenosis*, the Self-emptying of God, the Word of God becomes human thus undoing humanity's turn to corruptibility. Christ is born as a human being, lives, and dies once for all, in order that "the law involving the ruin of men might be undone" and the divinized, incorruptible potential of humankind is restored (1954, 63).

The incarnation is the once for all overhaul of humanity by the act of a loving God. It manifests God's care for the human race. It initiates a comprehensive reversal of the destitute state in which humanity found itself after the turning away from God and subsequent loss of paradise. Jesus Christ is the new Adam, who restores life to humanity, "since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life" (I Cor. 15:21-22). Human beings, created in the image of God and now restored in this image through Christ, are able once again to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:3-4). The incarnate Christ suffered death through the particularly horrific crucifixion. However, Christ's victory over death through the resurrection is a validation through which the Word of God continues to lure human beings to live renewed lives which seek after "heavenly things", are laden with the expectation of their own immortality, and are supplemented with the necessary "strength to meet death..." (1954, 85).

Nonna Verna Harrison is an advocate for a reexamination of the implications of what it means to be created and restored in the divine image, since God is the "direct source of our authentic human identity" (Harrison 2010, 30). At the outset, she acknowledges that there is a popular notion that human nature is inherently bad, then maps out a "prophetic alternative" grounded in Eastern Christian sources (2010, 5). She recalls the creation narrative and identifies facets of the divine image which are at the heart of human nature and are central to past, present, and future considerations of human identity. Harrison sets out to make the case that aspects of human nature are reflective of the divine image. These aspects include freedom, spiritual perception, virtues, royal dignity, a vital connection to the natural world, creativity, community, mystery, and others (2010, 5). She recommends practical steps for people to pursue, in order that they can recognize and cooperate with a process to polish the facets of the divine image in their lives. Thus by "pursuing a facet of the divine image that comes most naturally" (2010, 7) people

can turn their lives toward serving the goal which Harrison aptly puts front and center for human existence: the return of humankind to the image and likeness in which humans were initially created.

Harrison is consistent with authors and educators within Eastern Christianity who emphasize living out of the faith in an incarnational manner, eschewing overly spiritualized or ethereal means of seeking union with God. The Christian East, especially within the Greek or Byzantine churches, has preserved a crucial understanding of the importance of *theosis* via an emphasis on the incarnation, and has carried it forth as integral within its *phronema*, or mindset. Greek Orthodox author and religious educator George Nicozisin situates *theosis* within *phronema*, which is “an attitude, a position, and/or posture, which reflects a particular spirit, a theological sentiment or frame of mind” (Nicozisin 1970, xiii). Within his discussion of *phronema*, Nicozisin sets the stage for attentiveness to Orthodox Holy Tradition, including the centrality of liturgical practice. The hoped-for result of Nicozisin’s construct would be that every Orthodox Christian, immersed in a community attentive to Holy Tradition, would through the divine liturgy “live our theology, achieve our theosis, and manifest our Orthodox phronema” (1970, 104).

The Eastern Church prides itself on being a lived tradition, having carried over its *phronema* from the ancient church through the centuries to the present day. The aggregate of its traditions and experiences have now become known as Tradition with a capital “T”, or *Holy Tradition*. According to Stanley S. Harakas, Eastern Christianity maintains and embodies an “incarnational ethos” through its “various interpenetrating expressions” which, through the ever-present Holy Spirit, allow for the “continuity of Holy Tradition central to the Orthodox theological mind-set” (Harakas 2004, 130). For Harakas, “The key to the Byzantine approach to education and formation of the Christian consciousness and lifestyle is, then, its adherence to and identity with Holy Tradition” (2004, 131). Bishop Kallistos (Timothy) Ware affirms the process of how certain traditions have aggregated to become the body of Holy Tradition. Through the years, churches within the East by expanding from the emphasis on the Bible and the early Christian creeds and ecumenical writings to now encompass... “the Canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons, in fact, whole system of doctrine, church government, worship, spirituality, and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages” (Ware 1987, 204). Ware offers qualifiers to avoid a romanticized, wholesale acceptance of Orthodox Holy Tradition. He acknowledges that in its lived experience, the church has accreted traditions or customs which “are human and accidental- pious opinions (or worse), but not a true part of the one Tradition, the essential Christian message” (1987, 205). Ware adds that there is a resistance to change in Orthodoxy which serves to prevent healthy criticism of some of these individual traditions, a position which he sees as stagnating and untenable. Certain practices are not essential, as they simply are not part of Orthodox Tradition with a capital “T”. He calls on the Orthodox to “look closely at their inheritance and to distinguish more carefully between Tradition and traditions” (1987, 205).

Phronema is a holistic, life-encompassing world view within the Eastern Orthodox Tradition which stresses the dual priorities of *orthopraxy* or “right practice” and *orthodoxy* or “right belief”. In his important work *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Vladimir Lossky unveils the connection between orthodox theological understanding and everyday life. *Mystical Theology* links theological truths to *theosis*- which he reiterates, is no less than a person’s “participation in the divine life of the Holy Trinity; the deified state of the co-heirs of the divine nature, gods created after the uncreated God, possessing by grace all that the Holy Trinity possesses by nature” (Lossky 1976, 65). En route to this *theotic* participation, Lossky

dialogues with patristic sources and makes a case for an Orthodox Christian identity less measureable by rational understandings; he advocates a mystical “moving beyond” literal interpretations of theological and doctrinal assertions via an apophatic approach to theology. Even as he refers to the apophatic way of the theology of the Christian East as “a cross for human ways of thought... a mounting of Calvary” (1976, 65), he advocates for its centrality as a path to unity with God. Thus theoretical understanding of the revealed triune God has further significance transcending cognitive assent. This more profound emphasis is what Lossky terms mystical theology, and he explains that in fact Christian theology

is always in the last resort a means: a unity of knowledge subserving an end which transcends all knowledge. This ultimate end is union with God or deification, the *theosis* of the Greek Fathers. Thus, we are finally led to a conclusion which may seem paradoxical enough: that Christian theory should have an eminently practical significance; and that the more mystical it is, the more directly it aspires to the supreme end of union with God (1976, 9).

A recurring theme for Lossky is a re-appropriation of the term “mystical”. He explains that after being confronted by a dogma, Christians must live the dogma as it expresses a revealed truth, which appears to us as an unfathomable mystery. Instead of concern for full cognitive comprehension, we should look for a profound change, an inner transformation of spirit, enabling us to experience the idea mystically. Far from being mutually opposed, theology and mysticism are seen to support and complete each other (1976, 8).

Lossky’s presentation of the mystical understanding or assimilation of theological concepts may indeed be helpful toward bridging any perceived gap between *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxy* as a construct more palatable for a postmodern Christian. With mystical understanding, truths of Christianity can be assimilated into the life of the believer whether or not the believing person can fully comprehend these ideas. Mystically appropriated knowledge is concerned with bringing a believer into *phronema*, a life in touch with ancient Christian wisdom regarding *how to be* (orthopraxy) intrinsically cojoined with an understanding of how to be “right-believing” (orthodox). This approach contrasts most constructs in Western Christendom, as it does not stress comprehension of and intellectual assent to theological constructs which often seem abstract and too remote from human experience. It seems admissible that struggles with obscure syllogistic doctrinal formulations and skewed emphasis on certain doctrinal formulations in the West contribute to the postmodern trend of ascribing to oneself the distinction of being *spiritual but not religious*. This could be less of an issue if there was an emphasis in the West on its *phronema*, life with the community of believers coupled with an emphasis on a more mystical understanding of theology. Albeit less measurable than rational cognitive exercises, mystical theology links an individual to the larger community and does not foster quests for union with God based on one’s particular experiences which may prove to be idiosyncratic. Thus mystical theology neither places intrinsic value on a person’s superior appropriation of rational constructs, nor does it value contributions of those individuals who are commonly ascribed to be *mystics*, since their esoteric experiences may be as unhelpful for believers as grasp of philosophical abstractions. Regarding the latter, Lossky remarks that the mystical approach is not “mysticism properly so-called, the personal experiences of different masters of the spiritual life” since “Such experiences... more often than not remain inaccessible to us...” (1976, 11).

Religious education constructs in the Christian East tend to reflect the paramount importance of connection with the believing community. Constance Tarasar is representative of these efforts. For Tarasar, a total religious education effort has as its central focus life in Christ as experienced in the liturgical life of the church. "Taste and see," Tarasar says; "experience and then understand- this is the form of catechesis that has been given to us by the church" (Tarasar 1981, 256). Tarasar's biographer Robert Matlak explicates her holistic, integrated concept of religious education wherein "the sanctification of time and life, focuses more existentially upon the 'here and now,' on individual appropriation of Tradition, on the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, on the importance of authentic spiritual growth and life, and so forth. Due to the importance of attending to these multiple contexts at once, curricula must be quite 'broad-based'" (in Matlak, 1981, 5). Tarasar's *appropriation of Tradition* is arguably another way to speak about Orthodox *phronema*. Her construct is "broad-based" since it entails an aggregation of experiential wisdom of every believer's life in the church from its beginnings to everyone practicing the faith in a postmodern context today. As Ware does, she qualifies adherence to Tradition with the hope that as believers align themselves more to life in Christ, they will avoid undue emphases which have become dreaded "-isms"- such as pietism and rationalism, which have been distracting emphases at certain times in the history of the church (1981, 5).

More recently, Anton Vrame expounds on *theosis* as inseparably identified with a particular segment of Eastern Orthodox *phronema*, iconography. Utilizing his coined term *iconic catechesis*, Vrame attempts a systematization which emphasizes the Christian Orthodox Church's positive human anthropology and connection with the larger community. Living iconically "calls for each person to strive to become his or her unique, unrepeatable self, to see oneself and others as infinitely precious- endangered species- without whom the world would be diminished... No one is forgotten in the kingdom of God" (Vrame 1999, 95).

What emphases will be evident in religious education in Christianity in the West at it evolves over the next several years? What will be central to the identity of those who call themselves Christian? This author posits that healthy approaches would "*theotic*". They would be *incarnational* in their approach- infused with notions of the goodness of creation and the positive human anthropology gleaned from sacred scripture and early Christian writings. They would incorporate Eastern Orthodoxy's mystical theology rather than stress consent to linear-rational constructs. *Theotic* communities find the means to take human wisdom and experience seriously as these come together to provide an ever-reforming *phronema* which is then at the community's service for forming new members. Grounding religious education in *theosis* provides more than a hoped for end-of-life goal for a faithful person, a beatific vision. *Theotic* religious education is of necessity a "lifelong and lifewide" (Moran, 2009, 163) endeavor as Christians devote their lives working towards restoring healthy relationships with God, others, themselves, and the whole created order as immersed in the community of believers they engage themselves in simply "pursuing a facet of the divine image that comes most naturally" (Harrison, 2010, 7).

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- Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition*
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Will Irish Elementary School Teachers be able to Teach Christian Religious Education into the Future?

Abstract

In this paper I draw attention to the place and nature of primary (elementary) school based Catholic religious education in the south of Ireland. I will then look at the changing religious identity of young people in the south of Ireland over the past 30 years through the use of data drawn from the European Values Survey. Having established the uncoupling of many young people for organised religious belief, I then ask if they will be able to teach religious education in Catholic primary schools into the future.

Religious Education in Irish Catholic Primary Schools

All Irish primary school teachers are required to teach religious education for two and a half hours a week. It is one of the seven curricular areas required by the Irish state.¹ However, unlike all the other subject areas, the state does not prescribe the content of religious education, this is left to the patron bodies themselves. The Department of Education and Skills describes the nature of patron bodies in the following terms: “While the State provides for free primary education, schools are established by patron bodies who define the ethos of the school and appoint the board of management to run the school on a day to day basis.”² The table below outlines the number of primary schools in the state and their patron body.

Total number of primary schools by patron body (2010/11)³

| Patron Body | No of schools | % of total |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Catholic | 2,841 | 89.65 |
| Church of Ireland | 174 | 5.49 |
| Presbyterian | 17 | 0.54 |
| Methodist | 1 | 0.03 |
| Jewish | 1 | 0.03 |
| Islamic | 2 | 0.06 |
| Quaker | 1 | 0.03 |

¹ Government of Ireland, "Primary School Curriculum: Introduction," (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1999), 40.

² Department of Education and Skill, "Diversity of Patronage," <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Diversity-of-Patronage/>.

³ John Coolahan, Caroline Hussey, and Fionnuala Kilfeather, "The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Report of the Forum’s Advisory Group " (Dublin: Government Publications, 2012), 36.

| | | |
|--|--------------|------|
| John Scottus Educational Trust Ltd | 1 | 0.03 |
| Lifeways Ireland Ltd | 2 | 0.06 |
| An Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán Ghaeileg Teo | 57 | 1.80 |
| Educate Together Ltd | 44 | 1.39 |
| Schools in Educate Together network with their own patron body | 14 | 0.44 |
| Vocational Education Committees | 5 | 0.16 |
| Minister for Education and Skills | 9 | 0.29 |
| | | |
| Total | 3,169 | |

There were some 3,169 primary schools in Ireland in 2010/2011. Currently 96% of primary schools have denominational patronage, as noted in the table above. Almost 90% of the primary schools in the state have a Catholic patron. This means that the religious education programme in the vast majority of the primary schools in the south of Ireland is rooted in the Catholic Christian tradition and it was written by the Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics.⁴

Religious Education in Schools

While the state does not write the religious education curriculum or programme for schools, it does outline some core principles for the subject. It states that the curriculum for religious education in all schools, regardless of patron “takes into account the child’s affective, aesthetic, spiritual, moral and religious needs” and that it ought to specifically enable “the child to develop spiritual and moral values and to come to a knowledge of God.”⁵ It also asks each school to make “alternative organisational arrangements for those who do not wish to avail of the particular religious education it offers.”⁶

These core principles are very much in keeping with the aim of Catholic religious education, which seeks to engage all aspects of the child—their head, hands and heart—and help them come to a knowledge of God. In the Catholic school this knowledge is far more than learning *about* God, rather it aims at helping the children, where appropriate, to become “aware of and respond to the transcendent dimension of their lives.”⁷ The following quote from *Share the Good News, the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*, describes the aim of religious education in Irish Catholic schools.

In the Catholic school, building on the academic preparation and professional expertise of its religious educators, religious education will never simply be a general study of religions, their history, traditions and customs. A purely phenomenological approach, comparing one religion with another without due regard for the faith life of

⁴ Currently a new religious education curriculum for Catholic schools has been written and is awaiting approval from Rome before a programme can be created for the schools.

⁵ Department of Education, "Introduction to the Primary School Curriculum," ed. Department of Education (Dublin: Government Publications, 1999), 58.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Irish Episcopal Conference, *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (Dublin: Veritas, 2010), 58.

their students, their families and the faith community to which they belong is inadequate. Rather, religious education, as generally defined in Ireland, encourages Catholic students and others to engage with religious questions from within the context of their own lived religious faith. Their own experience and faith journey is respected by the teachers, and their commitment to the religious tradition of their family is supported.⁸

This aim demands a lot from our teachers. While they need to be good educators, they also—at the very least—need to have some affinity and appreciation for the Catholic faith tradition. They need to believe that it has a wisdom for the life of the children and that it can help them live life to the full (John 10:10). Otherwise, why would they teach it? And this is where we come to the crux of this paper. Given the changing religious identity of young Irish people over the past thirty years, will our new young teachers have the capacity or interest to teach Catholic religious education? Because as Parker Palmer says, we teach who we are.⁹

The religious profile of young people has changed considerably over the past thirty years in Ireland. Today, the cohort from which student teachers emerge is much less religious than previous generations. While the group examined in this paper is not the student teachers themselves, it is the milieu and context from which they are drawn. As such, this paper is a first step in the exploring the interest, capacity and ability of student teachers in Ireland to teach Christian religious education now and into the future.

The Data

Currently 82.6% of young people say they believe in God, while 17.4% say they have no belief in God. The figure of those with no belief in God has jumped considerably over the past 30 years, from 5.3% to 17.4%.

| Table 1: Percentage of people who express a 'Belief in God' | | | |
|---|------|-------|-------|
| | | Yes | No |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | 94.7% | 5.3% |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 93.2% | 6.8% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 95.3% | 4.7% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 82.6% | 17.4% |

In response to the question, 'How important is God in your Life', and on a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 being 'Not at all Important', and 10 being 'Very Important', we can see a decreasing amount of young people finding God 'Very Important' or 'Important' in their lives and an increasing number of people saying that God is 'Not at all Important' or not important.

| |
|--|
| Table 2: Percentage of people who express belief in the 'Importance of God' (1-10) |
|--|

⁸ *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (Dublin: Veritas, 2010), 57-58.

⁹ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach : Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 2.

| | | Not at all important | 9 | 8 | 3 | 2 | Very important |
|--------|------|----------------------|------|------|-------|-------|----------------|
| Wave 1 | 1981 | 4.9% | 2.6% | 2.9% | 17.3% | 13.5% | 17% |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 4% | 4% | 7.9% | 19.2% | 8.6% | 12.6% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 6.8% | 2.3% | 4.5% | 5.7% | 5.7% | 12.5% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 6.4% | 9.1% | 3.6% | 10% | 7.3% | 10% |

There has been a sharp rise in the figure of young people who say they don't belong to any religious denomination (see Table 2). In 1981, 2% said they did not belong to any denomination, whereas, in 2008, that figure had risen to 21.6% of the cohort.

| Table 3: Percentage of people who 'Belong to a religious denomination' | | | |
|--|------|-------|-------|
| | | Yes | No |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | 98% | 2% |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 93.4% | 6.6% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 90.9% | 9.1% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 78.4% | 21.6% |

A similar pattern can also be seen in answer to the question concerning moments of prayer or meditation in the lives of young people. The number of young people who answered 'no' to this question has grown from 28.9% in 1981 to 48.7% in 2008 and the number of those who answered 'yes' has decreased from 71.1% in 1981 to 51.3% in 2008. Today, less young people believe in life after death, heaven, hell and sin than thirty years ago; while the belief in re-incarnation has remained steady at almost a third of the cohort over these years (see Table 3).

| Table 4: Percentage of people who 'Don't believe in...' | | | | | |
|---|------|------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| | | Life after death | Heaven | Hell | Sin |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | 21.1% | 19.6% | 55.1% | 13.5% |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 26.4% | 19.9% | 61.1% | 19.6% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 28.9% | 14.6% | 56.1% | 15% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 34.7% | 36.9% | 61.4% | 34.9% |

Regarding a young person's own religious identity, the numbers have not fluctuated that much over the years. Those who identify themselves as a religious person has only dropped to 52.2% from 56.2% over the thirty years. The number of people who consider themselves as a convinced atheist has only risen marginally, from 1.8% to 2.6%.

| Table 5: Percentage of people who consider themselves 'A Religious Person' | | | | |
|--|------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| | | A religious person | Not a religious person | A convinced atheist |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | 56.2% | 42% | 1.8% |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 59.9% | 38.8% | 1.4% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 69% | 29.8% | 1.2% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 52.2% | 45.2% | 2.6% |

While there has not been any significant shift in the figures regarding religious identity, there has been change in the level of importance given to religion in one's life. For instance, in 1990,¹⁰ 17.9% of young people considered it a very important part of their lives, in 2008, that percentage dropped to 13.7% and the percentage of people who believe that it is not important at all, has grown from 6.6% to 19.7%.

| Table 6: Percentage of people who believe religion is important in life | | | | | |
|---|------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | Very important | Rather important | Not very important | Not at all important |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | | | | |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 17.9% | 49.7% | 25.8% | 6.6% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 8.1% | 45.3% | 29.1% | 17.4% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 13.7% | 27.4% | 39.3% | 19.7% |

While weekly attendance at a religious service was very popular thirty years ago at 76.6% of the cohort, it has dropped significantly to 11.7% in 2008. Occasional and intermittent attendance has become the norm.

| Table 7: Percentage of how often people attend religious service | | | | | |
|--|------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| | | Weekly or more | Once a month and holy days | Once a year | Less than once a year |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | 76.6% | 10.6% | 1.1% | 11.7% ¹¹ |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 70.2% | 21.9% | 2% | 5.9% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 26.2% | 45.4% | 9.1% | 19.3% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 18.8% | 24.8% | 17.7% | 38.5% |

Following a similar pattern, the number of young people who get comfort and strength from religion has also declined over the past thirty years. There has been a drop of over 12%

¹⁰ This was the first year this question was asked, it was not asked in 1981.

among those who got strength and comfort from religion, falling from a figure of 69.3% in 1981 to 58% in 2008.

| Table 8: Percentage of people who 'Get comfort from religion' | | | |
|---|------|-------|-------|
| | | No | Yes |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | 30.7% | 69.3% |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 36.1% | 63.9% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 43.6% | 56.4% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 42% | 58% |

While many do not get comfort from religion in general, the numbers are high when it comes to the importance of attending religious services for births, marriages and deaths.

| Table 9: Percentage of people for whom the following religious services are important: | | | | |
|--|------|-------|----------|-------|
| | | Birth | Marriage | Death |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | | | |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 91.4% | 92% | 96.7% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 90.7% | 95.3% | 98.8% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 90.2% | 86% | 96.6% |

Finally, while strong importance is given to the role of Churches in providing religious services, there is considerably less given to their ability to provide answers to questions surrounding problems of family life, moral and social issues and even spiritual needs. For instance, 78.3% of young people don't believe that the Churches provide answers to moral problems, 77.1% don't believe Churches give answers to problems of family life, 87% don't believe that the Churches give answers to social problems and 49.5% don't believe the Churches give answers to spiritual needs. The numbers of people holding these views has grown over the years.

| Table 10: Percentage of people who don't believe the Churches provide answers to | | | | | |
|--|------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| | | Social problems | Moral problems | Problems of family life | Spiritual needs |
| Wave 1 | 1981 | | 63.3% | 64% | 43% |
| Wave 2 | 1990 | 79.7% | 71.4% | 74.8% | 38.3% |
| Wave 3 | 1999 | 83.3% | 78.3% | 79.9% | 31.6% |
| Wave 4 | 2008 | 87% | 78.3% | 77.1% | 49.5% |

It is important to notice the movement and trend over time in the religious identity of these young people. In most of the categories there is a growing separation from organised

religious belief and practice. Rising numbers of young people are moving away from belief in God, fewer count that belief as important, less belong to a religious denomination, many don't believe in life after death, heaven, hell and sin, almost half are unlikely to count themselves a religious person, with religion becoming less important to them, many rarely attend religious services, except for the religious ceremony to mark births, marriages and deaths and large numbers don't believe that the Churches provide answers to social, moral and familial problems and almost half don't believe that the Churches don't provide answers to spiritual needs.

And so the question can be asked, if this is the cohort from which are students are drawn, can we be confident that our emerging young teachers will be able to teach Catholic religious education, one that has formational and sacramental dimensions to it. Since many young people in Ireland are becoming more unsure of their own relationship with the Catholic Christian tradition – how can they be expected to educate others in this tradition?

Reflection on the Data

Belief in God

A significant finding from the research was the fact that number of young people who professed a belief in God from 1981 – 1999 was remarkably high, with figures remaining above 90 per cent. However, these figures fell to 82.6 per cent in 2008, with 17.4% professing no belief in God. We cannot know from these figures, what sort of God people are professing a belief in or not – is it the God as revealed in the Christian tradition, the One who is love (1 John 4:8,16) or some higher force or being, a cosmic therapist or policeman?

Belonging to religious denomination

Just as the numbers of those professing belief in God decreased between 1999 and 2008, the same can be said for those who belong to a religious denomination. Up to 1999, the numbers describing themselves as belonging to one were over 90 per cent, however, in 2008, this number had fallen to 78.4 per cent. While there is a high instance of 'believing and belonging' among this group, significant shifts have happened between 1999 and 2008. On the one hand, there is a large amount of young people who profess a belief in God and belong to a religious denomination, but on the other, the figures ask questions as to the quality and level of belief and involvement. For instance, over half this group only attend religious services once a year or less, with 24.8 per cent attending monthly and holy days. Roughly a third do not believe in life after death, heaven, or sin; with 61.4 per cent not believing in hell. A little over 40 per cent of them say they don't get comfort from religion and between 70 to 80 per cent of them don't believe that the Churches give answers to social, moral or familial problems, with 50 per cent of them not believing that the Churches give answers to one's spiritual needs.

And whereas there has been some change in the level of belief and belonging, those who consider themselves religious has remained reasonably fixed over the past 30 years, with 56.2

per cent identifying themselves as religious in 1981 and 52.2 per cent doing the same in 2008 (see Table 5).

So where are we now? The figures clearly show a significant number of young people only having a marginal connection with their religious tradition. While they state a belief in God, with over 70 per cent belonging to a religious denomination, the expression in terms of participation at religious services and shared beliefs that are in keeping with the tradition is poor. Their religious tradition is not that important to them and appears to have little meaningful impact on their own identity. While there is a very high recognition of the importance of religious services celebrating births, marriages and deaths, many young people have little appreciation for the institutional church or its teachings.

Conclusion

The research data indicates that while the vast majority of young people in Ireland believe in God, they are moving further and further away from any serious engagement with institutionalised religious belief. The Catholic Church is becoming less significant in their lives. For over two thirds of this cohort, it is not a source of help to them regarding social, moral and family problems and only a half believe it is of value in answering their spiritual needs. The nature of their religious identity is changing, it is less important to them today and they have less need for organised religion. This begs the question: how can they teach religious education in a Catholic school in a meaningful and persuasive manner? Such a question must draw our attention to the Colleges of Education, which prepare teachers for all our schools, as to how they might best prepare students to teach religious education in Catholic primary schools. And that is a whole new paper!

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Speaking With Meaning:
Helping Youth Claim A Public Religious Voice

Abstract

Young people live in a reflexive world. The market, society, and faith communities engage dialogically with young people each in their own native tongue. Evidence suggests that American culture has a seductive pattern of privatizing religious authority, even as concerns the common civil good. Using the work of Martin Luther, Jurgen Habermas, Thomas Groome and Eboo Patel this paper offers theory and method by which Christian communities can help young people claim a public religious voice.

Much has been written concerning the National Study on Youth and Religion. Various interpretations have examined the lack of discursive ethical and theological commitments in the voices of the youth. One way that some have approached this is the overly privatized nature of value systems among the youth, that is, a lack of a “public religious voice.” It is urgent that Religious Education develops theories and methods for relating religious voice to civil and public spheres¹. This paper intends to offer a preliminary starting point to this conversation, beginning with the theory of “voice” and following with its relevant application and development.

Lev Vygotsky studied voice as a subject’s internal and external mastery of the tool of language (Vygotski*i, 1962). He found a direct correlation between the development of language with external experiences and challenges. Language use was primarily a social tool through which words and memories were used to creatively abstract thought beyond the concrete limits of a challenging situation in cooperation with adults (Vygotski*i, 1962, pp. 136-137). Voice represents this development from childhood onward of the subject’s skill at language directly correlated with the development of creativity and imagination.

Inner-speech is thus directly related to intelligence. Language mastery and intelligence are linked as concrete constructions of humanity’s external social reality. The self’s history, creativity and dreams find their unity in the voice. Through external social-speaking humans can participate together in social reality in order, through communicative action, to cooperate in problem solving. Voice is necessary for individuals to speak to influence others and cooperate in external activity (Vygotski*i & Cole, 1978, pp. 52-57).

¹ My political philosophy is influenced by the work of Jurgen Habermas (Habermas, 1984), (Habermas, 1974), and select Christian interlocutors namely, Don S. Browning & Francis Schussler Fiorenza (Browning & Fiorenza, 1992), Gary Simpson (Simpson, 2002) and Elaine Graham (Graham, 2002)

Vygotsky's work highlights that the cooperation of voices is key to social cooperation. Through voice, humanity transcends isolated experiences of the world by creating, sustaining and participating in a shared social reality. Thus, to participate in "deliberate democracy" persons must develop an intentional voice. How might religious communities themselves understand their responsibility in both private and public realms? How can this understanding positively impact youth as they develop and claim a public religious voice to participate intentionally in this process?

Throughout history, youth have given time, talents and passions to speak and act outwardly to affect a better world. Take for example the French Revolution; it was nothing less than France's teenagers who offered leadership of vision and passion to lead the French people to demand liberty, equality and brotherhood. We saw the same phenomena in the summer of 2010 in the revolts that made up the so-called "Arab Spring", which was initially and primarily a young people's movement.

Eboo Patel, however, reminds us that Al Qaeda and similar terror organizations have connected with the voice and passion of youth. Terror recruiters are gifted at speaking to young people's desire to make a difference. Once they have connected, terror groups bring youth into potent socializing networks and help them claim a distorted public religious voice. That voice speaks and acts towards the external world in violent and destructive ways. Patel states: "Young people wanna impact the world. They want to leave their footprint on earth, on the world, and they're gonna do it, somehow. If the only way they get a chance to do it is by destroying things, then we shouldn't be surprised that is the path they take" (Tippett, 2007).

It may be hard for many Westerners to imagine a productive public role for young people. Our collective conscience has little memory of teenage youth beyond the context of young people spending the majority of their time sequestered in an age-specific social cohort. For most of human history however, teenage young people spent the majority of their time apprenticing under adults for a vocational future. Mentorships placed maturing brains and minds in the midst of trustworthy social structures that provided scaffolding for the development of maturing voices.

Many religious communities struggle to see a connection between their private religious voice and the public sphere. Due to an inability to imagine how their religious practices and mentorship should connect with the public sphere, many assume that religious voices rightly remain silent in the public sphere and thus our religious communities resist claiming a public religious voice.

What is more many may ask that their religious communities keep utterly silent concerning public or "political" issues. When this occurs the possible scaffolding that could be built in religious social circles is subverted. This has most certainly not always been the case. Perhaps it would help religious communities in the West to imagine a different model for approaching the two-sphere model from which the private-public dichotomy arises.

On the eve of the Enlightenment, The Reformer, Martin Luther, described a two-sphere model that separated the state from the private lives of citizens (Wright, 2010). For Luther, the sole role of the state was to protect its citizens. The state is called to do this in two ways, first by limiting evil and second by encouraging external righteousness. Ultimately however, the authority of the state ends here. With Luther, the primary sphere of God's creative and governing action in the world is in the

private sphere, namely in families (Luther & Lull, 1989, pp. 429-459). Luther valued family and the loving nurture and education of children above all else. Luther comments, “A city’s best and greatest welfare, safety and strength consist in its having many able learned wise honorable and well-educated citizens, who can then readily gather, protect and properly use treasure and all manner of property” (Luther & Lull, 1989, p. 465).

Luther sought to value the ordinary lives of the faithful above the privilege of the princes. Luther envisioned a theological world that placed the state in service of its citizens. This required the private nurture and education of children and youth so that they might always be free to pursue inner-righteousness. His 1524 letter to the princes, demanding they establish a public school system, Luther stressed clearly and passionately the importance of teaching young boys and girls the Christian gospel, literacy, and wisdom in general. Luther went so far as to comment, “Indeed for what purpose do we older folks exist other than to care for, instruct and bring up the young” (Luther & Lull, 1989, p. 464).

Imagine a young man in Luther’s day spending his hours in the care of responsible adults. A fourteen-year-old boy may have spent the morning studying basic grammar in school and the afternoon working in the local printing press with his father. He may have practiced the committed work habits of his older mentors daily, shaping his voice through those sustained interactions. Picture the formative exchange that would have taken place as the adults passionately engaged in dialogue about the reformation-writings of Luther they were printing together, doubtlessly debating the virtues of the Reformation itself all the while. Certainly the young man would have found his nascent voice in his youth participation in lively debates about popes, the princes and the future of Catholic Europe. Perhaps he would also daily witness his father taking a side route on his way home from the shop to share the family’s hard-earned wages with the destitute widow and her children living blocks away in the boy’s own hamlet. Daily his voice would develop through proximity to their practices of communicative action, voice, charity and justice making.

For our conversation we would do well to stress that adult mentorships and intergenerational praxis, like those described in our imaginary print shop, form what Lev Vygotsky referred to as a “Zone of Proximal Development”, or “ZPD” (Vygotski*i* & Cole, 1978, pp. 84-91). In a ZPD learners develop skills with particular tools. Notably for Vygotsky they develop their mastery of humanity’s paramount tool: language. Whenever emerging, unskilled subjects utilize a tool alongside older, more highly adept counterparts, development occurs. Pedagogy that intentionally develops the use of language and by extension voice is always and primarily social in nature. The public voice is developed through engagement in a Zone of Proximal Development through conversation about ethics, morals and deliberative democracy.

In order then to help youth claim a public religious voice, religious communities must develop social practices capable of resisting the sequester of generational cohorts in American society; growing since the dawn of the high school era. Many congregations have developed practical ways of doing just that: congregational mentoring programs, intergenerational worship, intentional structuring of congregational-curriculum around inter-generational interaction, the list could go on

and on. However inter-generational ministry is not a simple guarantee of developing public religious voice. Faith communities with no practice of public religious communicative action will develop a privatized ethical and moral voice.

Nurturing such a voice requires two further assets. The first is an appropriate pedagogy. Such pedagogy must facilitate public communicative action within the congregational scaffolding, while also intentionally honoring and nurturing the voices of all the groups. Secondly, structures and practices must be built across religious traditions in which the inter-religious communicative action can take place.

Thomas Groome's five-movement method seeks explicitly to create dialectical and dialogical learning through empowering the voice of the learner. If engaged intentionally, it is an exemplary method for creating a ZPD helpful for youth in claiming a public religious voice. Groome offers a possible response to our first need to facilitate public communicative action.

Groome's pedagogical method centers on a generative theme that offers the possibility to learn together about any topic that seems right and relevant to the educator (Groome, 2011, p. 304). This means that the generative theme may be a particular confessional, moral or even public policy concern of a particular community. Explicitly claiming a more complex public voice requires that young people have regular access to intentional communities, grounded in practicing intentional democracy as a part of the natural fabric of their community's praxis.

Groome's first movement introduces the topic by inviting conversation among the learners concerning the generative theme's effect on their own lives (Groome, 2011, p. 309). This movement encourages learners to explore the generative theme in the same breath that they socially exercise their voices together. The second movement invites the group to "reflect critically" on the theme (Groome, 2011, p. 313). This step further deepens the methods engagement with the learners' individual voices, empowering them to direct their own learning together through communicative action. Thus together they develop their voices by speaking and hearing each one's personal connotations, experiences and loyalties regarding the generative theme. This "social-scaffolding" is exemplary of the pedagogy through which Vygotsky found that personal voice is developed and claimed.

Movement three lets the faith-tradition speak its "story and vision"; one might say that in movement three the teacher makes space for the historic voice of the faith to speak (Groome, 2011, p. 318). This movement is the key to utilizing Groome's method to engage the development of a public religious voice. Here the voice of the religious tradition is itself expressed to the learners. The group dialogically engages the tradition's voice communally and simultaneously as individual subjects with particular voices. Together they hear and explore the tradition.

Finally movements four (Groome, 2011, p. 324) and five (Groome, 2011, p. 329) draw the previous steps together. In movement four the group is asked to "appropriate" the voice and wisdom of the faith to their contemporary situation. Movement four asks the community to "re-voice" the conversation having listened together to the voice of the faith on the theme. Finally movement five requests a committed response from the group. We might say movement five literally is a moment that asks the learners in some way or another to claim a personal voice.

I wish to highlight three particular virtues of Groome's methodology for developing public communicative scaffolding. The first is his primary commitment to dialogue as the ground of learning. Groome's method stresses intentional formation that honors, even stresses, the voices of the learners and of the group. Thus youth are never told in Groome's method what to think, rather, they are invited to consider in their own voice, the wisdom and authority of the tradition. Secondly, Groome grounds formation in "shared praxis" (Groome, 1980, pp. 250-255)². This means the formation of voice that occurs is connected with practicing that which matters. This empowers the translating of particular religious affections into the subjective voice, sending it out into the world. Thirdly, Groome's method creates space for the voice of the tradition, the voices of the learners and the day's pressing public issues to correlate in constructive dialect.³ Within Groome's method public issues can be brought into private religious space while also structuring safe communicative action.

Hopefully readers have begun to imagine replacing the aforementioned 16th century print shop mentoring experiences within the social structures and praxis of our contemporary religious communities. However cooperative democracy requires transcending the boundaries of particular traditions. Eboo Patel's Inter-Faith Youth Core (IFYC) is trailblazing the way for the future inter-religious cooperation in deliberative democracy.

IFYC provides youth of all faiths with a shared faith experience and formation of a public religious voice across traditions (Patel, 2012). Patel stresses that the influences in young persons that shape voices that construct good in the world work in similar ways to those that shape voices that participate in religious violence. He asserts that when one listened Osama Bin Laden speak to young people, one got the sense Bin Laden understood their passions and longings and was able to connect with them deeply (Patel, 2010, p. 130). Patel comments, "Many mainstream religious institutions ignore young people or, worse, think that their role should be limited to designing the annual t-shirt. By contrast, religious extremists build their institutions around the desire of young people to have a clear identity and make a powerful impact" (Patel, 2010, p. 143).

Patel's approach is itself based in praxis. The first broad movement in IFYC is to engage in "service learning...hospitality, cooperation, compassion, mercy" (Patel, 2010). Patel asserts that in this shared engagement learners are "seeing the best in somebody else's tradition just as you are practicing the best in yours" (Tippett, 2007). Service is always coupled with a second movement, namely communicative action. The youth gather with adults from across the tradition to speak together about their motivation for service in care in their own voice and the voice of their faith. Patel describes hearing youth speak to each other about the best of their faith's great themes: youth speaking of Sura 93, Matthew 25, Tikkun Olam and the like to describe their religious motivations for acting together towards building social justice.

² Here, Groome uses Piaget rather than Vygotsky. However Caryl Emerson has offered a demonstrated the relation "voice" in Vygotsky as a metaphor for approaching Piaget, (Emerson, 1983).

SPEAKING WITH MEANING

Ultimately three aspects of Patel's program offer indispensable worth in claiming a public religious voice. The first and most obvious is the creation of safe space to share faith across traditions. The students speak in their own voice their understanding of the tradition. They learn together that their traditions are distinct in their wisdom and theology. Patel has stressed that students tend to be deepened and strengthened in their own particular faiths even as they deepen their love of the neighbor's tradition.

Secondly, Patel's program grounds its formation in praxis and action rather than theory and belief. They form their voice by working together towards justice and speaking their faith to each other in the process. In this way they engage the best aspect of what modernity offered, namely their shared engagement in physical, material and historical reality. They work together towards building the world, and then explore the different reasons they did this. In the process they engage the difficult process of shaping voices that both value the private particulars of their faiths and act in public partnership in the construction of that vision.

Third, Patel's program practices building public cooperation through communicative action. The youth in Patel's program learn how to communicate constructively. In the process they also become the complex network of leadership needed for the future generations. Thus they learn constructively what issues are up for partnering public conversation and which are privately protected for the sake of inner-righteousness. Patel's program paints an exemplary picture of a claimed public religious voice.

It has become customary to describe Western pluralism as a "problem" or a "challenge". In reality, the promise of peaceful pluralism is one of the great theological accomplishments of Western democracy. This however begs a renewed and reinvigorated civil sphere. If democracy is to continue to serve the people, it is in desperate need of its religious traditions to find constructive ways to cooperate beyond the precious particulars of the faith in order to view together historical, material, and social reality.

Historically, finding a path through social growing pains has required empowering the rising generation. Religious education empowers young people in the fabric of private religious communities' methods, practices and communal life. Developing public religious voices among youth blesses the world by creating the promise of deliberative democracy. It is an urgent call to religious education that we begin engaging the process responsibly and immediately.

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SHOULD STATE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

-An Example from Turkey-

ABSTRACT

As education of religion is a debated field this situation dates back to its being private branch in changing education system. However debates come until today. Different comments, which come up with the coming of new secularist system, reawakened the education of religion and since 1946 with transition to multi-party system education of religion became a lively matter in the agenda of policy. In March 30, 2012 a new law, which regulates education system as 4+4+4 and makes it obligatory 12 years on and off, was accepted. In this system Life of the prophet Muhammed and Quran became elective courses in curriculum. As a result, arguments about the education of religion in Turkey grew violent again.

In this article, firstly history of religious education in Turkey is mentioned. Then necessities of religious education are discussed in the light of discussions on new education system. At last the position of State in Religious Education are discussed from the example of Turkish situation.

Introduction

Education of religion at schools in Turkey has always been a debated matter in every period since the ends of the 19th century. Until the western style schools, which were opened before Tanzimat Reform Era and got involve in education system, education of religion was arranged as the only main subject not as a branch subject in Madrasah which is an old education institution. But in western style schools this situation was vice versa education of religion was only a part of curriculum. (Zengin, 2004)

In this period until republic, education of religion continued to be a part of general education in western style schools but at the same time existence of madrasahs continued as well. And consequently traditional and contemporary education institutions coexisted.

1-Religious Education before 1980

Changes starting with republic affected education system as well. In March 3, 1924 a new law on unification of education came into force and according to this law all madrasahs were closed and all educational institutions in Turkey were joined to Ministry of National Education. With the proclamation of republic in new policy this law also determined the position of education of religion. Accordingly Quran and religion education started to take part from second year of primary school. To educate religious experts, Faculty of Theology was opened. Also to meet the demands of public religious vocational high schools were opened. Education of religion in the early years of republic aimed at supporting the modernization activities and correcting the misinterpretation in the area of religion. After the law on unification of education came into force changes in policy understanding also affected the general education. The first manner of application unfortunately was not be able to preserved and later it caused to start a problematic period in terms of education of religion.

The first problem in the education of religion started in 1926. The length of religious course was one hour in the curriculum of 3rd, 4th, 5th grade primary school students. And according to the 30.11.1929 dated decision of Ministry of National Education Board of

Education and Discipline firstly in city primary schools education of religion took part an student did not get exam from this education and later according to another 29.10.1930 dated decision only voluntary 5th grade students could get education of religion which takes 30 minutes on every Thursday afternoon. (Doğan 2003; 616-120)

Although education of religion took part in curriculum, according to a regulation it was removed from village primary schools in 1927 and later in 1936 education of religion was removed completely however in village primary schools it was continued out of curriculum until 1938. But it was witnessed that no education of religion took part in the curriculum of any school according to the regulation done in 1939. In the program development activities which were started to be done after 1927, education of religion was removed from secondary school and between 1929 and 1931 it was gradually removed from teacher training schools as well. (Doğan 2003; 616)

In this process in 1929 religious vocational high schools and in 1933 Today's Istanbul University Faculty of Theology were closed and there was no institution providing education of religion or religious staff at that time. (Yürük 2012; 107)

Removal of education of religion and its institutions from education system ended up with tragic results. Negotiations, which were done in the 7th CHP congress that gathered in November 1947, are interesting in terms reflecting the situation without education of religion in recent years. Because in this congress CHP Sinop Deputy Vehbi Dayıbaş stated the complaints of voters with such words: *"Christians go to church and pray there but what our children will do and how are they going to pray? They are devoid of necessary religious knowledge! For what reason I think education of religion should be given."* Abdulkadir Güney, representative from Çorum, also stated his ideas with such words: *"According to analyses that we have done it is clear that those nations who support their religion have always been pioneer in social development, those who does not care their religion have been undeveloped. While all world nations appreciate our religion and holy book Quran why do we ignore our religion's development?"* By asking such questions he expressed the results of deprival of education of religion. Sinan Tekelioğlu, deputy of Seyhan, made a great speech in the congress and left nothing to say with his such words: *"Christian, Jewish and Turkish Sects had opened schools for themselves and raised priest there! Let me tell you what I heard from villagers, they don't have anyone to bury their death. Today, gambling and drinking alcohol are in an unbelievably high level. There is no fear of God in such a country of faithless nation. There is no respect for father, mother an elder people. When they are asked who is God? Children cannot give any answer, they don't know their God!"* Such similar complaints were expressed in 1948 dated Selamet Mecmuası (a kind of magazine) by the editor of Cumhuriyet newspaper Nadir Nadi. He complained about the lack of imam (someone leading prayer) and muezzin in Villages and mosques. (Tanrıover 1948; 457)

After these quarrels in 1948, education of Religion came into force at primary schools but it was out of curriculum. And in 1949 Ankara University Faculty of Theology was opened later in 1951 religious vocational high schools were opened again to continue education of religion. (Öcal 2012; 218-219)

2- Religious Education after 1980

Until 1980 Military Coup religion courses were elective. September 12 1980 is the beginning of a new period in terms of education of religion in Turkey. In this period one of the most important event is that education of religion became obligatory under the roof of formal education. Problematic events in 1970s played an important role in education of religion's being obligatory. 1970s is the period when problems were not debated in good conditions and ideologies frequently conflicted with one another. In ideas and it left

saddening bloody memories in the mind of Turkish Nation. After such saddening events military management realized that it was necessary to solve all the problems by re-unifying national values and to reach their aim they started to create a new state understanding by beginning from constitution. (Ayhan 1999; 252, Altaş 2002; 146)

Apart from the elective Islamic courses before 1982 religious culture and moral knowledge lesson taking part in the curriculum to support the unity in the society and to know the society where everybody lives was designed as a lesson which comprises all sects. In that period Prof.Dr. Beyza Bilgin struggled to make the education of religion obligatory at schools and she explained why the name of the course changed as religious culture and moral knowledge when it becomes obligatory. The reason was to keep all the sects away from insisting on one another. So every sects could be represented freely under religious culture and moral knowledge. According to Bilgin, Turkey adopted obligatory religious culture and moral knowledge lesson after experiencing different education of religion systems. It is necessary that the adopted lesson should not cause conflicts and it should support the social unity and solidarity also it should be complied with the facts of society. (Bilgin 2007; 66-81) For that reason it was needed to have supplementary religion education models which meet the demands of society: Turkey tried to meet her demand with the mentioned model above.

Turkish Republic had witnessed a seventy year experience in terms of secularity. In this process especially in the area of religious education there were many applications. Firstly education of religion and then removal of it later optional religious courses and ultimately obligatory religious education.... This was the last point that we have reached. Having education of religion in state schools is the result of experiences. (Tosun 2005, 108)

Prof.Dr. Cemal Tosun who is one of the leading religious education academician in our country argued about the necessity of religion courses in a secular country and he stated that religion has social, cultural, philosophical, universal and legal essentials. He also explained his ideas with such words: “One of the basic functions of the educations is to reveal and support the skills of all individuals and to meet the basic demands consonantly. It is asserted that religion is necessary to meet the need of faith which is one of the important needs of human being. According to these assessments sense of religion is an inborn and ongoing ability and need. It is an ability because every human being has tendency and ability to believe in Supreme Being. It is sense religion and faith are the features that make human being a human being. This religion sense of human being is infinite. But by hook or by crook he satisfies himself. What expected from the education is to prevent people from this random or faulty satisfaction and to enhance the physical and spiritual ability of individuals. To separate the religious need and feeling from the other needs or disregard them is against the aims of education. The other important subject that should not be disregard is that human being is a social essence. Another vital task expected from education is to socialize new generations. Socialization can be defined as; to enable people comply with the society that they live in. (Tosun 2005)

Education of religion can help people to socialize in two ways.

- To provide background experience to those who want to attend religious activities by teaching them necessary knowledge, attitude and behaviors.
- To provide positive appreciation and better comprehension to those who do not attend religious activities done by others.

Education is to convey the cultural heritages to new generations which are not obstacle to advance. In every society's cultural heritage there are of course concepts that come from religious knowledge. Religion is also a decisive element in a nation's or society's identity. Religion is a part of culture as important as language and history. Moreover it affects the other

cultural elements as well. Consequently religions is necessary to teach as it is both an element of culture and its affective factor. Otherwise new generations will have identity problem and they will not be able to appreciate and comprehend the cultural values and it would result in cultural degeneration. (Tosun 2005)

As some people stated obligatory religious courses in Turkey were not put into curriculum to insist on a specific sect or belief. Religious culture and moral knowledge course was designed within the frame of basic values of Islam and as it comprises of all sects it left nothing for misinterpretation. With this education programme students are aimed to have true knowledge about religion and morality and to enhance their basic skills while contributing to the general aims of national education. While religious culture and moral knowledge course teaching programmes were being improved, research oriented information about Islam and other religions was used and the whole inconsistent information was removed. In Islam oriented datas Quran and sunnah centered consolidative approach was applied. Basic values of Islam which covers related issues were given high priority. These values that are related to faith, prayer and morality were cared to be on the common grounds based on Quran and sunnah. The main aims is to provide useful and true information about religious, cultural and moral values. All religious and moral values which are appropriate for this approach became the subject of teaching but it was also paid much attention not to insist on a doctrine (especially based on a specific sect.) (Kızılabdullah&Yürük 2008, 32-40)

3-Current Situation of Religious Education

In March of 2012 Turkish education system was changed. The primary education stages, which includes the first two stages of four years' education each, will entail four years of mandatory elementary education, followed by an additional mandatory four years of middle school education, in which students will be able to choose whether they want to study at a general education middle school or a religious vocational middle school, which are referred to as Imam Hatip schools. After being shut down as part of the strict regulations enforced during the February 28th 'postmodern coup'¹, the new legislation includes the reopening of Imam Hatip middle schools. Primary education establishments will be set up separately as independent elementary schools and middle schools. (Genç 2012;39)

Courses on the Quran and the life of the Prophet will be offered as electives for middle school and high school students. The Ministry of Education may also prepare elective courses on Christianity and Judaism. Middle school education will be made mandatory beginning in the 2012-2013 school years. (Genç 2012;40) And also Religious Culture and Ethics courses

¹ The 1997 military memorandum refers to the decisions issued by the Turkish Military leadership on a National Security Council meeting at 28 February 1997 which initiated the 28 February process that precipitated the resignation of prime minister Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party and the end of his coalition government. As the Erbakan government was forced out without dissolving the parliament or suspending the constitution. At the National Security Council (MGK) meeting on 28 February 1997, the generals submitted their views on issues regarding secularism and political Islam on Turkey to the government. The MGK made several decisions during this meeting and the Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan from the Welfare Party was forced to sign the decisions. The decisions were intended to protect the secularist ideology in Turkey. Some of the decisions that Erbakan was forced to sign are:

- Forcing people to donate skins of sacrificed animals to the Turkish Aviation Board (THK)
- Strict headscarf ban in universities
- Eight year primary school education
- Shutting down Koran schools and Imam-Hatip middle schools
- Abolition of Tarikats (sufi orders)
- Control of media groups which object to the decisions of Yüksek Askerî Şûra (Supreme Military Council) to fire religious soldiers on claims of "irtica" ("reaction"/"reactionaryism")

still compulsory and were to be taught from fourth grade primary to the end of middle school for two hours per week; and, in high school, for one hour.

Conclusion

There are a lot of examples from the history of Turkey for State should take or take not responsibility for religious education. When state does not take any responsibility for Religious education, Turkey suffered great hardships. In the light of all these experiences, Turkey take responsibility for religious education.

In recent education system coming in to force in March 2012 there are elective courses such as Life of Prophet Muhammed and Quran , but it does not necessarily require that religious culture and moral knowledge course should be removed from the curriculum. Because this course addresses all people in terms of its context and it keeps students away from alienation to his own society and world by means of gaining objective information about his own religion and other religions.

It is important for state to take responsibility about religious education to provide the correct religious knowledge and ensure to social cohesion. State should give information for their citizens about religious and cultural life of their community. Otherwise we meet the following three conditions are

1. People who receive religious education in school.
2. People who receive religious education in private individuals.
3. People who have never receive religious

This situation is dangerous for the establishment of social peace in multicultural world. Prevent the recurrence of these situations, and establishment of social peace, State must take responsibility for the religious education.

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‘Negotiating and constructing religious identities’

Abstract

What is ‘religious identity’ and how may schooling impact upon it? In this paper, I present an elementary theory of religious identity construction and negotiation, drawing upon the theoretical framework that emerged from extensive fieldwork as part of a study of adolescent Christians, Jews and Muslims in England undertaken for my DPhil at the University of Oxford. I suggest that a conception of religious identity negotiation and construction based upon sociological and anthropological theories has much potential for educators and educational researchers. This is because to understand the impact of schooling on religious identity construction, a theory must be sensitive to social context, structural factors and power-relations – and how such phenomena may be interpreted and acted upon by individuals. In the course of this argument, I refer to important empirical and theoretical studies in comparable areas of inquiry.

Introduction: conceptions of religious identity in educational research

Reflecting a dichotomy in identity theory more widely, conceptions of religious identity in educational research can be separated into two principal groups: those that assume a psychological conception of identity, and those that assume an anthropological or cultural studies conception of identity. The former, (e.g. Markstrom-Adams & Smith, 1996; Hunsberger et al., 2001; Rymarz & Graham, 2006; Bertram-Troost et al., 2006, 2007; Armet, 2009), adopt concepts that centre upon religious identity *development* or *formation* as a psychological process, while the latter focus on religious identity *construction* as a socially located process (e.g. Østberg, 2000; Zine, 2001; Peek, 2005).

Studies of religious identity development in the psychological tradition use the adolescent identity development theory of the Freudian psychologist Erikson (1968) as their reference point by employing frameworks or measures derived from Marcia’s (1966, 1980) operationalization of Erikson’s theory. Marcia focused upon the psychological content of Erikson theory that posited adolescence as a crucial time in the human life-cycle consisting of a psychosocial ‘identity crisis’ whereby identity diffusion is overcome by adolescents’ ‘growing occupational and ideological commitment’ (Marcia, 1966, p. 551).

Studies of religious identity development in the Marcian mould typically assume that there are four basic identity statuses through which adolescents may progress in order to achieve a coherent self-image and healthy psychological unity: *foreclosure*, that a choice of identity is made but without exploration; *diffusion*, no identity is formed and there has been no exploration; *moratorium*, no identity has been formed, but exploration has taken place; and *identity achievement*, identity has been formed after exploration has taken place. Quantitative studies of religious identity development use measures of identity status based on this model in statistical tests with measures of religiosity in order to understand the relationship between measures of religious socialization, or of religiosity, and identity status.

Studies of this kind can be criticised on account of the assumptions of their conceptual frameworks. Eriksonian-Marcian frameworks (and studies using other positivist models of religiosity) focus upon participants’ interior psychological self-concept, rather than the cultural

processes and causal factors within schools that shape religious identity. Schachter (2005) and Vissel-Vogel et al. (2012) argue that these models of development can therefore fail to adequately account for the content and context of religious development. Schachter (2005) also demonstrates, through use of a counter-example case-study, that the assumption of a standardised, universal structure to identity development in the Marcian paradigm may also fail to capture individual courses of religious identity development in adolescence.

Marcia's appropriation of Erikson's theory has drawn substantial criticism because it fails to adequately account for Erikson's own view of the importance of cultural and contextual factors in identity development (Schachter, 2005; Faircloth, 2012; Flum & Kaplan, 2012). A reading of Erikson's classics: *Young Man Luther* (1958); *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (1968); *Gandhi's Truth* (1969); and, *Life History and the Historical Moment* (1975), confirm this critique. It is because of the relational complexity between context, culture and the individual that Erikson considers the concept of identity as 'unfathomable' as it is 'indispensable' and 'all-pervasive' (1968, p. 9). Recognition of Erikson's original complex and context-specific theory of identity development has led religious identity theorists, while avoiding Marcia's paradigm specifically, to re-appropriate his theories to examine religious identity development in contemporary contexts (Schachter, 2005; Rich & Schachter, 2012; Visser-Vogel et al., 2012). Researchers have also modified the Marcian framework to accommodate additional measures to evaluate contextual factors (Betram-Troost et al., 2007); while others have used observation, semi-structured interviews or unstructured 'life-story' interviews in order to explore the causal and contextual factors and processes in religious identity formation (Streib, 2001; Schachter, 2005; Good & Willoughby, 2007; Visser-Vogel et al., 2012).

Paradigms of identity status development in the psychological tradition entail the existence of an 'achieved' identity. Archer (2003) makes a criticism of studies of ethnic identity using the Marcian paradigm that is also pertinent to a critique of its application to religious identity. She observes that when ethnicity is incorporated in an Eriksonian-Marcian or positivist model it becomes an essentialised 'fixed' and 'static' concept, susceptible to stereotypical and neo-colonial biases (Archer 2003, p. 28). Studies of religious identity using an Eriksonian-Marcian framework (or those resting upon other psychological measures based upon essentialised notions of religiosity) also assume religious identity is a psychological commitment to measurable (orthodox or stereotypical) beliefs and practices. This criticism also applies to conceptions of religious identity such as Rymarz and Graham's (2006) notion of 'characteristic practices', a whole body of research in the tradition of Leslie Francis (e.g. Francis 1988, 1992, 2001; Francis & Kay, 1996) and theories of 'faith development' in the tradition of Goldman (1964) and Fowler (1981). Although not necessarily using the terminology of 'religious identity' *per se*, studies in these traditions conceptualise religiosity and faith development as uniform processes that are primarily concerned with individuals' assent to largely static beliefs and practices. They can therefore also be criticised on account of their theological and psychological assumptions, particularly apparent in the case of Goldman (1964) and Fowler (1981), who, following Piaget's theory of cognitive development posit religious understanding necessarily develops more complexity with age (Hyde, 1990).

In contrast to studies that conceive of religious identity in terms of exploration or commitment at the psychological 'core' of the individual, some researchers have conceptualised religious identity by drawing upon the research traditions of cultural anthropology and symbolic interactionism and concepts related to role-performance (Goffman, 1959) and boundary maintenance (Barth, 1969). Studies using sociological and anthropological frameworks to

investigate religious identity (e.g. Jacobson, 1997; Østberg, 2000; Zine, 2001; Peek, 2005) focus on cultural and social processes that impact upon, and constitute, the construction of religious identities, particularly upon Muslim children or adolescents in Western societies and educational institutions. The difference in conceptual frameworks employed between these and psychological studies is reflected in the use of terminology. Identity ‘development’ and ‘formation’ (terms that have connotations of a universal identity-teleology) are used less than terms that seek to express a more dynamic, dialogic, and transient conception of identity as a socially located process.

These studies of religious identity suggest an alternative way of conceptualising religious identity from essentialist conceptions. Rather than as a hierarchy of psychological statuses, or individuals’ commitment to fixed, beliefs and practices, these studies assume and reveal the flexible nature and mutability of religious identities in their socio-cultural contexts, and how religious identities are shaped by socio-political processes and phenomena, including educational institutions. One significant aspect of studies such as Zine (2001) and Peek (2005) is that they show religious identities can be constructed in response to society’s representation of religious adolescents’ traditions as part of a process of role-performance. The authors interpret this process as one necessary to maintain ethnic and religious identities either as shifting boundaries between groups (Jacobson, 1997), or in order to preserve religious beliefs and practices (Zine, 2001; Peek, 2005).

Religious identity negotiation and construction

The term ‘identity negotiation’ originated in social psychology (Swann, 1987). Swann was concerned with the processes that affected changes to personal identity. His terminology and a similar concept of ‘negotiation’ as a socially located process of identity construction, has been appropriated and further developed by identity theorists interested in issues of political and cultural representation. For example, in his classic text on identity, *The Politics of Recognition* (1994), Charles Taylor drawing on the work of Mead (1934), appeals to the dialogic aspect of identity negotiation. Scholars in the field of cultural studies interested in issues surrounding race and ethnicity in particular, (e.g. Hall ed., 1997) also conceptualise identity as a negotiated process. Fixed notions of identity cannot account for the impact of individuals’ changing and conflicting experiences in the unsettled cultural and diverse contexts of postmodern societies. Hall (1996), argues that in the context of globalisation and post-colonialism, essentialist and modernist concepts of identity are not viable in understanding how ‘fragmented and fractured’ concepts of self are ‘multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions’ (Hall 1996, p. 4) that enable identity construction as part of the postmodern ‘endlessly performative self’ (Hall, 1996, p. 1).

A key assumption of this critique is that ‘identity’ makes no sense outside of a system of representation in social space (Taylor, 1994; Hall, 1996; Gee, 2000). To have an identity is to be recognised as such, and to represent oneself as such, as part of an on-going dialogic process within a culturally determined system of representation. The multifaceted nature of postmodern societies means that identity is therefore constantly constructed across conflicting systems of representation and recognition. Because identity-processes are concerned with how individuals construct their sense of self in dialogue with systems of representation in a plural society, harm can be caused through mis-representation.

A body of literature concerning ethnic, national and racial identity construction among adolescent minorities in educational contexts (often in diaspora) draws upon this concept of identity negotiation (e.g. Jackson, 1999; Stritikus & Nguyen, 2007; Stewart, 2008; Chen, 2010;

Awokoya, 2012). These studies provide, or apply, a conceptual framework that can account for the impact of conflicting systems of representation and their power structures upon minority groups' identity construction in schools.

Gee (2000) gives further theoretical insight into how such identity processes may be conceptualised in school settings, and how they can be recognised as relating to different systems of authority. 'Identity' can be defined as 'what kind of person' someone is recognised as, or presents themselves as, in a given circumstance (Gee, 2000, p. 99). In the sense of identity as 'kind-of-person', Gee suggests there is fourfold typology of identities that are underwritten by different sources of socially constructed power: 'Nature-identity (from a state in nature); 'Institution-identity' (a position within institutions); 'Discourse-identity' (individual character traits as recognised in the dialogue or discourse of individuals, such as being 'charismatic'); and, 'Affinity-identity' (shared in the practice of affinity groups) (Gee, 2000, p. 100). According to Gee, being African American can be an Institutional identity (I-identity) because social and educational institutions may ascribe certain positions to African American students, for example, by direct discrimination or institutional racism. It can also be understood as a Nature identity (N-identity) when considered in a racial or biological sense. African American identity can be recognised and represented in the way people talk and act in dialogue as a Discourse (D-identity), or by performing practices or holding beliefs that show an affinity with other African Americans (A-identity). All of these kinds of identity rely upon social and historical systems of representation and recognition (Discourses), but an individual has some agency in terms of which kind of identity they may seek to be recognised as, perform or emphasise.

Gee's typology may be used as a theoretical illustration of how religious identities could be contextually constructed in different ways, drawing upon, and reacting to, different sources of social authority. But it is important to note that while Gee's typology is useful in expressing the nature of shifting identities according to systems of representation, his concept of an A-identity – such as a 'Star Trek fan' (2000, p. 101) – can be considered weak in comparison to affinity with a religious tradition or community. Gee's concept of A-Identity does not fully encapsulate the binding nature of religious affiliation upon individuals, in particular as a commitment to transcendental beliefs which exert a powerful impact upon the way individuals interpret reality. Jackson's (1999) concept of identity negotiation may be relevant here as it incorporates the notion of worldview and self-definition as an integrated facet of identity negotiation. In his study of the experiences of African Americans, Jackson (1999) develops the concept of cultural identity negotiation to account for 'a communication phenomenon among two or more individuals that is driven by message exchange over a period of time.' Given that religious identities are likely to draw from, and entail, comprehensive systems of meaning and understanding, Jackson's definition of cultural identity negotiation captures a nuance that may be applicable to the experience of religious adolescents as it considers identity as a corollary and condition of worldview as well as a form of representation and performance.

The use of the term 'religious identity' to refer to the identification of an individual with a religious tradition was first introduced by Hans Mol (1976, 1979) and later expounded by Seul (1999). These scholars argue that because religions rest on metaphysical and ethical beliefs drawn from a shared religious tradition, they form a key influence on an individual's perspectives of themselves and the world. Seul (1999) argues that religion provides the strongest kind of identity for individuals and groups. Religious norms and values are communicated through texts and practices and because of their appeal to the transcendent they have a greater influence on people than other kinds of influences.

The importance of religious beliefs, practices and group identification to the conceptualisation of religious identity is recognised in studies in the psychological tradition of religious identity research which use measures of practices, beliefs etc. to analyse the development of religious identity. The criticism of these concepts of religious identity given above is not intended to dispute the impact of distinctive characteristics of religious traditions (beliefs, practices, ways-of-being and ways-of-seeing the world) on people's lives, worldviews, self-concepts and self-representation. Instead, the above critique is intended to demonstrate that some concepts of religious identity are more sensitive and sophisticated in accounting for the complexity of religious identity construction as an on-going social process in a plural or postmodern context. Identity is a useful concept in the study of religion because it 'effectually unites a multiplicity of concerns' (Bailey, 2001, p. 82). Principally, it provides a way of conceptualising adherence and affiliation to historical traditions that emphasise relationship to the transcendent, while remaining sensitive to varying contexts and their action upon individuals.

The role of religions as powerful discourses in adolescents' lives can be thought as similar to 'culture' in Stritikus and Nguyen's (2007) study of Vietnamese youth. Religions, like culture, can be 'carried by individuals' and 'reconstructed' in 'moment-to-moment interactions' (Nasir & Hand 2006, p. 458 in Stritikus & Nguyen, p. 862). Although religious identity is co-constructed by individuals and their social context, this is done by individuals drawing from, endorsing, or opposing, established religious traditions, their systems of representation and forms of recognition. For example, the studies of Islam in the lives of adolescents reviewed above do not suggest that the tenets and practices of Islam do not impact upon individuals' worldviews and identities, but that adolescents' identities as Muslims are constructed across contexts that view Islam and Muslims in different or opposing ways. In these different contexts not only does being Muslim mean different things to different people, but individuals may draw upon different resources from their religious tradition to perform or represent themselves in different ways. The use of symbols to create identity boundaries can be an important part of this process (Jacobson, 1997; Ajrouch, 2004). A pertinent visible example of this would be the decision of Muslim women to wear or not wear hijab in diaspora contexts – a topic of academic interest in recent years (e.g. Read & Bartkowski, 2000; Haw, 2011).

Conclusion: a summary of a theory of religious identity negotiation

The discussion above has introduced the origins and assumptions of conceptions of identity, religious identity, identity construction and identity negotiation. I argue that the conceptual framework of religious identity construction and negotiation gives explanatory potential for studies in education, particularly how educational institutions may impact on the religious identity construction and negotiation of their students.

In summation, the theory developed in the course of my own study can be presented as follows. Educational institutions may represent or recognise religious adolescents' religious traditions in particular ways and ascribe (Peek, 2005) religious adolescents a particular religious identity through a system of representation and recognition underwritten by institutional authority (I-identity) (Gee, 2000). Similarly, religious adolescents may represent themselves or seek to be recognised as having particular affinities, beliefs, practices or character traits (Gee, 2000).

The process of identity negotiation takes place when adolescents seek and act to represent and define themselves to others, perhaps in order to change other people's perceptions as part of an exchange of identity presentation and recognition according to established systems of representation (Hall, 1996; Jackson, 1999; Gee, 2000; Chen, 2010). Systems of representation

are the ways people recognise and represent identities by conventions of depiction and portrayal. Aspects of systems of representation may act as cues or messages that prompt religious identity negotiation (which in itself can become a form of representation and message exchange). Adolescents may use symbolic boundaries between them and others to show affinity or identification with, religious traditions or their adherents (Jacobson, 1997; Ajrouch, 2004). Over time, the process of understanding oneself to be, or seeking to be recognised, or representing oneself in a particular way, as part of identity negotiation, contributes to religious identity construction – the identification with, rejection of, or partial or full integration, or presentation of elements of a religious tradition (or ties with members of that religious tradition) with an individual's worldview, lifestyle, beliefs, practices, actions.

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Critical Reflection for Religious Educators In/For Liberal Democracy

Abstract

Despite the predictions of secularization theorists in recent decades, religion continues to play a critical role in people's lives—both privately and publicly. In light of this sustained religious environment, this paper accepts the fundamental premise of the need for increased and improved religious education in/for the public sphere. It is thus imperative that religious educators are better equipped to authentically engage students in a liberal democracy that is also religiously pluralistic. This is especially vital for teachers and students who desire to understand, respect, appreciate, and learn from the various worldviews around them as citizens in democratic societies while simultaneously maintaining commitments to their own faith traditions. Critical reflection, one type of reflection in which teachers consider the social, political, cultural, and moral influence upon and implications of their teaching, is one activity teachers can utilize to increase their capacity and ability to engage in such authentic religious education for the benefit of their students in a pluralistic democracy.

The Climate

At the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1998, Julia Bartkowiak outlined three major objections to religious education in public schools that seem to reflect both public opinion and attitudes of policy makers, both then and now.¹ Each of her points deserves some explanation and response in order to establish the need for the critical professional reflection called for here—reflection that considers social, political, cultural, and moral influences and implications regarding what we teach—that will assist religious educators in doing religious education in/for liberal democracy.²

Bartkowiak's first objection to religious education in public schools is that such a proposal is constitutionally unjustifiable. She accurately cites the hallmark cases of *McCullum* (1948) and *Schempp/Murray* (1963) that established the prevailing and persistent judicial doctrine distinguishing “between teaching *about* religion and the teaching *of* religion. They [the

¹ Bartkowiak, J.J. (1998, August 10-15). *Religious education in the public schools*. Report of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy. Retrieved from <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Soci/SociBart.htm>.

² My choice of the term “liberal democracy” comes directly from Hanan Alexander's and Ayman Agbaria's recent work (see *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy*. [2012]. New York, NY: Routledge). Their use of this term embraces both the need for critical thinking and individual autonomy as well as the importance of the virtues and capacities of good citizens (see pp. 1-2). While Walter Feinberg didn't use this term exactly in his earlier work (see *For Goodness Sake: Religious schools and education for democratic citizenry*. (2006). New York, NY: Routledge), his assumptions concerning “liberal pluralism” and an individual's right to choose how to live one's life within a society that embraces many different belief systems and communities seem to have led him to comfortably adopt the term later (see Feinberg, W. [2012]. An inquiry into the justification for full-time religious schools in the liberal democratic state. In H.A. Alexander & A.K. Agbaria [Eds.], *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy* [17-32]. New York: Routledge.)

Supreme Court Justices] deemed only the latter unacceptable and encouraged the former. The Justices declared that while the constitutional right to freedom of religion does not allow religious practices to be forced on children who attend public schools, courses which presented the religious practices of various people in a historical and comparative manner were essential to being well-educated and were constitutionally permissible.”³ Bartkowiak goes on to argue that teachers are incapable of teaching *about* religion without inevitably interjecting their own bias, which would either favor one religion over others or undermine the legitimacy or value of other (or all) religious views. Thus, religious education is constitutional in theory but unconstitutional in practice. I will respond briefly to the “theoretical” aspect of Bartkowiak’s objection first and then respond to the “practical” aspect in conjunction with Bartkowiak’s second objection.

As far as the constitutionality of religious education is concerned, other advocates for religious education in public spheres have responded to this objection far better than I could.⁴ Constitutionality issues could be resolved if more informed and interested direct stakeholders were brought to the table for this discussion. One of Nord’s more helpful suggestions in this regard may have come when he wrote, “I might say that I do not believe that courts should attempt to manage (much less micromanage) the curriculum or classroom—though they may need to address egregious injustices. As Justice Brennan said, educators are the experts in these matters, not court justices. (Or, as I said, educators *should* be the experts.) Unfortunately, school and university administrators appear to be totally oblivious to any such responsibility.”⁵

Bartkowiak’s second objection to religious education in public schools, closely related to the “practical” aspect of her first objection, rests entirely on her assumption that teachers are completely incapable of doing religious education without some sort of teacher bias. Her biggest concern is that teachers would use such courses as opportunities to proselytize students—either overtly or subtly—to the teacher’s own religious or moral views. Turning the tables on such secular arguments, Nord has demonstrated that anti-religious bias already exists in the public schools, and that offering courses in religion would simply bring the balance that the Constitution provides for and the Supreme Court has recommended, neither favoring nor opposing religion generally or any one religion specifically.⁶ Stephen Monsma offers a “pluralist-liberal model” that might offer teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders a starting point for considering curriculum and methods that might be appropriate for religious education experiences in a public school setting.⁷

³ Bartkowiak, 1998.

⁴ See Feinberg, *For Goodness Sake*, xi-xxiv, 189-198; and Nord, W.A. (2010). *Does God Make a Difference? Taking religion seriously in our schools and universities*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc. (see especially the Introduction and chapters 1-4, 7-8).

⁵ Nord, *Does God Make a Difference?*, 167.

⁶ See again the recommended chapters in footnote 4 in Nord, *Does God Make a Difference?* Nord’s argument for balance is also supported by Vryhof, S.C. (2012). Between memory and meaning: Schools as communities of meaning. In H.A. Alexander & A.K. Agbaria (Eds.), *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy* (46-59). New York: Routledge.

⁷ Monsma, S.V. (2012). State financial support for religious schools: Issues and models. In H.A. Alexander & A.K. Agbaria (Eds.), *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy* (33-45). New York: Routledge. His model offers one framework for teachers and students to seek greater understanding of differing religious worldviews in an attempt to prepare them for democratic, pluralistic discourse and citizenship for administrators, teachers, parents, and students who favor a more academic approach to studying religion in public schools. Diane Moore has also outlined in considerable detail her “cultural studies approach to teaching about religion” in Moore, D.L. (2007). *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A cultural studies approach to the study of religion in secondary education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. In other settings where stakeholders may be

In addition to these and many other efforts of public school teachers and religious educators to counter Bartkowiak's concern regarding teacher bias, Bartkowiak's concern may also be rejected due to its *prima facie* assumption of objectivity—in religious subjects or any other school subjects. If we were to apply the principle of Bartkowiak's "teacher bias" objection to all other school subjects and teachers, our current educational system would be quickly annihilated amidst various academic "civil wars." For example, history teachers may have Eurocentric or Afrocentric biases that would be grounds for their dismissal in the eyes of those who don't hold the same bias. Prescriptive grammarians would have a heyday leading the "witch hunt" to expel all the descriptive grammarians in public elementary schools around the nation. The point is that to not offer a subject in schools based solely on our lack of trust in teachers and fear regarding the naiveté and gullibility of students will not promote the interests of pluralist democratic societies. Education for citizenship in a liberal democracy, in which there is a great pluralism of religious viewpoints, must include much more than the mere acquisition of knowledge. Such education must allow for discussion of differing viewpoints between individuals and groups, with their inherent biases, in a way that fosters productive dialogue and community development despite differences.⁸

One final sub-point of Bartkowiak's second objection regarding teacher bias deserves further response. In further asserting the dangers of teacher bias in the classroom, she asserts that "for those teachers who adhere to a religion that believes there is only one correct set of religious beliefs, there is little incentive to accept the validity of alternative beliefs or to present them as alternatives that deserve tolerance and respect."⁹ My hope is that this argument is passé and that the "rooted cosmopolitanism" expressed by Stephen Vryhoff is becoming and will become more indicative of national and global attitudes.¹⁰ While my own faith tradition, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has been and still is regarded by some as an exclusivist group, from the beginning of LDS history¹¹ to the present¹² Latter-day Saints have recognized the reality of

more comfortable with a process that nurtures spiritual development, while striving to avoid sectarianism, Rachael Kessler's "gateways" approach may be useful, as outline in Kessler, R. (2000). *The Soul of Education: Helping students find connection, compassion, and character at school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

⁸ While this article focuses on the need for greater religious understanding for primarily political or civic purposes, the need for greater understanding of differing religious worldviews and practices is also needed in such mundane settings as the American workplace. According to a recent survey sponsored by the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, increased religious diversity in the workplace is leading to increased conflict and/or perceived persecution. See Brown, M. (September 2, 2013). Religious discrimination in the workplace increases with diversity. *Deseret News*. Retrieved from <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865585613/Religious-discrimination-in-the-workplace-increases-with-diversity.html>. Religious education in schools may help dispel bias and fear and increase understanding that would prepare students to enter the adult world of work.

⁹ Bartkowiak, 1998.

¹⁰ See Vryhof, Between memory and meaning, 57-59. Vryhoff's "rooted cosmopolitanism" suggests that we can remain firmly rooted in our own world views or faith communities, and at the same time increase our exposure to, understanding of, and appreciation for differing worldviews and religious traditions. Thus, our view of the world and the people who live in it becomes broader and more inclusive. Vryhoff effectively captures the "real-life" nature of such an approach when he quotes Garrison Keillor: "... in a democracy, we need a few reality checkpoints at which we all crowd together, nabob and yahoo, and rub elbows and get a clue about who lives here other than us."

¹¹ While cultural and political forces, both internally and externally, have sometimes caused the LDS Church and its members to necessarily retreat and isolate—perhaps sometimes unnecessarily so—the desire of Church leaders and members from the beginning has been to respect and protect the religious practices of others. One of the "Articles of Faith" penned by Church founder Joseph Smith in 1842 declares: "We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith 1:11). Joseph Smith also proclaimed personally: "If it has been

pluralism and the need for tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation despite differences in beliefs. Surely, considerable evidence could be gleaned from many religions showing this aspect of Bartkowiak's second objection, at least, to be wholly unfounded. Once again, education in any field inevitably includes hermeneutical differences, contrasts in fundamental assumptions, and some inherent bias. Rather than eliminate any particular branch of learning, including religious education, on such grounds, teachers and students can learn to navigate these differences in a classroom that resembles a world where they are inevitable.

In Bartkowiak's third objection, she acknowledges the religious diversity and need for tolerance within the United States. However, she responds by claiming, "While it may be the case that religious education might, under ideal conditions, serve the State's interest in promoting tolerance in children, there are good reasons to think that under existing conditions within many public schools such courses would fail to promote tolerance. Exposure to a variety of views, by itself, does not automatically result in tolerant children." Aside from declaring religious education a failure before it is even given a chance, the real objection here is that Americans, and by implication citizens of other democratic societies, simply need to accept that fact that religiously-based views are not tenable in the public sphere. And since we can't learn to dialogue and work together despite our differences regarding these deeply cherished beliefs, then we should just ignore them.

Given the work of Feinberg (2006), Nord (2010), and the recent compilation of thoughtful and challenging essays edited by Alexander and Agbaria (2012), such a stance looks like the proverbial (albeit mythical) ostrich with its head stuck in the sand. While it may be true that "exposure to a variety of views, by itself, does not automatically result in tolerant children,"

demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a 'Mormon,' I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves" (Smith, J.F. & Galbraith, R.C. [1993]. *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, Co., 313).

¹² Several recent examples counter Bartkowiak's allegations. In 2001, the Church co-sponsored chapter 7 in Haynes' and Thomas' *Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools* (Haynes, C.C. & Thomas, O. [2001]. *Finding Common Ground: A guide to religious liberty in public schools*. Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center, 88). In 2010, Elder Quentin L. Cook, a member of the Church's Quorum of Twelve Apostles, published an article on Patheos.com where he encouraged "mutual respect for each other's beliefs and a desire to collaborate on important issues where we find common ground" (Cook, Q.L. [August 9, 2010]. *Partnering with our friends from other faiths*. Retrieved from <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Partnering-with-Our-Friends-from-Other-Faiths.html>). Two months later, Cook more strongly urged members of the Church to "be at the forefront together with all people of goodwill in doing everything we can to preserve light, hope, and morality in our communities" (Cook, Q.L. [2010]. Let there be light. *Ensign*, 40[11], 30). The Church recently published an article on its online "Newsroom" on the relevance and value of religion generally in society (The relevance of religion. [July 25, 2013]. Retrieved from <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/relevance-religion>). While writing this article, I read about the groundbreaking ceremony for the LDS temple in Hartford, Connecticut, in which President of the Church, Thomas S. Monson, and Monsignor Gerard G. Schmidt, of the Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford, wielded shovels side by side in a display of mutual respect and cooperation in support of one another's differing beliefs and systems of worship (Avant, G. (August 19, 2013). President Monson breaks ground for the Hartford Connecticut temple. *Deseret News*. Retrieved from <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/765636163/President-Monson-breaks-ground-for-the-Hartford-Connecticut-Temple-video.html?pg=all>). Some may propose that these examples are rare exceptions to LDS patterns of behavior, institutionally or individually. However, it is the opinion of the author that such disparity between what we say and what we do, are inherent qualities of the human condition and not peculiar to any one group of people. Such "gaps," as will be discussed later in the paper, can be resolved through the help of more effective reflection.

it is almost guaranteed that lack of exposure will result in intolerance.¹³ If we fail to initiate students into the “ongoing conversation about how to sort out the contending views” in society, “a conversation in which students come to understand the relationship of cultures, traditions, and disciplines to one another”¹⁴ then their education has failed to prepare them to make a significant, transformative contribution in the world in which they live. Given the growing need for civility, mutual understanding, and respect in established and emerging democracies all over the world, any *status quo* approach seems untenable.

Professional Reflection in Religious Education

So what does professional reflection have to do with helping religious educators engage in religious education for liberal democracy? In order to explain, I must—albeit somewhat surprisingly—acknowledge the legitimacy of Bartkowiak’s concern about teacher efficacy and bias in religious education in/for liberal democracy. I just happen to disagree with her prognosis—she thinks the condition is incurable, while I believe that caring, deeply passionate, and internally motivated teachers can improve and become more effective at creating space and dialogue for deep student learning and transformation. At least part of that remedy is improving our professional reflection. The well-known educator Herbert Kohl alluded to the core problem of reflection when he confessed, “My beliefs in a free, nonauthoritarian classroom always ran ahead of my personal ability to teach in one.”¹⁵ In other words, no matter how much we think we understand our own teaching assumptions and philosophy, no matter how strongly we feel about our mission as teachers, there is often a gap between our educational ideals and our behavior in the classroom. Professional reflection seeks to identify, analyze, and reduce that gap.

My own work with professional reflection rests on the foundation of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön. Their work focused on the discrepancies between “espoused theories” (i.e. what we say we believe/do) and “theories in use” (i.e. what we actually do) and the development of “hybrid theories of practice” (i.e. the ongoing process of trying to bridge the gap between espoused theories and theories in use).¹⁶ I have also relied heavily on models of reflection developed by Neville Hatton and David Smith¹⁷ and Fred Korthagen.¹⁸ Korthagen’s “onion model” of reflection invites teachers to make more deliberate connections between the inner

¹³ For many generations, educators and many other civic leaders have felt that, as President Woodrow Wilson put it, “The schoolhouse is the great melting pot of democracy” and that children who “have grown up and come through the processes of the schools [will] have imbibed the full feeling of American life” (See Wilson, W. [September 2, 1912]. *Labor Day Speech in Buffalo, New York*. Retrieved from <http://livefromthetrail.com/about-the-book/speeches/chapter-2/woodrow-wilson>). What will that feeling for “American life” be for school children in schools where religion and religiously-based views are neglected, ignored, or rejected? Just a few years after President Wilson’s speech, Francis Greenwood Peabody suggested, “An uneducated religion is the root of bigotry, persecution, and hypocrisy” (Tracy, F. et al. (1917). *Ideals and Methods for Religious Education for the Coming World Order*. *Religious Education*, 12(3), 182. Conversely, I proposed that a “unreligioned education” will have the same effect.

¹⁴ Nord, *Does God Make a Difference?*, 111.

¹⁵ Kohl, H.R. (2001). Ten minutes a day. In F. Schulz (Ed.), *S.O.U.R.C.E.S.: Notable selections in education* (105-109). Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 106.

¹⁶ Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

¹⁷ Hatton, N. & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: Toward definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(1), 33-49.

¹⁸ Korthagen, F. A. J. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 77-97.

layers of their sense of mission, identity, and beliefs, and the exterior layers of their observable competencies/skills and classroom behaviors. Hatton and Smith describe four types of teacher reflection that help teachers evaluate their pedagogical practice in conjunction with their teaching philosophy: technical reflection (i.e. what happened in the classroom?); descriptive reflection (i.e. why did the teacher make the decisions he/she did?); dialogic reflection (i.e. what interactions with others help the teacher think about and modify his/her practice?); and critical reflection (i.e. what is the reciprocal relationship between teaching and the environment in which it takes place?).

In my dissertation research, I evaluated the reflection practices of a small group of LDS religious educators of secondary students and developed a model of reflection, based primarily on Hatton and Smith's four types of reflection, that simultaneously described professional reflection for these teachers and provided a framework for continued reflection that would help them minimize gaps between teaching philosophy and classroom pedagogy. Participants in this study responded very favorably to the interview questions and reflective process entailed in the study, reporting that it was both enlightening and transformative.¹⁹ One general conclusion from this study was that not only do models of professional educational reflection work quite well in religious education settings, but they are also sorely needed.

Critical Reflection in Religious Education

This is especially true with regard to critical reflection. Hatton and Smith's conception of critical reflection included a teacher's ability to problematize "the goals and practices of one's profession" and "thinking about the effects upon others of one's actions, taking account of social, political, and/or cultural forces."²⁰ Aside from considering the spiritual impact of their teaching on students (certainly a primary goal considering their setting), teachers in the aforementioned study did not make comments that indicated serious consideration of their teaching as a function of/within the larger social, political, cultural setting of a liberal democracy. While such considerations may not be primary or central to all religious education settings—such as those where faith education within a specific religious tradition is the objective—they are vital in responding to Bartkowiak's objections in an effort to promote religious education in/for liberal democracy.

Alexander and Agbaria's recent edited volume (2012) of sixteen essays provides a broad cross-section of samples of critical reflection for religious educators to consider the social, political, cultural, moral, and religious milieu in which they do religious education. These essays provide thoughtful discussions that encourage religious educators to consider how they might engage professionally²¹ (i.e. conferences, publications, public meetings, etc.) and pedagogically²²

¹⁹ Gardner, R. S. (2011). *Teacher reflection among professional seminary faculty in the seminaries and institutes department of the Church Educational System*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Utah State University, Logan, UT. For example, one teacher commented that the reflective process followed during the interview helped him better understand the connections between his own teaching philosophy and his lesson preparation, classroom decisions, and interactions with students: "it's like a puzzle. I'm taking all these fragments and putting them together. It's kind of helpful. Thank you" (178). The other five teachers who participated in the interviews made similar comments.

²⁰ Hatton & Smith, Reflection in teacher education, 45.

²¹ See especially Seymour, J.L. (2012). Constructive, critical, and mutual interfaith religious education for public living: A Christian view. In H.A. Alexander & A.K. Agbaria (Eds.), *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy* (226-244). New York: Routledge.

(i.e. their actual praxis in their own religious education settings) in religious education efforts that will promote greater understanding and sincerely respectful dialogue and political cooperation in/for pluralistic democratic societies.

Religious educators seeking to do religious education in/for liberal democracy should seek to create classrooms which mirror at least one major “condition of pluralism [which] is its transparency and the understanding that my freedom to think and worship as I see fit is dependent on your freedom to think and worship as you see fit.”²³ Rather than ignoring our differences and pretend that they don’t exist, we might even be able to see the world more clearly and appreciate humanity more deeply as we learn from our differing worldviews. While we cannot completely eliminate teacher bias in religious education settings (or, as I have argued above, in any other academic discipline), a critical first step for handling this challenge is to make explicit—to ourselves and to our students, inasmuch as we can—our implicit assumptions and beliefs. This kind of reflection “allows [us] to hear as that audience would truly hear, not as [we] imagine they might” and will mostly likely involve dialogic partners—such as administrators, other teachers, and even students—who can “serve as mirrors, refining the image we have of ourselves and reflecting back to us the way they experience our behavior.”²⁴ One very useful tool for religious educators in this endeavor is the “critical incident questionnaire” developed by past-president of the REA, Mary Hess, and Stephen Brookfield.²⁵

Critical Reflection Practices for Religious Educators in/for Liberal Democracies

While I acknowledge Bartkowiak’s point that the mere presence of religious education in public or private education settings will not promote or improve liberal democracies, I propose that well-trained, caring, reflective religious educators will. In addition to the resources I have already mentioned herein for encouraging critical reflection among religious educators (and there are others I have not mentioned), I have found that well-constructed questions can assist religious educators in their critical reflection. Here are a few examples of such questions:

- 1) Which of our institutional goals pertain to preparing students to be productive contributing citizens in a liberal democratic society?
- 2) What curriculum, practices, or other institutional resources are available to help our students attain these goals?
- 3) What institutional processes exist that might detract from or deter students from reaching these ideals?
- 4) What are my personal goals for preparing students to engage in a society with differing worldviews and religious beliefs?

²² See especially Miedema, S. (2012). Maximal citizenship education and interreligious education in common schools. In H.A. Alexander & A.K. Agbaria (Eds.), *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy* (96-102). New York: Routledge; Heimbrock, H.G. (2012). Religion, reason, and experience in public education. In H.A. Alexander & A.K. Agbaria (Eds.), *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy* (140-152). New York: Routledge; and Thiessen, E.J. (2012). Democratic schooling and the demands of religion. In H.A. Alexander & A.K. Agbaria (Eds.), *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious education in liberal democracy* (161-178). New York: Routledge.

²³ Feinberg, *For Goodness Sake*, 167.

²⁴ Feinberg, *For Goodness Sake*, 100, 101.

²⁵ Brookfield, S.D. & Hess, M.E. (2008). “How can we teach authentically?” Reflective practices in the dialogical classroom. In S.D. Brookfield & M.E. Hess (Eds.), *Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and contradictions* (1-18). Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.

- 5) What classroom practices do I implement in order to help students share and support their own religiously-based views in the public sphere?
- 6) What classroom practices do I implement in order to help students understand, respect, and learn from religiously-based views that are different from their own?
- 7) What classroom practices invite students to develop skills that will prepare them to engage and work with others in the public sphere when religiously-based worldviews lead to differences in attitudes, priorities, and policies?
- 8) How is my teaching affected by past and current political, social, cultural, and moral forces?
- 9) How might my teaching help students make a positive political, social, cultural, and moral contribution in the world, now and in the future?
- 10) What am I learning from my students about their present political, social, cultural, and moral environment? How is this affecting what I teach and how I teach it?
- 11) “What is the preferred meaning of respect in a religiously pluralist society, and how can it be promoted in the context of a deep belief in the primacy of one religion?”
- 12) “How can an education into a faith tradition be maintained while reflective critical thinking about one’s own religious tradition is promoted?”²⁶

I suggest three ways that teachers can use these questions for regular reflection. All three practices require teachers and administrators to deliberately schedule time for reflection—one of the biggest challenges to consistently doing meaningful reflection. First, teachers could simply write out in-depth answers to these questions appropriate to their own teaching setting. They might not answer all questions, but I suggest that at least a few of the questions would be appropriate in just about any religious education setting. Teachers then review and revise these answers regularly. This document could form the cover-piece for the reflection journal I recommend next. Second, teachers could begin a reflection journal that uses one or two of these questions for self-evaluation at the end of every lesson. After picking one or two questions to focus on for a given period of time, the teacher writes a brief response to each question following each lesson. At the end of the allotted time frame, the teacher searches the journal for patterns or tendencies that reveal helpful insights for one’s own praxis. Third, the teacher could discuss their selected questions and responses with a trusted administrator or colleague²⁷ and then invite that individual to observe the teacher’s classroom (I highly recommend regular observations as opposed to a single “snapshot” observation). The observer focuses solely on how the teacher’s classroom behavior connects with the questions and answers they have discussed. Teacher and observer then meet to discuss connections and gaps between the teacher’s “espoused theory” (i.e. how they answered the questions) and the “theory in use” to continue to improve the teacher’s “hybrid theory of practice.” It is vital in this reflection process that these observations be strictly formative and not summative in any way.²⁸

²⁶ These last two questions come from Feinberg, *For Goodness Sake*, 173.

²⁷ For more on the critical need for trust between teachers and observers (especially instructional supervisors), see Smith, H.R. (2013). The role of trust in religious education. *Religious Educator*, 14(2), 125-133.

²⁸ See Glickman, C.D., Gordon, S.P., & Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2004). *SuperVision and Instructional Leadership: A developmental approach*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc., 258-259, 310-314. I highly recommend chapters 12-16 for anyone interested in improving observation and feedback skills. Another excellent source for improving the effectiveness of observation and feedback is Blase, J. & Blase, J. (2004). *Handbook of Instructional Leadership: How successful principals promote teaching and learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

The Challenge

Liberal democracies around the world must renovate their approach to religious education if they are to thrive in an increasingly globalized and religiously pluralistic world. These liberal democracies also need religious educators who have a framework for negotiating the delicate balance necessary to educate students for religious understanding and moral character development within the diverse societies of which they are a part. As we continue to press for increased religious education in the public sphere, religious educators must also accept the increased professional responsibility and competency it will require to do religious education in/for liberal democracies. Critical reflection is one key to that professional development that will help religious educators succeed in accomplishing the religious and civic objectives in this endeavor.

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**Youth Finding and Hiding Religious Voice:
 Coming Out Religiously in an Interreligious Multivalent World**

Abstract:

Voice is critical to youth; yet young religious voices encounter diverse public values, often communicating inclusion or exclusion based on personality, ethnicity, gender, ability, religion, or sexual orientation. Drawing from youth interviews and focus groups, we analyze influences on youth to speak or hide their religious voices in public spaces, and to claim religious motivations for their public personas and actions. We conclude with educational proposals for faith communities, schools, and other public spaces.

The question of voice is critical to youth and young adults, as attested in a growing body of literature. Yet the religious voices of young people are complicated by the diverse values they encounter in schools and other public venues, alongside a mix of religious values that communicate their inclusion or exclusion based on their diverse personalities, ethnicities, genders, religious affiliations, abilities, and sexual orientations. Drawing from the data of 35 youth interviews (with mostly Christian youth), we analyze the factors that influence youth to speak their religious voices in public spaces, and those that influence them to hide their voices. We analyze the intricate relationship between religious voices and the formative, constructive, and disruptive dynamics of young lives. We also analyze the relationship of inner religious voices, or motivations, and the public personas and actions of young people. These conclusions have implications for religious education in faith communities, schools, and other public spaces.

The entire analysis has been shaped by an ethogenic approach to the study, inviting young people to describe and explain their lives from their own perspectives. We also followed

an ethogenic approach to data analysis: the research team identified common words and phrases used by the interviewees, common symbols, frequent actions and activities, patterns of interaction, and themes.¹ The last two steps of this analysis – patterns of interaction and themes – take account of the more detail-oriented earlier steps, and then move toward higher levels of categorization and abstraction. These two sets of interpretive findings formed the base for the interpretive work of this paper. While the whole data set has shaped our findings and presentation, we will present the findings with exemplifications from individual narratives.

The paper itself begins with an analysis of the dynamics of “coming out,” which happens in many ways in young lives. We have seen in the youth’s self-descriptions that the challenge of coming out often shapes the voice of a young person and the places and ways that the person chooses to exercise that voice. A young person may come out as gay, as smart, as economically poor, as physically challenged, as ethnically mixed, or as religious. Youth also come out by taking stances against their parents, school, church, or friends, and these stances are often fraught with emotion as young people take stands on controversial topics such as war and violence, gay equality, and politics. The realities vary, as do the dynamics, but the very act of coming out seems to be a critical force in young lives and their sense of power or agency. Building upon this analysis of the dynamic process of coming out, we can further investigate young persons’ self-descriptions: the dynamics of religious voice in their lives, the relationship between inner religious voices and public personas and actions, and the implications for religious education.

Dynamics of “Coming Out”

Questions of “coming out” are major for young people, yet they take different shapes. One factor that many youth identify as shaping their life stories is a sense of being different from others – different in ethnicity, gender, personality, abilities, sexual orientation, or religious

persuasion. One young person, Andrew (18 years), when asked to share a significant, life-shaping event, described the period in his life when others began to identify him as Hispanic:

Okay, well I guess like when I went, when I lived in North Carolina. It was very diverse ... I remember it was just mixed and I didn't think a thing about it ... But like when I moved up here, things were different because I never thought that I looked Hispanic at all. I never realized that. I still don't. I don't act Hispanic, and I wasn't raised Hispanic. And people say, 'Wow, what are you?' and I'm like, 'Oh, yeah, I forgot.'²

For Andrew, this was not a time when he made a conscious effort to “come out,” but a time when others labeled him and he had to decide what that label meant for his life. For Andrew, being different was also marked by some physical features that evoked bullying from other young people. All of this was pulling him down until he began to excel in running and he found a place in his school and in his own self-understanding. Andrew's way of “finding voice” was thus through running and later through listening to music that voiced some of his yearnings and values. When the interviewer asked Andrew what helped him be more outgoing in high school, he responded:

Seriously, it was music and being on the cross country team because that was something for me to identify with. Like really bring out something in me ... But I realized I wasn't like everyone else. And like I'm different than a lot of the people and I wasn't afraid to show that anymore.

Andrew's story echoes many others, revealing a search for his identity and a reluctance to expose himself to others. It also echoes the real rejection that many young people feel as a result of being different in some visible or invisible ways from their peers. Finally, it echoes the path of many young people to find a fitting way to present themselves to others, to exercise agency, and

to identify resonant voices that express their deepest values and concerns. For Andrew, the agency came through running, and the resonant voices, through music.

For Andrew, politics is also important and he keeps up with political events. He also identifies several critical public issues, especially ones on which he disagrees with his father, his pastor, or others around him. The issues he names are homosexuality, immigration, and women's place in the family and social structures. He does not give explicitly religious reasons for his perspectives, but he articulates them in relation to the voices of others around him. He is open to gays, but does not want to be gay himself. He is more open to immigration than his dad, and he strongly disagrees with his pastor on women's being subject to their husbands, but he does not want to identify as a "feminist male." In short, he has clear judgments on many social issues, and they are sprinkled with explicit and implicit religious rationale, but he is not "coming out" to make strong statements to others on these matters; he mostly keeps them to himself and to more intimate conversations with family and friends.

Andrew's story is unique to Andrew, but some of the patterns are common to most of the youth we interviewed, especially the pattern of discovering himself and his voice through experiences of difference and the pattern of coming to voice through something that he does well or something that means a great deal to him. For Andrew, the important factors were running and music. For other youth, they are friendship, cheerleading, public speaking, or a school subject in which they excel. Another common pattern that is seen in Andrew's story is the seriousness with which he takes his religion (praying, studying the Bible, asking theological questions) and the seriousness with which he takes social and political issues. As for most of the young people we interviewed, however, Andrew leaves the relationship between his religious and socio-political

convictions in a state of tension, mostly separate but brought into active dialogue at points where the public dialogue is already visible as, for example, with homosexuality or women's rights.

Dynamics of Religious Voice

If voice or agency is important to young people and is intertwined with many factors, what influences young people to speak their religious voices or to hide them? The present study does not stand alone. It is influenced by earlier research on youth voice and agency, including the work of Claire Bischoff, Evelyn Parker, Rodger Nishioka, Kenda Creasy Dean, Christian Smith, Katherine Turpin, Almeda Wright, David White, and Anne Streaty Wimberly. This literature accents the influences on youth to be silent, the yearnings of youth to voice themselves, and the potential of educational practices to create spaces for young people to voice themselves – to narrate their lives and their values. The research thus far indicates that the very act of giving voice to one's internal conflicts and motivations can strengthen one's sense of self and one's resolve to live well in the world. Indeed, many of the youth are convinced that sharing their voices is also important for others to live well. Roshawn, for example, seeks to be a leader rather than a follower, and he hopes that, in his future life, he can “keep black brothers out of jail”; “give all the homeless people a home” and “get guns and drugs off the street.”³

Analyses of this same interview data in an earlier study reveals that youth navigate the waters of identity through a complex process of formation, (re)construction, and disruption, and they do this, in part, through the very act of narrating their lives.⁴ Some life narrations are more formational, as youth identify themselves with the religious narratives and other formative stories offered by their communities. Others are more (re)constructive, as youth seek to identify themselves in relation to, but distinct from, these larger narratives, and as they seek to critique and reconstruct the narratives themselves. Still other life narrations are disruptive, as youth

dismiss or dismantle the narratives offered them by their religious, familial, and cultural communities. These processes are intertwined, but youth usually engage in one more than the others or they move from one to another over time.

The present research reveals how these processes are enhanced and complicated by youth's public voice, but also how easily the public religious voice can be encouraged in some settings and not in others, or thwarted altogether. Stacey, for example, saves her religious talk for church. A 17 year-old African American woman living in the southern United States, she says: "Well, I would say my church community and my school community are totally different. ... I feel like I'm two different people." She goes on to say that she talks about God with her church friends but not with her school friends. Some young people are reluctant to share their religious voices, even in their religious communities. Martin, for example, is a 20 year-old European American man from Kentucky, who cannot reconcile his church's teaching with his closeness to people of other faiths. He says, "I can't force myself to believe that my friends here – my closest friends who are Jewish and Muslim – are going to hell. That's just beyond me. And I asked my pastor about that back home and he's like, 'uhhhhh...' It was like 'I don't have the time for this discussion right now.'" For Martin, at least in that moment, the faith community did not encourage his voicing of questions and newly emerging perspectives.

Seung (22 years) gives a more ambiguous picture of his religious community in encouraging or thwarting religious voice. He recalls that the church was "hateful to one of my friends" though his own experience in his local church has been positive: "They are always wanting to know what's going on with me, they're always wanting to talk to me, and they're never not supportive of anything that I doing." On the other hand, he recognizes that "there are a

lot of people out there that are set in their ways, and it's sad that they don't want to hear what we [young people] have to say."

A fourth young man, Julian, growing up in Burma and now living in England as a 21-year-old college student, has quite a nuanced perspective regarding the times and places for expressing a religious voice. Julian grew up with a sense of freedom to speak and act in his church, together with a sense of the political dangers of speaking publically in a conflicted country, where he has seen his father go to jail. He came to recognize that some settings are not safe for a public voice: "My family is still there [Burma] so I can't talk a lot about how bad the situations are, but still I am a bit proud of what I did there at the church." Julian was proud of his church voice but careful of the public settings where he might express that voice. On the other hand, Julian critiqued the church in the United States for being "too private," and he valued more communal and public religious talk. At the same time, he recognized that religious talk was even limited within his church in Burma. For example, his parents and others did not like to talk about "sexual issues and stuff" that divided the church.

These four young people reveal how complicated religious talk can be, even for people within a religious community. Sometimes young people, like Stacey, make clear distinctions between their religious voices within their communities and outside of them. Sometimes, they are cautious to express a religious voice even within their own religious community, especially when the community itself is conflicted or when it does not really welcome young voices, as for Martin and Seung's friend. And sometimes, they develop fine-tuned distinctions regarding when and how religious voices can be raised, as for Julian. Julian recognizes that the effort to keep religious talk within a religious community can be a political necessity, but he also recognizes

that religious talk can be complicated *within* religious communities when people disagree on important issues.

Some communities tend to be privatized and not to encourage religious talk, even within the community, and some encourage religious talk as long as it avoids controversial issues. Youth learn to navigate these different perceptions and realities as they find and speak their voices. Those youth whose identity is largely in *formation* and strongly rooted within a particular religious community are often content to let religious talk be within the community, though some of these youth are comfortable in both religious and other social settings to witness to their faith. Those youth whose identity is under major *construction or reconstruction* are often prone to ask questions and explore their religious perspectives within their religious communities and in the larger world, as are those who are strongly deconstructing their lives after some kind of disruption, such as a series of deaths or a growing sense of their own difference in sexual orientation, economic status, or values. Thus, “coming out” religiously might be more assertive of particular beliefs and values by someone who is in a more formative time of his or her life, and it might be more question-posing by someone who is living through a more constructive or disruptive time of life.

Inner Religious Voices Interacting with Public Personas and Actions

We have focused thus far on the more public voices of young people and the factors that influence youth to come out with a religious voice. Another important aspect of coming out religiously is attending to one’s inner religious voice or one’s motivation to act in certain ways as a result of one’s religious beliefs and values. Many of the young people describe their life passions with direct or oblique reference to religion. Andrea, for example, says, “I want to go in the Peace Corps, like I just want to save the world ... I just want to do whatever I can do to like

help other people.”⁵ Andrea, like Andrew in the earlier description, has sorted her values partly in contrast to those around her. For example, she compares herself with her sister: “And even though we were raised in the exact same house by the exact same people, she is like so materialistic, like things that are important to her are just not important to me at all.”⁶

Similarly, Acharris describes her passions as listening to friends and really helping them: “I know that some of them are actually alive because of me.”⁷ Her interpersonal values and actions are shaped by religious motivations, as are her perspectives on global issues. Acharris, for example, urges the United States to talk with people in situations of conflict and war. She argues strongly for non-violent diplomacy: “If we actually went out there and tried and tried to make this better, we could do it because there’s so much potential in the American people – in the whole world.”⁸

The stories of Andrea and Acharris reveal seemingly straightforward influences between their inner religious voices and public action. Their “coming out” could be described as the movement from inner conviction to outer, visible action and active dreaming for future action. The line between inner and outer does not always appear to be so straightforward, however. Young people who are more actively involved in (re)constructing their lives or asking disruptive questions may reveal their inner religious motivations in oblique or confusing ways to larger publics.

Consider Jordan, whose deep inner life is often missed by people who see only her public persona.⁹ As a child, she stood out from her class for too much talking. She was thrown into the identity-construction process by being different from others. She described the role of her fourth grade teacher, Sister Lucy, in helping her make her way.

She was the first teacher that I ever had that saw past my inability to stop talking in class and realize that I was actually really smart. But because I talked so much and my teachers hated me it's like we were in trouble all the time. And then when I got in her class she ... took me under her wing and then I became this little genius kid. And I love her for it.

In addition to these inner struggles to find herself, Jordan also had some significant religious experiences that deeply influenced her, such as her baptism and the times she “caught the Holy Ghost.” Because of her openness with her voice of critique and non-conformity, however, people are often confused by her public persons. She says: “Most people think I’m an atheist because of the way I come off. I’m very loose with how I speak about God. I’m not like revering, ... but I’m very much a believer you know.”

In fact, Jordan is not only free about saying that she is a believer, but she also likes to be honest about being a lesbian. She says, for example: “If my church [destroyed by a hurricane] is ever rebuilt I will probably come out to my congregation because I don’t like the idea of sitting in church and listening to a gay bashing sermon when I completely disagree with everything they’re saying ... because I’m sure there’s someone in my church whose gay.” She adds: “I honestly don’t care how they react. I just want them to know that I disagree with them and, if they don’t accept me, that’s fine.” Jordan’s story is complicated by her own love of Jesus and the tensions she feels about what is and is not safe to say in the church: “My struggle with Christianity right now is what’s very important to me.”

At the same time, Jordan is actively constructing a religious identity that takes account of the many significant influences on her life. She says of herself:

Well, Jordan’s religion is kind of strange because I’ve merged ... My Mom was Buddhist for 20 years and then she converted to Christianity. I don’t know why. I

wouldn't have. Because I think Buddhism is pretty awesome. You know you're responsible for things that happen to you. Plus I'm a Jesus freak so I can't let go of Jesus and I love the principles of Buddhism so I made 'Jordan's religion' and that's what I do. I think God's OK with that.

Jordan reveals an active construction process as she navigates her identity, and that process includes public exploration of her religious experiences and perspectives. Her inner religious voices interact with her public persona and actions, which sometimes confuses others but represents a robust religious identity for her and a considerable desire to be public with her religious voice. Like Andrea and Acharris, she identifies complex relationships between her inner religious voice, or convictions, and her public persona and action.

New Possibilities for Religious Education

The present set of interviews represents a limited sample, but some conclusions are strong in the data and worthy of future research. Young people come out religiously in relation to the cultural, religious, and communal contexts in which they live and in relation to their own identity-shaping processes. Experiences of difference – their own and others – often sparks a process of “coming out.” The ways by which youth navigate identity – whether more formative, (re)constructive, or disruptive at a particular moment in time – shapes the ways by which they offer their public religious voice. And youth's internal religious voices, or religious motivations, shape the ways in which they live their public lives. These insights are not only worthy of future research, but they are also suggestive for religious education.

One of the largest insights thus far is that *teachers and leaders in religious and school communities need to be alert to the differences with which young people are wrestling and the ways that those differences shape their lives*, for good or for ill. For educators to respect those

differences and to encourage young people to develop their own unique selves is to strengthen the identity-shaping efforts of the youth as well as their public religious voices. This includes encouraging young people to develop their unique potential and to wrestle with the hard questions that emerge in their lives, whether through tensions with others or internal tensions.

Another major insight is that *religious institutions and schools need to engage with young people in different ways as they navigate their identities in different ways*. For young people who are shaping their identities in a more formational, tradition-abiding way, the clear presentation of a tradition can be empowering. This does not rule out the possibility of stretching the boundaries of those traditions with the youth, but it recognizes that some youth in some periods of their lives seek the solidity of a particular religious orientation that can shape them and empower their religious voice. Similarly, young people who are engaged in more disruptive or (re)constructive processes of identity-formation need space to explore religion and their own perspectives and attitudes and to engage in that exploration with people similar to and different from them.

One further education insight is that *young people need opportunities to explore and question their internal religious voices and the ways by which those voices shape their public personas and actions*. The self-presentation of young people in public settings can be deceiving, and their exploration of the inner life and the motivations that arise from that life are critical to their own self-understanding and integrative living.

All of these insights beg for more, and that is the work of the discussion in our REA session. We look forward to the new insights that will emerge there.

¹ Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Dynamics of Religious Culture: Ethogenic Method," in *International Handbook of the*

² Andrew is a pseudonym for an 18-year old boy of European-American and Hispanic ethnic background, who lived in a small north Georgia town at the time of the interview. All interviewee names are pseudonyms, and other identifying information is removed from the presentation.

³ Roshawn (pseudonym) is a 13-year old African American boy, living in Atlanta at the time of the interview, 14 February 2008.

⁴ Moore, "Youth Navigating Identities: Charting the Waters through Narrative," International Academy of Practical Theology, Toronto, 13 April 2013.

⁵ Andrea (pseudonym) is a 19-year old European American girl who lived in Atlanta, GA at the time of the interview, 17 October 2004, lines 983-985.

⁶ Ibid., lines 994-997.

⁷ Acharris (pseudonym) is a 18-year old African American girl, who lived in Young Harris, GA at the time of the interview, lines 281-282.

⁸ Ibid., lines 357-359.

⁹ Jordan is a 19-year-old African American lesbian woman living in the southern United States.

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**Parents coming out religiously.
Secular and religious reasons for their choice of a primary school**

Summary

The secularised Dutch context can be characterised as post-pillarised, referring to the earlier educational context with 'pillars' for Protestant, Roman Catholic, Islamic and public/humanistic education. Whereas in former days in the schools teachers as well as pupils adhered to the particular religious or secular worldview of the school, today this is no longer self-evident. This poses the question: "What motivates parents nowadays to send their child to a Christian primary school?" We provide an answer via a qualitative empirical research project in which seven Protestant primary schools participated. National and international research shows the priorities of parents in choosing a school. In our research we focus on parents' motivations that underpin their prioritizing. The analysis of the interviews shows that parents look with the eyes of a child, that the first formal personal contact with the principal or a teacher of the school where a parent will look around has a huge influence on the final choice - a choice that materialises rather intuitively ("it feels good") and is imbued with care and love. Parents find it important that their child is provided with knowledge of the Christian tradition and that the school has an open mind towards other religions as well.

I Introduction

The Dutch society changed over fifty years from a mono-cultural society in which the Christian tradition was dominant, into a society characterised by multi-culturality and super-diversity.¹ The motives of parents to choose a Christian school for their children seem to have shifted from an emphasis on broadening and deepening socialisation in the Christian tradition (*teaching into religion*) to getting acquainted with worldviews and religions in general and the Christian tradition in particular (*teaching about religions and worldviews from a secularised-Christian perspective*).

With our research we wanted to map the underlying motives of parents in choosing a school. This contribution is based on the analysis of interviews mainly with mothers of schools of the various types that took part in the research project we reported at the REA 2011 Conference.² Later in this presentation, we will make use of the tentative indications of the three types of

¹ Crul, M., J. Schneider, F. Lelie (2013). *Superdiversiteit, een nieuwe visie op integratie*. Amsterdam: VU University Press.

² Bertram-Troost, G.D. C. Kom, I. ter Avest & S. Miedema (2011). The Positioning of Protestant Primary Schools in the Secular Age. Results of an Empirical Project in the Netherlands. In: L. Huffaker (Ed.). *Brain matters: neuroscience, creativity and diversity. 2011 Proceedings of REA/APPRRE*. REA/APPRRE: Toronto.

schools we distinguished then: tradition oriented school, diversity oriented school, meaningful learning oriented school.

The aim of our research is to gain insight in the process parents of young children go through when choosing a school, the values that play a role, and the concretisation thereof in principals' and teachers' actions. Our contribution might help to optimize the communication between school and parents in the process of choosing, also within the framework of enhancing the partnership in education.

In our research the following questions were guiding:

- * How does *the process* of school choice take place?
- * Which *motives* can we distinguish regarding the final choice for the respective school?
- * Which *relation* do parents see between a (possibly) worldview related motive and other motives when it concerns the choice of a Christian school?

II Setup and implementation of the research

We have chosen for a qualitative research setup with focus-group interviews. This choice is self-evident since most young parents are used to discuss all sorts of educational matters together. Young fathers and mothers meet each other at the day-care centre and the playgroup when bringing and picking up their children, and then exchange opinions.

The focus-group interviews stimulate further reflection together - in our case - on the identity of the school and parents' choice. From a focus-group interview suggestions can emerge that could benefit the communication on the identity between team and parents.

The focus-group interview was a semi-structured interview, constituted by key questions related to our research question. During the focus-group interview, two researchers are present all the time: a discussion leader and a minutes secretary.

II. 1 Selection of schools

Regarding the selection of schools for participation in our research we made use of the earlier mentioned 3 school types. Schools were recruited based on the following criteria: school type, national dispersion (countryside and large urban environment), pedagogical concepts (e.g. Jenaplan or Montessori education), and whether or not several primary schools of a different denomination in the near vicinity of the school were present (rich-choice or poor-choice context). From the twelve selected schools that complied with these criteria, parents from seven schools have participated in our research.

II.2 Recruitment of parents

The recruitment of parents for the focus-group interviews went through the principals of the schools.

Parents of children from groups 1 and 2 were approached, since those parents have made the choice of the school most recently.

II.3 Method in the focus-group interviews

The focus-groups consist of five to eight parents on average, mainly mothers. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. Each interview was analysed by both researchers immediately upon completion, and the most important points of discussion were noted down.

A third researcher has listened to the recorded interviews in full, gave comments on the researchers' interpretations of the context and/or parents' wording, and added literal quotes from parents to the report.

II.4 Method for analysing the focus-group interviews

Three *verbatim*s were analysed by the researchers independently from each other and revealed the following themes in the school choice process and parents' considerations:

- process of school selection
- worldview in upbringing and education
- parent perspective versus child perspective
- motivation of parents in relation to school type

The reports of the other focus-group interviews were analysed on the basis of these four themes.

III Results of the analysis of the focus-group interviews

Below we will present the most striking results from the analysis of the focus-group interviews, focusing on the process, the worldview/educational aspect, the parent and child perspective, and the Christian aspect of the identity of the school. In our quotes we refer to the parents of the type of school their child is attending.

III.1 Process of school choice

By far most parents think about the school choice by the time the fourth birthday of their child comes nearer.³ Sometimes the choice has implicitly already been made because the child attended a playground that is associated with a certain primary school. Sometimes it turns out that the choice was already made previously, since one or more older children already attended the school.

A mother whose child attended a meaningful learning oriented school in a rich-choice environment briefly and aptly depicted her school choice process: "At first we received a booklet at home. We already had looked around a bit on the Internet. The religious schools performed better than the public ones. We visited both. Here we were welcomed very pleasantly."

A mother whose child attended a traditional school explains that after paging through an information leaflet, she went to take a look at those schools: "Just at the school yard, what sort of parents and children are there, do you think you can have a 'click' with them?"

During each focus-group interview, parents mention the intake interview with the principal or a teacher as an important moment at which they develop a further impression on the school. But not only during that phase. Being and staying on speaking terms is also important for parents in case of a difference of opinion, as a mother of a child attending a traditional school explains as a result of the turmoil that had occurred on the story of the Creation versus the evolution theory. "However, we had a sound discussion on that with the principal."

Sometimes, prior to the intake interview, a parent just takes a look how things are going in the school yard. When this mother (child attending a traditional school) saw that the teachers were doing far more than "just chatting with each other", she concluded that it was good. "And once things feel good, why should one look any further then?"

³ Waslander, S., C. Pater, M. van der Weide (2010) *Markets in Education: an analytical review of empirical research on market mechanisms in education*. Paris : OECD.

Some individuals that collect information via the website of the school also consult the social media: “What do they themselves post on the Internet, for example: what sort of hobbies they have?” This provides “a rather good image” of the school, according to one of the mothers. The municipal information guide in which qualifications of schools are included is a source of information for some parents as well during this phase. However, this group of parents is an exception.

III.2 Ideology in upbringing and education

Generally speaking it seems that for parents it is difficult to distinguish between the education at home and at school. During the interviews on what one considers as valuable in the upbringing at home, the focus quickly redirected to the education at school. One mother of a child attending a traditional school finds it important that there is correspondence with the approach at home. Another mother from the same school is pleased that at school additional information is provided. “Everything is explained properly here, for example what Palm Sunday stands for.”

Another parent speaks of another school where she initially had a look: “Over there, the Christian part did not mean that much: there was only one celebration by the end of the month.” In general, parents are not looking for a very strict Christian school. “The very strict part is not necessary for me, like wearing skirts and a compulsory visit to the Church ... but yet still a little bit, so that my daughter knows about it” (meaningful learning oriented school). “The Christian stories are nice for the children”, one mother (traditional school) states, who explains that she herself is not religious. “I find it good to get acquainted with those stories during childhood”, a mother from a meaningful learning oriented school says. “I did miss it myself indeed: I attended a public school. It is part of Dutch culture”. A mother from a child attending a traditional school says on this: “I find it important that they know what the Christian holidays are about”. Contrary to this, according to this mother, “Public schools do have a Christmas tree, but they don’t tell a story with it.” “At home we don’t celebrate that much, but it is nice that here at school they do something with it”, a mother of a meaningful learning oriented school states.

III.3 Parent perspective versus child perspective

When reasoning on a school choice, the parent appears to be motivated by the interests of the child at some occasions (looking through the eyes of the child), yet at other occasions the motives of the parents themselves appear to be decisive (looking through the eyes of the parent, with the memories of their own childhood). An example of the child perspective is provided by a mother who finds it important for her child that school-friends live close-by, and that children from the neighbourhood meet each other at school. One mother of a child attending a meaningful learning oriented school interprets the child perspective in view of ‘the future’ pointing to the importance that they (the pupils) “already learn a little how to present themselves, since there is quite some pressure on them. So I think: the sooner they start out with such a stage, the less fear they will have for it as well”.

Knowledge on religion is regarded by some parents of a diversity school as an asset, since they themselves experienced to have profited from it: “You can take it along during the rest of your life”. Another parent from the same school points out that “lack of knowledge can quickly result in fear”.

An example of a parent perspective is that of a parent who attended a Christian school, and has no negative memories on that (meaningful learning oriented school), or a parent who does indeed have negative memories on the public school she attended and therefore has selected a Christian school for her child (meaningful learning oriented school).

III.4 Motivation of parents in relation to school type

The way in which the Christian aspect is shaped at the traditional school (introducing pupils to the Gospel and make them become acquainted with the Bible and Christianity) connects to what parents say, namely that the school provides a steppingstone for belief in and knowledge of Christian holidays and other traditions, and that for the rest parents should take care of religious education themselves. Parents of traditional schools prefer one line between home and school. This shows resemblance with the description of the traditional school, that the team is mainly of Protestant Christian origin, which contributes to the feeling of familiarity. Parents also address this as ‘odour of the nest’.

As far as the Christian character of the school is concerned, parents of diversity schools find teaching about the Christian and other traditions the most important thing. For these parents knowledge of traditions belongs to a proper preparation for the future: “You profit from it later on in society”. That is the reason why these parents value diversity at school. This corresponds with what is written in the description of the diversity school, namely that one wants to prepare pupils for a life in a multi-cultural society. Furthermore, the description of the diversity school indicates that there is space for encounter; diversity is an opportunity for learning.

Parents of a child attending a meaningful learning oriented school also state that attaching a meaning to Christian holidays is also an important surplus value of a Christian school. Parents also attach value to the praxis of the Christian faith in social activities. Openness towards other cultures and religions is appreciated. The description of this school type reads: “We teach our pupils to deal with various worldviews from our own (Christian) tradition”.

IV Conclusion

We can answer our three research questions now as follows:

During the *process* of school choice, informal informers are important. Parents follow what they hear from family, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances in the neighbourhood. Official documents, the school guide, and the school website play a secondary role. Some parents take a look at the school yard to obtain an impression of the way teachers deal with children and of the other parents standing at the gate. The main role is, however, for the one who conducts the intake interview. During this contact moment, experiencing a ‘click’ or not is of decisive importance.

With regard to the *motives* that parents mention for the selection of the school, the interests of the child come first: their child should feel good going to school, should be given all attention, and should learn how to deal respectfully with others. Secondly, the child should also be prepared for the future. These ‘interests of the child’ appears to be acknowledged in various ways by parents: the interests of their child now, the interests of the child as the parent experiences it, and the interests of the child-inside-the-parent, the child that this parent once was. Above all, the mothers experience the school through the eyes of the young child (infant). The motivation for a Christian school in term of the *relation between a (possibly) worldview related motive and other motives* varies from a predominance of becoming acquainted with the Christian tradition as an extension of home, in addition to home, or as acquiring knowledge on the tradition that is after all part of Dutch culture.

V Discussion and recommendations

The various roles that appear to be available for parents as partners-in-education in the school community don't play a role in the school choice motivation of parents. Firstly they choose for their child. They wish to experience a 'click' with other parents and team members.

Parents experience the school through the eyes of their child during the school choice process. Only in exceptional cases parents look ahead to the development of their child from a four year-old to a twelve year-old. Parents know a lot about the *emotional needs* of their young child, and they realise the need for safety, security, and attention of their infant. However, parents know little about the *learning needs* of the child, hardly of the infant, but certainly not of the growing up child. An important task for the school seems to be left there. The school should take the parents by the hand in the development of their child from infant to adolescent, as well as in the corresponding learning needs.

For both the traditional school, the diversity school, and the meaningful learning oriented school, Sacks' metaphor 'the home we create together' applies for the collaboration between the main stakeholders in the development and shaping of the child.⁴ In this metaphor, the school can be regarded as a home to live in, that materialises because of the efforts of all parties involved. A home where all inhabitants contribute to the maintenance, each by means of his/her own expertise. This creation shows the power of "orchestrated diversity: since we are not the same, we all contribute something unique, something that only one of us can give".⁵ Thus, partnership in education of parents and teachers is a must.

⁴ Sacks, J. (2007). *The home we build together: recreating society*. London: Continuum.

⁵ Ibid. p. 93

IMPORTANT: This essay is a work in progress prepared for the 2013 Annual Meeting of the REA in Boston and should be treated as such. The work still needs some good editing and completion of arguments. Do not cite it in part or in its totality without the explicit written permission of the author who will make sure that any citable section will have been completely revised and demonstrates an acceptable level of academic accuracy. The author can be contacted via email. Thanks.

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**Nineteenth Century Debates about the Need for Catholic Schools as a Legitimate
Alternative to the Public School System in the United States:
Lessons from Yesterday, Implications for Today**

Major debates about the need for Catholic schools during the nineteenth century capture the passion and tensions around the question of what it means to be Catholic and American. In this essay we look at two major case studies that bring together a polyphony of voices addressing the question of why Catholic schools are needed—or not—within the overall American experiment. The essay shows how key debates leading to the establishment of the largest network of schools sponsored by one single denomination in the country was the result of four streams of arguments: philosophical/theological, educational, political, and cultural. The essay offers important insights for similar conversations as well as for others that remain unfinished as Catholics and other Christians continue to wrestle with the idea of denominational education in the secular State.

The nineteenth century was a remarkable period in the history of American Catholicism. So it was for the United States, a young nation that had declared its independence from the British Crown only in 1776. American politics during this century would be characterized by an effort to give meaning to the idea of being a Modern nation, established to “form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”¹ The achievement of these noble ideals would face colossal. Not only the nation had to work hard to maintain its original Union (thirteen states) together despite major differences and competing claims about what government should be, but also it had to manage major additions to its rapidly expanding territory.² Right in the middle of these developments, the young nation found itself

¹ Constitution of the United States of America.

² The following major additions took place in the nineteenth century: Louisiana Purchase (1803); annexation of the Republic of Texas (1843); incorporation of the Oregon Territory (1848); annexation of most of the South West via

immersed in a painful Civil War (1861-1865), a major defining moment in shaping the emerging American identity. After the war and the multiple territorial additions, the expanded Union remained together. However, it was a much more diverse Union. In turn, slavery had been abolished. It was time to heal and to develop a sense of common character. It was also time to focus on strengthening socio-political structures that would build cohesion. The shaping of the educational system would be at the heart of these efforts.

Millions of Catholic immigrants from Europe, along with immigrants from other faith traditions, crossed “the big pond” and arrived in the United States, a young nation that was pretty much in flux. They were searching for the American Dream, the hope of a new beginning while searching for better conditions of life. In 1830 the total population in the country was about 13 million; only 3 percent Catholic. In the following decades large waves of immigrants would make their way into the U.S. shores: 1.5 million in the 1840s, 2.5 million in the 1850s... 5.2 million in the 1880s. Many of them were Catholic. By the end of the nineteenth century, about 19 percent of the entire U.S. population was Catholic, already the largest single denomination in the country until today.³ Despite the growing Catholic presence throughout the nation, a sentiment of anti-Catholicism brewed negative attitudes and decisions, many of them expressed in the legal system, against this group in various parts of the country. Catholics were often perceived as outsiders, intruders, incapable of obeying U.S. authorities because of their allegiance to a foreign leader (i.e., the Pope in Rome), and rather incompatible with the American experiment.⁴ Interestingly enough, the centuries-old tensions between Protestant and Catholic Christians colored many of the conversations about national identity despite the Constitutional separation of church and state.

For most immigrants this was a once-in-a-life-time journey. The idea of returning would promptly fade in their minds; many did not even entertain it. Whatever the United States of America was to become then, it had to incorporate the experience, vision, and contributions of the new immigrants, a fifth of them Catholic. For Catholics, the changes and conflicts of America, as many referred to the United States, would inevitably become their own changes and conflicts. Soon they would have to address the question: is it possible to be American and Catholic? The debates in the eighteenth century about public education and the argument that Catholics needed their own separate schools yielded important arguments to eventually answer such question.

Competing Promises

At the beginning of the 1840s, New York City had seven Catholic schools. The first Catholic school, St. Peter’s Free School, existed in the territory of the diocese before this ecclesiastical unit was established in 1808.⁵ It also preceded any of the schools sponsored by *The Free School Society* (later *The Public School Society*) in the city, which later would constitute the core of

the Treatise Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848). In less than fifty years, the United States of America tripled the geographical size of its territory.

³ See James M. O’Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 94-144; Mark Massa, *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2003), 36.

⁴ See Massa, 18-39.

⁵ New York became an Archdiocese in 1850.

New York's public school system. St. Peter's benefitted from an arrangement that allowed it to receive public funds for its operations. This was possible thanks to the 1795 "Act for the Encouragement of Schools" that allowed the use of surplus funds from the city's treasury to support private and religious schools. In 1825 administration of the funds moved to the Common Council of the City of New York and, under the lobbying efforts of *The Public School Society*, funds were denied to all denominational schools. By the 1840's *The Public School Society* not only held control of most public schools in the city, but also instituted a "non-sectarian" religious instruction, which focused largely on Bible instruction and moral values. Religious or denominational instruction would progressively be removed from the school setting and eventually lead to the emergence of the Sunday School alternative. Protestants in general embraced the dual model. Catholics protested not only because of the defunding of their schools but also because Bible instruction and teaching of moral values, which remained as part of the curriculum, was largely done from an implicit Protestant perspective, often with anti-Catholic undertones.

One important conviction underlying the opposition to funding denominational schools with public funding was enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution: "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

⁶ The First Amendment would eventually become the key reference point to challenge any efforts to use public funds for any religious activities, including education led by faith-based groups. Yet, during the first half of the nineteenth century the educational system of was still in formation. Catholics saw no contradiction —neither did many Protestants or legislators—in using government funds to schools sponsored by religious denominations since they were offering a service that the local communities were not appropriately offering. The arrangement was practical and it served at the time. Secularists and others who did not welcome Catholics would maintain continuous opposition to any form of funding for their schools. Another issue at stake during this time was the fact that religion remained an integral part of the curriculum in public schools. The key question was not whether to teach religion or not, but what would be the content of religion classes.

In Massachusetts this was exactly one of the questions that drove important conversations in the development of the Common School Movement, to which the name of Horace Mann is closely linked. In 1837 Mann became the head of the Board of Education of Massachusetts, the first such institution in the country. As such he advanced a series of reforms strengthening public education, which eventually would spread throughout the country. Mann argued for wide accessibility to public schools and the best quality of teachers. Schools should prepare children with the values of a free society to participate in it in light of those values. He opposed religious sectarianism in education, a rather common situation undermining the progress of public education in Massachusetts early in the century and before. On this he was in line with a law passed in 1827 by the Massachusetts legislature making education free to all children and limiting sectarian approaches to teaching religion. Nonetheless, he remained open to the idea of teaching of religion in public schools. In his *First Report* to the Board of Education in 1838 he noted a major deficiency in moral and religion teaching in public schools: "Entirely to discard

⁶ The First Amendment was adopted in 1791. Italics mine.

the inculcation of the great doctrines of morality and of natural theology has a vehement tendency to drive mankind [*sic.*] into opposite extremes... Against the tendency to these fatal extremes, the beautiful and sublime truths of ethics and of natural religion have a poisoning power.”⁷ Once again, the teaching of religion was to be non-sectarian. When done, it needed to focus on principles common to all sects or religious groups. This also applied to the selection of books that were to go in the libraries of public schools. Although this vision was challenged publically and legally, in the end it prevailed.⁸

One thinker who took issue with Mann’s proposal of teaching principles common to all sects or religious groups was Orestes Brownson (1803–1876), a rather prolific writer and a well-recognized public voice. He spent great part of his life on a religious search. Baptized a Presbyterian as a young man, he later joined other Christian denominations, spent some time with the Transcendentalists in New England, and in 1844 converted to Catholicism where he stayed until his death. His main vision for education was rather constant throughout his life. In his several essays on the topic, Brownson resisted the reduction of education to mere schooling. He firmly believed that the future of the young nation would greatly depend on the quality of the education it offered for its young. For Brownson, “Education is something more than the ability to read and write and cypher, with a smattering Grammar, Geography, and History into the bargain. *Education is the formation of character.*”⁹ The only way to achieve such character was explicit religion, not the neutral approach to religion that Mann and his associates were proposing in the Common Schools which, according to Brownson, was failing to produce virtuous citizens. He firmly believed that “There is no foundation for virtue but in religion, and it is only religion that can command that degree of popular virtue and intelligence requisite to insure the popular government the right direction and a wise and just administration.”¹⁰ When proposing what religion would be best to fulfill such goal, he was certain that Catholicism was the best fit. For him, Protestantism had proven to be inadequate insofar as it had placed religion under the control of the government and the people. Catholicism, on the contrary, offered a model that commanded the people and took care of them. His proposal certainly did not lack strong reactions and critiques, particularly in a context that breathed the air of anti-Catholicism. Three points are worth highlighting here. First, for Brownson education and democracy went hand-in-hand and the best guarantor of effective education, that is education that shapes character and virtue, is religion—for him Catholicism. Second, Brownson was convinced that Catholicism had much to offer to the shaping of American identity. He wanted a “Catholicizing of America.” But for this to happen he also knew that Catholics needed to become more Americanized.¹¹ Thirdly, he believed that the Common School enjoyed a lot of potential and he had no objection about Catholics sending their children to them. Public education was better than no education at all, indeed. Besides, Catholics needed to get involved in these schools. His remarks, largely articulated in the 1850s caused some uproar among Catholics who were arguing

⁷ Horace Mann’s *First Report to the Board of Education* in 1838. Cited in Raymond Benjamin Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929), 42.

⁸ See Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools*, 163-180.

⁹ Orestes Brownson, “An Address on Popular Education Delivered in Winnisimmet Village, on Sunday Evening July 23, 1837 (Boston, Press of John Putnam, 1837), p 3. Cited in James M. McDonnell, *Orestes A. Brownson and Nineteenth-Century Catholic Education* (New York, NY: Garland, 1988), 95.

¹⁰ Brownson, “Catholicity Necessary to Sustain Popular Liberty,” in *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, 2, 4 (October 1945), 517.

¹¹ See Mc Donnell, *Orestes A. Brownson and Nineteenth-Century Catholic Education*, 63-64.

for the need of Catholic schools to exist and be supported by the State. Most reactions to his ideas were negative, including that of Archbishop Hughes in New York.¹² In fairness to Brownson, he was a strong supporter of Catholic schools, a support that would increase towards the end of his life as he became increasingly aware of the broken promises of the public school system. Yet, he wanted strong Catholic schools, capable of rivaling any public school in its curriculum and formation. He often found with pain that the quality of many Catholic schools left much to desire and did not hesitate to indicate that the success of these schools would depend on the quality of education they offered. Catholic schools needed to be good and Catholics needed to attend them to remain Catholic. It was by retaining their religious identity that Catholics would make a major contribution to the larger American society. In Brownson we encounter a nineteenth century thinker who believed in the compatibility of the American project and the Catholic experience. At times he was ambivalent about such fusion yet remained hopeful that it was possible.

Let us return to New York. In 1840 the Governor of New York, William H. Seward, reopened the possibility of denominational schools receiving funding from the city, to which the seven Catholic schools rapidly responded with requests. The Common Council rejected the petition arguing that it was unconstitutional to do so and it would open the door to other organizations to do likewise. Bishop John Hughes of New York zealously protested the decision denouncing the various anomalies Catholics saw in such schools, starting with teachers indifferent to Catholic sensibilities, “the Scriptures without note or comment—the selection of passages, as reading lessons, from Protestant and prejudiced, authors... the comments of teachers, of which the Commissioners cannot be cognizant—the school libraries, stuffed with sectarian works against us... a combination of influences prejudicial to our religion, and to whose action it would be criminal in us to expose our children at such an age.”¹³ From this perspective, it was almost unconscionable for Catholic parents to send their children to public schools. Bishop Hughes appealed to the state legislature in Albany. The legislature did not rule in favor of Catholics by granting them public funds for their schools, yet took control of public funding away from *The Public School Society* and gave it to district and local governments. In 1850 Bishop Hughes wrote: “The time has almost come when we shall have to build the schoolhouse first and the church afterward.”¹⁴ Here we find early glimpses of the argument that would eventually lead Catholics to establish the largest network of denominationally sponsored schools in the country.

Should Catholics Support Public Schools?

December 7, 1884 was the last session of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, a gathering that had begun on November 9. The issues discussed were complex; yes, worthy of the complexity of the experience of being Catholic in the United States at the time. Baltimore III saw in action a body of archbishops, bishops, abbots, and many others who revealed an intricate system of hierarchical relationships that by and large reconnected Catholics to their traditional roots yet raised eyebrows among others, insiders and outsiders, committed to what had become the Americanizing project. The Catholic Church in 1884 was a much stronger institution

¹² Ibid., 124-146.

¹³ Cited in Robert R. Newton, *The Evolution of the New York Archdiocesan School System, 1800-1967* (1982), 11. Essay available online via Boston College library system.

¹⁴ Cited in Ibid., 12.

compared to that of just a few decades earlier. The U.S. Catholic population had gone from 200,000 people in 1808 to a strong presence of 14 million members—13 million people lived in the entire country at the beginning of the century! There were more than sixty dioceses throughout the U.S. territory, compared to just Baltimore in 1800. Less than 500 priests and about 900 nuns served an incipient Catholic population in the 1840s while nearly 10,000 priests worked alongside roughly 50,000 nuns at the end of the century to meet the needs of their fast-growing communities. Thousands of parishes had been created. About 200 Catholic schools had opened by the 1840's; at the time of Baltimore III there were more than 2,500 and soon afterwards that number would grow almost five times.

Among its various pronouncements about education, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore decreed: "Bishops are exhorted to have a Catholic school in every parish and the teachers should be paid from the parochial funds." Furthermore, "For children who attend the public schools, catechism classes should be instituted in the churches." Finally, "Parents must send their children to such schools unless the bishop should judge the reason for sending them elsewhere to be sufficient. Ways and means are also considered for making the parochial schools more efficient. It is desirable that these schools be free."¹⁵ At the heart of this command to erect parochial schools, the sense of obligation of sending Catholic children to them, and the provision that solid faith formation were offered to those children enrolled in public schools were the same arguments that sparked earlier debates about the need for Catholic schools in New York and other parts of the country. Baltimore III seemed to have sealed the deal. Catholics were greatly concerned about the increasing secularization in public schools. Catholic bishops, intellectuals, and educators often spoke about the need for education to be at the service of the "fundamental questions" of life, faith, and morals. How to ask such questions if religion was not part of the public school curriculum? At the same time, Catholics were concerned at how the Bible was read in public schools and the anti-Catholic spirit in these institutions. Many accused Catholics of being against bible literacy and even of being enemies of the American culture.¹⁶ Incidents such as Catholic children in public schools being ridiculed because of their faith or being expelled for not attending school on holy days certainly increased the tension. For many Catholics, erecting their own schools was the most viable solution. Doing so also would address, though not in a satisfactory way, the question of funding for education. Parishes were to support the schools. It seemed like a rather Solomonic decision. But the question was far from over. A new debate would soon ensue.

Between 1891 and 1893 Catholic education in the United States would witness an interesting chapter of its history, namely the "Catholic School controversy." The rapid expansion of the network of Catholic schools led many Catholics to adopt an increasingly negative attitude towards public schools, often ignoring any positive elements in them. The attitude was somewhat arrogant and usually defensive. In turn advocates of public schools strongly critiqued the expansion of the Catholic denominational school system, citing its development as a sign that Catholics had little regard for American institutions (and its Protestant roots) and were more concerned about foreign, religious allegiances than about those more pertinent to American identity. The arguments were not new, yet they had increasingly polarized. Bishops were perceived as the champions of the "Catholic position." However, in 1890 the National Education

¹⁵ Decree 13 of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore (1884).

¹⁶ See Phillip Gleason, "Baltimore III and Education," in *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 4 (1985), 282-283.

Association meeting in St. Paul, MN invited Archbishop John Ireland, head of that Archdiocese, to address the group. In his address he surprised many by extolling the merits of the State School and expressed the desire to see both the public and the Catholic school systems working toward some form of unity. He declared himself a friend and an advocate of the State School. He agreed with the compulsory nature of public education. Ireland also indicated that the main reason for the existence of Catholic schools was the hostility towards religion in public schools. He raised the issue of double-taxation that Catholics endure while paying their taxes and not being able to subsidize the education of their children in Catholic schools. For this he offered a twofold solution. On the one hand, to teach religion in public schools as it is the case in other parts of the world. The emphasis would be determined according to the majority of the children in the land, namely Protestantism, provided that denominational schools are also funded and are assessed according to established educational standards. On the other hand, that parish school buildings be used as State schools during school time in which religion is not taught at all, yet after that period of time religious activities could take place without a problem.¹⁷ In his diocese such experiment was already taking place in Fairbanks and Stillwater.¹⁸ Reactions to Archbishop Ireland's words were largely negative among Catholics. Letters from various sources went back and forth to Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, Archbishop Ireland, other bishops concerned about the Catholic school question, and even the Pope in Rome. Archbishop Ireland traveled in 1892 to Rome to defend his position and explain some of his ideas about education. In the end, Archbishop Ireland received the support not only of Cardinal Gibbons and other moderate bishops, but also of Pope Leo XIII.¹⁹ The Fairbanks-Stillwater arrangement was short-lived, eventually rejected by the school boards and opposed by several sectors.

While Archbishop Ireland's ideas and provisions could be read as the pragmatic side of the controversy, a more theoretical debate was ensuing during these years. In 1891 Rev. Thomas Bouquillon, Professor of Moral Sciences at Catholic University of America, wrote an essay entitled *Education, To Whom Does It Belong?* The essay was commissioned by Cardinal Gibbons with the hope of providing some theoretical grounding to settle the School Controversy. Catholics in the United States and in Rome, including bishops and intellectuals, by and large asserted that there was no such thing as the natural right of the State to educate. Compulsory public education and having the state teaching morals as well as religion (e.g., Bible), therefore, were modernistic aberrations. Only the family and the Church—and the schools established by the Church—could be said that have such right. On the contrary, this was a question that Protestants and many others in the United States had already solved in favor of the State around the 1840's with the emergence of the Common School Movement.²⁰ Baltimore III had stated: "The three great educational agencies are the home, the Church, and the School"²¹—the State was explicitly excluded. Rev. Bouquillon's essay was a provocative piece that argued that the State also shares in such right:

¹⁷ Archbishop John Ireland's Address to the National Education Association during its 1890 annual meeting, "State Schools and Parish Schools," cited in Daniel Flavian Reilly, *The School Controversy, 1891-1893* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1969), 48.

¹⁸ Immaculate Conception Parish in Faribault, MN and St. Michael's Parish in Stillwater, MN, as part of the Poughkeepsie Plan. Archbishop Ireland was not the only one using this model. Other dioceses were also implementing it. See Reilly, *The School Controversy*, 76.

¹⁹ Ibid., 180-183.

²⁰ See Ibid., 8, 17.

²¹ Baltimore III, cited in Reilly, *The School Controversy*, 107.

Education: to whom does it belong, is the question with which we started out. We now make answer. It belongs to the individual, physical or moral, to the family, to the State, to the Church, to none of these solely and exclusively, but to all four combined in harmonious working for the reason than man [*sic.*] is not an isolated but social being. Precisely in the combination of these four factors in education is the difficulty of practical application. Practical application is the work of the men [*sic.*] whom God has placed at the head of the Church and the State, not ours.²²

The essay was immediately the target of strong critiques. Bouquillon's argument went at the heart of what traditional Catholics had come to treasure about education and wanted to preserve this right as the Church's and parents'. The zeal to affirm the uniqueness of this right had led some bishops in past decades to refuse the sacraments to children attending public schools.²³ Baltimore III explicitly prohibited such practice. Some critics of Bouquillon insinuated that the author's concessions to the State were likely the result of the influence of Enlightenment ideas to which he had been exposed as someone born and educated in France—an *ad hominem* attack to discredit his work, indeed. Among the most fervent respondents were Jesuits thinkers engaged in the question of education, particularly Rev. R. I. Holaind from Woodstock Seminary in Maryland and Rev. Salvatore M. Brandi from the journal *Civiltà Cattolica* in Rome, among others.²⁴ Holaind offered six rebuttal points. He argued that a non-Christian State cannot have educational rights, the right to education cannot be given to everyone since not everyone has jurisdiction everywhere, granting this much to the State interferes with parental rights, only the Church can teach the central truths of morality, the State could perhaps develop schools but only when there is no legitimate authority to do so and that is not the ideal, and the State cannot have control of that for which it has no competence.²⁵

Bouquillon crafted two follow up essays²⁶ responding to his critics almost to no avail since each time he wrote he received similar replies. However, much was changing in the minds of Catholics in the United States towards the end of the nineteenth century as they discerned more deeply their identity as Americans. Something was also changing in the Church worldwide as Papal writings and other documents wrestled with idea of Modern States and the role of the Church in them. It would be in the twentieth century when Rev. Bouquillon's ideas would be vindicated and some of elements of the pragmatic—some would say progressive—vision of Archbishop John Ireland would eventually become part of mainstream American Catholicism. Such process of vindication had begun already at the end of the nineteenth century. In November of 1892 Pope Leo XIII sent Archbishop Francis Satolli as his envoy to the United States to oversee in person the situation and find a solution to the Catholic School Question. Satolli's final report was in many ways an affirmation of Ireland's and Bouquillon's efforts to look at Catholic

²² Thomas Bouquillon, *Education, To Whom Does It Belong?* (Baltimore, MD: J. Murphy, 1891), 31.

²³ Ironically, the children of Orestes Brownson's son (named Orestes Brownson, Jr) in 1869 were refused the sacraments by Bishop John Hennessey when the young Orestes declined to send them to Catholic schools. At that time Orestes, Jr. taught and led a school in Iowa where the majority of teachers were Catholic.

²⁴ See Reilly, *The School Controversy*, 106-133.

²⁵ René Isidore Holaind, *The Parent First: An Answer to Dr. Bouquillon's Query, "Education: To Whom Does It Belong?"* (New York, NY: Benziger, 1891).

²⁶ Thomas Bouquillon, *Education, To Whom Does It Belong? A Rejoinder to Critics* (Baltimore, MD: J. Murphy, 1892) and *Education, To Whom Does It Belong? A Rejoinder to Civiltà Cattolica* (Baltimore, MD: J. Murphy, 1892).

schools in a much wider framework. Four brief excerpts of Archbishop Satolli's final fourteen-proposition document are worth citing:

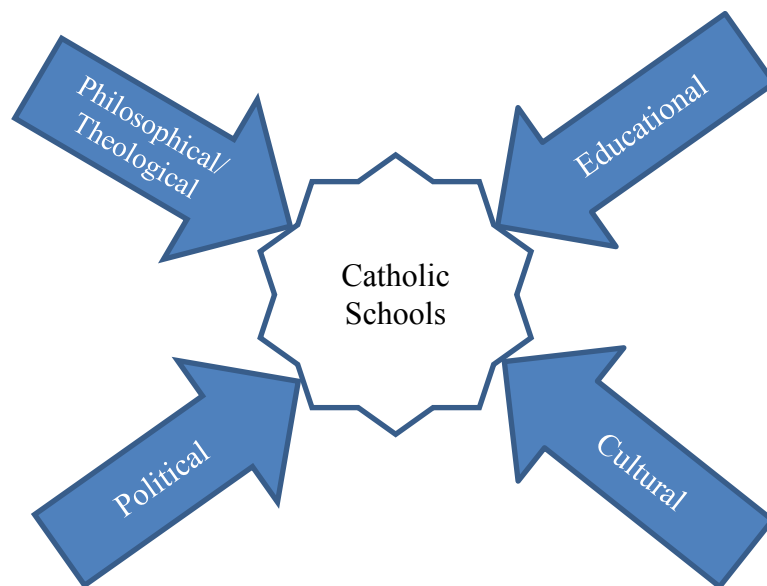
Proposition III: "When there is no Catholic school at all, or when the one that is available is little fitted for giving the children an education in keeping with their condition, then the public school may be attended with a safe conscience..."

Proposition V: "We strictly forbid any one, whether bishop or priest, and this is the express prohibition of the Sovereign Pontiff through the Sacred Congregation, either by act or by threat, to exclude from the sacraments, as unworthy, parents who choose to send their children to the public schools. As regards the children themselves, this enactment applies with still greater force."

Proposition VI: "[The Church] holds for herself the right of teaching the truths of faith and the law of morals in order to bring up youth in the habits of a Christian life. Hence, absolutely and universally speaking, there is no repugnance in their learning the first elements and the higher branches of the arts and the natural sciences in public schools controlled by the State, whose office it is to provide, maintain and protect everything by which its citizens are formed to moral goodness, while they live peaceably together, with a sufficiency of temporal goods, under laws promulgated by civil authority."

Proposition VII: "The Catholic Church in general, and especially the Holy See, far from condemning or treating with indifference the public schools, desires rather that, by the joint action of civil and ecclesiastical authorities, there should be public schools in every State, according as the circumstances of the people require, for the cultivation of the useful arts and natural sciences..."²⁷

Polyphony of Perspectives



²⁷ Cited in Reilly, *The School Controversy*, 271-276.

During my presentation at the REA meeting I will use this graph to highlight the various voices and arguments that coincided in the development of the argument in favor of Catholic schools in the United States during the nineteenth century. Using a musical metaphor, I will illustrate, in light of the above two case studies, how when one of the voices in the polyphony changed its “tune,” the others eventually had to adapt and in the process give way to a fresher understanding of the idea of Catholic identity expressed through education.

Into the 20th Century: Questions for Conversation

What did we learn from the nineteenth century debates about the need for Catholic schools in a socio-political context shaped by the Constitutional separation of church and State?

Are you familiar with similar debates in the 20th century that have directly affected ways in which Christians understand their role in defining education as well as their participation in the larger efforts to educate children and youth?

Are there any unresolved issues in the conversation about the rights of churches and the state to provide education?

Is the United States a Christian nation? If so, how is this reflected in the way Christians are educated in the public school system?

Can/should faith-based schools be authentically denominational (e.g., Christian, Muslim, Jewish) and American in our day?

What challenges does contemporary secularism pose to the education of Christians in public schools and in denominational schools?

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**Engaging Our Symbols, Sharing Our World:
Forming Young People Around Symbols for Participation in the Public Sphere**

Abstract: This paper highlights the potential of symbols, specifically those David Tracy calls “religious classics,” to anchor both dialogue among people of differing beliefs and the formation of young people by their religious communities. Symbols present a particularly propitious focal point for such dialogue because of (1) the congruence of symbolic expression with the dynamics of human cognition and (2) the suitability of this mode of expression to the present cultural context. A dramatic example illustrates the process of shared reflection upon classic religious symbols *through which* and *for which* religious communities should form their youth for responsible participation in public spaces.

Introduction

Events like 9/11, the 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, and the continued religious violence in Nigeria have forced upon us all—even one time advocates of the secularization theory—the realization that religion is still a major force in the lives of human beings. To ignore this force in our society is folly; to fail to prepare our youth to address it, negligence. Having admitted to ourselves that religion seems here to stay, we are confronted anew with the question of how to address religious differences. On one hand, some, particularly here in the U.S., tout tolerance as the highest virtue. “You do your thing, I’ll do mine,” they say. However, such “lazy pluralism” deprives us of the many rewards to be gained from dialogue and more widespread collaboration while ignoring the very real problems that stem from religious and ideological disagreement.¹ On the other hand, the rise of fundamentalism around the globe indicates that many people are responding by entrenching themselves more firmly in their own traditions. Such exclusivism holds little promise in a time when rapid advances in transportation and technology are bringing us into more frequent contact with the “other,” not only on our TV’s, computers, and mobile devices, but even at our very doorsteps. We cannot deny it—the other is here, and he is very different from me. If we harbor any hopes for peace around the world and in our local communities, we need to learn to talk to one another.

Between these extremes of lazy pluralism and exclusivism, we must find a more adequate middle ground, a common ground where the people of coming generations may meet and interact. One possibility is that pointed to by the likes of David Tracy and Thomas Groome of rooting ourselves in the particular while remaining open to the universal.² Though this is a nice sentiment, the question arises how exactly religious communities go about forming their young people to live out such a paradoxical existence. In this paper, I highlight one aspect of religious formation that holds particular promise for preparing young people to participate in the public sphere of our pluralistic, postmodern world, namely, helping them to appropriate intentionally and meaningfully the core symbols of their religious tradition and, subsequently, to engage in genuine conversation with members of other traditions about their own symbols.³ In this proposal I draw primarily upon the work of David Tracy, who advocates concentration on “classics” as one hope for moving theology forward into publicness. I begin by describing what sorts of symbols are capable of supporting this kind of formation and conversation and then explaining why it is that formation around symbols holds such promise. In the latter part of the paper, I analyze the process of shared reflection upon symbols *through which* and *for which* youth should be formed, offering as a dramatic example Jesus’ encounter with the woman at well.

The Promise of Symbols

To begin generally, a symbol is an image that elicits an affective as well as a cognitive response. Symbols are distinct from signs in that signs unambiguously signify a single referent (e.g., a stop sign) where symbols evince two or more meanings—the thing itself (e.g., water) and the thing it symbolizes (e.g., purification and/or chaos). Many thoughts, concepts, and

¹ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 6.

² Groome articulates his position thus: “I summarize the catechetical challenge amidst religious diversity as follows: ‘to ground people in the particular with openness to the universal’” (Thomas H. Groome, “Catechesis Amidst Religious Pluralism,” *Catechetical Leader* 19, no. 1 (January/February 2009), U3).

³ For the sake of directly addressing the conference prompt, I speak herein about the formation of young people specifically. However, this approach is important and appropriate for audiences of all ages and demographics.

associations can be wound up within a single symbol.⁴ That is to say that symbols bear an “excess of meaning.”⁵

To reach an understanding of the sort of symbols capable of sustaining religious formation we must specify further, for not just any symbol will do. When I speak of symbols in this context, I mean a subset of what David Tracy calls “religious classics,”⁶ and, like Tracy, my proposal rises and falls on the contention that these “classics” actually exist.⁷ When Tracy speaks of “classics” in general, he means expressions of the human spirit produced in response to a moment of profound experience and understanding of “the truth of existence.”⁸ These expressions at once conceal and disclose a truth about our lives so compelling “that we cannot deny them some kind of normative status.”⁹ They provoke and challenge us in such a way that, when we encounter them, we sense that our very existence is at stake in how we respond.¹⁰ Though these classics are the products of a particular time and place, they exert this “claim to attention” for all times, people, and places.¹¹ So-called “classic works of literature” offer one example, but classics in Tracy’s sense can also be images, rituals, events, persons, and symbols. Not all symbols are classics, however. For example, while the Pepsi logo certainly qualifies as a symbol, encountering this symbol is unlikely to evince the feeling that one’s existence is at stake therein, as is indicative of a classic.

Within this general category of classics Tracy specifies certain expressions as “religious classics.” He distinguishes, “Unlike the classics of art, morality, science and politics,” which disclose some truth about *one aspect* of reality, “explicitly religious classic expressions will involve a claim to truth as the event of a disclosure-concealment of the whole of reality *by the power of the whole*—as, in some sense, a radical and finally gracious mystery.”¹² Furthermore, in contradistinction to people’s response to other sorts of classics, their response to a religious classic comes with the conviction “that their values, their style of life, their ethos are in fact grounded in the inherent structure of reality itself.”¹³ As an example, Tracy speaking out of his own tradition suggests, “For the Christian the present experience of the spirit of the Risen Lord who is the crucified Jesus of Nazareth *is* the Christian religious classic event,”¹⁴ and, consequently, “The classic images for the Christian are those related to that event and that

⁴ Immanuel Kant, for example, explains that such presentations of the imagination “arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words” (*Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), §49; cf. Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 140, n.36).

⁵ Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 102. Theologian Robert Doran also puts it well: “The manifest meaning of a symbol, according to one style of interpretation, points beyond itself to a second, latent meaning or to a series of such meanings, by a type of analogy which cannot be dominated intellectually” (*Subject and Psyche: Ricoeur, Jung, and the Search for Foundations*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), 139).

⁶ This notion of symbol also closely resembles what Edward Farley terms “deep symbols.” (*Deep Symbols: Their Postmodern Effacement and Reclamation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 3.) Farley in turn points to Philip Reiff, Daniel Boorstin, and Susan Langer as others who share his meaning.

⁷ See Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, xii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 126. Tracy refers to such a moment as the moment of “intensification.”

⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁰ Tracy describes, “If, even once, a person has experienced a text, a gesture, an image, an event, a person with the force of recognition: ‘This is important! This does make and will demand a difference!’ then one has experienced a candidate for classic status” (*Analogical Imagination*, 115-6).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 102. Think, for example, of a “classic” work of literature, which yields new insights with each reading and retains its profundity generation after generation.

¹² *Ibid.*, 163.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

person: the dialectics of the symbols of cross-resurrection-incarnation.”¹⁵ It is such religious classics, specifically those taking the form of symbols—what I refer to hereafter as “classic religious symbols”—that I believe to hold unique promise for religious formation today.

I offer two reasons for my optimism regarding the potential of symbols to this end¹⁶: (1) the congruence of symbolic expression with the dynamics of human cognition and meaning-construction¹⁷ and (2) the suitability of symbolic expression for communication in the present cultural context.

Concerning the first, two millennia of investigating the mind in philosophy and more recently in psychology, neuroscience, and cognitive science have upheld what Aristotle wrote long ago: “the mind never thinks without an image.”¹⁸ On a basic level, images are necessary for the mental process of arriving at new understandings.¹⁹ To understand experience is to conceptualize it, i.e., to make intelligent connections and explanations for what we experience. However, such conceptualization depends upon discovering in an image some clue to our implicit or explicit questions about experience. We notice, remember, or imagine some key element of an experience that allows us to pivot from the concrete instance to the abstract concept that constitutes understanding of a thing.²⁰

On a deeper level, it is primarily through symbols that we make sense of the world and orient ourselves within it. Human beings are not automatons that operate by ingesting information and calculating a logical response. In addition to following the dictates of reason, we are influenced by our feelings and values.²¹ Furthermore, while it would be ideal to reason through all life’s questions before beginning the actual work of living, life does not afford us this luxury. We are “thrown” into a world already in progress and assume responsibility for our lives only after they are well underway.²² In consequence, we must synthesize meaning on the fly and orient ourselves in the world as best we can given what we find there. Classic symbols are among the artifacts we find scattered in the world, and, according to Tracy, it is through and in these symbols rather than through our own achievements that we find ourselves and our way in

¹⁵ Ibid., 249.

¹⁶ Though I might offer many more, I limit myself to two due to space constraints.

¹⁷ According to Barbara Maria Stafford, “Such symbolic configurations become physically impressed upon the mind because they are already congruent with the formal template of ‘mental’ representation” (*Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 65).

¹⁸ Aristotle, “De Anima,” in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 431a, 16. In philosophy see, for example, Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologica,” trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *New Advent*, 2008, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/>, I, q.79, a.4, r.3; and Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 348. For an exploration of research in these newer fields, see Stafford, *Echo Objects*, 2007. In psychotherapy, there is, of course, the classic work of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. For a social behaviorist perspective, see Arthur W. Staats and Jeffrey M. Lohr, “Images, Language, Emotions, and Personality: Social Behaviorism’s Theory,” *Journal of Mental Imagery* 3, no. 1–2 (1979): 85–106.

¹⁹ As Bernard Lonergan puts it, “the image is necessary for the insight” (*Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, Volume 3*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, 5th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 1992), 33). Lonergan’s standard example is Archimedes striking upon a solution to the dilemma of how to determine if the king’s new crown was pure gold when water was displaced from the bath as he lowered himself in (see *Insight*, 27–28).

²⁰ See Lonergan, *Insight*, 27–35 for a more detailed analysis of the process of understanding.

²¹ These are the two modes of being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) that Martin Heidegger refers to by the terms *Verstehen* (understanding) and *Befindlichkeit* (mood). (*Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and John Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), 172, 182.)

²² Ibid., 223.

the world.²³ These symbols are the means by which our predecessors oriented themselves amidst the fundamental questions and concerns of human existence. As we inherit the tradition they bequeath to us, these classic symbols become inseparable from our own thinking about the same fundamental questions.

Because symbols serve this inceptive function in human cognition and meaning-construction—prior to explicit understanding and rational justification—they provide a unique touchstone for dialogue among people of different traditions and worldviews.²⁴ Genuine dialogue is most likely to occur when communicating at the level of our most fundamental concerns, e.g., the question of our origins, our drive to live meaningful lives, our fear of death.²⁵ More so than doctrines, which are laden with added layers of interpretation and ideology, symbols draw us into these fundamental questions. The Buddha's struggle with suffering, the Israelites' experience of exile, the apostles' post-resurrection experience of redemption—all these experiences, rooted as they are in some particular classic religious symbol, nevertheless have the power to evince some truth that resonates with every human being, regardless of tradition or creed. They beckon us from the safe distance of our formulated beliefs into the immediacy and messiness of human experience. From this standpoint amidst the ambiguity of experience, we are more likely to recognize the frailness of our own expressions of belief and therefore to sympathize with those who express their beliefs differently.²⁶

The second argument for forming youth around classic religious symbols builds upon the first. The world we live in today has been described as the “civilization of the image.”²⁷ We are constantly flooded with images from billboards, televisions, computers, electronic tablets, and smart phones. The result is that we consume and exchange exponentially more images and symbols than any generation before us.²⁸ What is the impact of this deluge of manufactured images on minds hardwired to construct meaning through symbols? Researchers are only just beginning to investigate the matter, but we may surmise that it poses a significant challenge to religious communities striving to form their members in a particular symbol system and with a coherent sense of identity.²⁹ In consequence, faith communities will have to remember how to speak compellingly out of their own symbols if they are to have any hope of their members

²³ See Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 307.

²⁴ As Paul Ricoeur has argued, it is in symbols that our thoughts and feelings first come to linguistic expression.

²⁵ Tracy writes, “For there the most serious questions on the meaning of existence as participating in, yet distanced, sometimes estranged from, the reality of the whole are posed” (*Analogical Imagination*, 155). Paul Knitter similarly reflects, “Before dialogue can be communication about doctrines and beliefs, it must be a communion which comes about when the partners ‘...penetrate the ultimate ground of their beliefs’” (Paul Knitter, “Religious Imagination and Interreligious Dialogue,” in *The Pedagogy of God's Image: Essays on Symbol and the Religious Imagination*, ed. Robert Masson (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 106).

²⁶ This is not to say that sharing one's symbols will magically open the doors to mutual understanding and respect. Misunderstanding is always a possible outcome, even the most likely one, it might seem. Yet if the symbols we share with one another are genuine classics, they will provoke some sense of familiarity in the other, however distant or vague. There is something inviting about this sense of familiarity, which is typically lacking when people of different faiths or no explicit faith at all come together to discuss differences of beliefs.

²⁷ Roland Barthes, “Lesson in Writing,” in *Image Music Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 175.

²⁸ Leonard Sweet, for example, describes our current culture as “image-driven” and “visualholic.” (*Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century Church*, 1st ed. (Nashville: B&H Books, 2000) 86, 92.)

²⁹ Even before the technological explosion of the internet, social media, and mobile communication devices, Raymond Firth acknowledged, “public symbols have been regarded as having power to regulate individual behavior, to express personal sentiments, and to dictate forms in which private symbols present themselves” (*Symbols: Public and Private* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 212).

drawing upon that religious tradition as their primary source of meaning rather than whatever happens to be trending on Twitter.³⁰ Indeed, in an era marked by deep-seated distrust of traditional institutions, authority, and doctrine, symbols may very well be religious communities' best hope of reaching not only a wider audience but even their own members.³¹

The Process of Engaging Classic Religious Symbols

Having argued for the particular potential of classic religious symbols for promoting dialogue in the public sphere and preparing youth to participate therein, I will now describe what such a conversation looks like in practice. In so doing, I will be simultaneously presenting a blueprint for the formation process since regular participation in conversation around such symbols is itself the best formation. The importance of actual conversation in this process cannot be emphasized enough.³² Symbols are not magic talismans; they are products of human meaning-construction. Consequently, their meaning needs to be unpacked in the context of conversation in order for them to exercise their power to open up people from different traditions to one another. To illustrate this power of symbols I take as my model a story from my own Christian tradition, Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1-42). The story is a familiar one: Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at the well and asks for a drink. Understandably, the woman is surprised that this Jewish man would even speak to her, much less drink from the same ladle as herself. She is wary of the Jews, against whom her own people are opposed by an embittered history and conflicting beliefs. Yet, despite her hesitation, Jesus' offer of "living water" (v.10) draws her in. Struggling to grasp the meaning of Jesus' symbolic speech at first, by the end it is clear that she has been transformed in the conversation. She runs back into town and becomes the mediator of a life-changing event for many there.³³

Analyzing the moments in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, we can discern a model for engaging others in today's pluralistic public spaces.³⁴ The process begins when we share a classic religious symbol from our own tradition in which we find personal meaning.³⁵ In

³⁰ For two discussions of the atrophy of traditional symbols see Farley, *Deep Symbols*, 13-28 and Edward K. Braxton, "Bernard Lonergan's Hermeneutics of the Symbol," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* no. 3 (1976): 197.

³¹ In the words of Lonergan, "Never has the need to speak effectively to undifferentiated [i.e., symbolic] consciousness been greater" (*Method in Theology: Volume 14*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 99).

³² For Tracy, the event of understanding in conversation serves as the paradigm for all true understanding. (See *Analogical Imagination*, 101-2.)

³³ Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus repeatedly engage others in this way with symbols, especially his parables. Though I might have chosen any number of other stories to illustrate my point, this one is particularly appropriate since Jesus is engaging a person from another faith tradition and because this story is more revealing than most of the evolving thoughts of Jesus' interlocutor. The reader should not infer from my selection of this story that the purpose of conversation around symbols is conversion of one's interlocutor to one's own religion. Though the conversation in this particular story is rather one-sided, others like Jesus' exchange with the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:24-30; Mt 15:21-28) demonstrate that even Jesus was open to personal change in these encounters.

³⁴ I describe the following as discrete moments in the conversation, but in reality they may overlap chronologically or occur simultaneously.

³⁵ From a very early age, human beings employ cognitive behaviors for the sake of "equilibration," or protecting the stability of one's meaning. (See, e.g., R. De Lisi and S.L. Golbeck, "Implications of Piagetian Theory for Peer Learning," in *Cognitive Perspectives on Peer Learning*, ed. A.M. O'Donnell and A. King (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999), 3-37; Z. Kunda, "The Case for Motivated Reasoning," *Psychological Bulletin* 18 (1990): 480-498; P.K. Murphy and L. Mason, "Changing Knowledge and Beliefs," in *Handbook of Educational Psychology*, ed. P.A. Alexander and P.H. Winne, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2006), 305-324.) For many people, over time these healthy cognitive behaviors ossify into a close-mindedness to views that conflict with their own. However, these

the story above Jesus symbolizes himself with the image of “living water.” (Christians would offer a Christocentric symbol like the cross or the resurrection since we are not a religious classic as Jesus is.) So long as the symbol is a genuine classic, our conversation partner will be enticed by the sense of familiarity and the aura of truth evinced by that symbol, as the Samaritan woman is in this story.³⁶ The moment that then follows is crucial: We must allow ourselves to be drawn out and enveloped by the familiar yet strange subject matter of the symbol.³⁷ It is clear when this moment occurs in our story. The woman’s initial suspicion of Jesus falls away, her challenges to his integrity cease, and she unabashedly expresses her desire for the living water Jesus has promised. We have all had such an experience of a real conversation where both parties are engrossed in the subject matter, carried along, as it were, by a power not our own. Likewise, we have all had the experience of its opposite. When one person or both begin by speaking out of self-consciousness or a predetermined agenda, the conversation never gets off the ground.

In the next moment we share our honest response to what the symbol is speaking to us—what resonates with us, what unsettles us, what becomes clear, what remains obscure. Again, this response cannot not be a rehearsal of stock arguments or party lines. It must be an honest response to the fundamental questions provoked by the symbol.³⁸ As each speaks one’s heart and mind, the other must listen and earnestly attempt to understand that person’s meaning, to enter into the “world” of the other, as Hans-Georg Gadamer says.³⁹ This requires a momentary suspension of judgment as we open ourselves to the personal truth the other is attempting to convey. In our scripture story, Jesus speaks to the woman’s heart, and she in turn listens earnestly to his responses to her questions. Her questions are not veiled attempts to trip him up or accusations disguised as questions, as was often the case in the Pharisees’ exchanges with Jesus. She sincerely wants to know what is in his heart and mind. Admittedly, any understanding of another will always be imperfect, forged of whatever mental materials we bring to the conversation. Still, even an imperfect, analogous understanding of the other has the potential to be life-changing.⁴⁰

This brings us to the final moment in the process. Genuine listening inevitably involves

defensive cognitive behaviors mask an equally basic drive to share our meaning with one another. (See, e.g., Laurie Santos, “The Human Mind-Meld” (presented at the The Nantucket Project: Collective Intelligence: The Miracle of Human Progress, Nantucket, MA, October 7, 2012), <http://bigthink.com/collective-intelligence/humans-are-hardwired-to-share-knowledge>, especially her point regarding “proto-demonstrative pointing.”)

³⁶ Which is not to say that the interlocutor will necessarily respond positively to the symbol’s demand for attention. There is always the possibility that one will resist this demand and refuse to engage.

³⁷ In Tracy’s words, “conversation occurs *only* where the conversation partners allow the subject matter to take over” (*Analogical Imagination*, 101, 452).

³⁸ For a model of serious engagement with the symbols of different religions, see John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth: Experiments in Truth and Religion*, 1st ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

³⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd revised ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 446. Gadamer explains, “In human relations the important thing is, as we have seen, to experience the Thou truly as a Thou—i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us” (Ibid., 361). Indeed, recognizing the otherness of another person can be an opportunity for self-discovery. As Nicholas Lash says, “Once the assumption that the stranger is inferior is shattered, then he is experienced *as* a stranger. And once you admit that you do not understand *him*, you are gradually forced to admit that you do not understand yourself” (Nicholas Lash, *Theology on Dover Beach* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 71).

⁴⁰ For Tracy, any understanding of another is always analogical, and yet that understanding by analogy is not insignificant: “Who you are I know only by knowing what event, what focal meaning, you actually live by. And that I know only if I too have sensed some analogous guide in my own life. If we converse, it is likely we will both be changed as we focus upon the subject matter itself—the fundamental questions and the classical responses in our traditions” (*Analogical Imagination*, 454-5).

the risk of being changed.⁴¹ If we really listen, the other may say something that challenges our beliefs and disrupts our worldview. If we are intellectually honest, we may realize that we need to change in order to conform our life to this new truth. This is a difficult risk for anyone to take.⁴² It is far easier to remain fortified within the familiar confines of our creeds and doctrines. For the Samaritan woman, taking this risk means acknowledging her dubious moral situation, revising her religious beliefs, and exposing herself to rejection by her community. Yet she accepts the new truth revealed to her, and it transforms her and her community. The same is possible for us today if we dare to remind ourselves that our doctrines as articulated are not pure truth but only relatively adequate heuristic expressions made necessary by the practical concern of living a life in response to our experience of the transcendent.⁴³ If the other presents us with an expression that is more adequate, then integrity compels us to follow where it leads. And it is not only once that we undertake this risk. Rather, it is a risk we take each time we enter into the public square and come face to face with an “other.”

Having walked through the moments of a conversation centered around classic religious symbols, we might now ask, What is to be gained from this process? In the first place, we might hope for a broadening of our understanding of ourselves, our traditions, and our relation to ultimate meaning.⁴⁴ Reflection upon symbols, with their power to provoke and vivify, is more likely to stimulate such personal growth for the average person than disputing doctrine or theory. Second, we might reasonably hope for a greater understanding of and respect for the persons with whom we engage in such conversation. Going beneath the hardened ideology and polemics, we come to see the other as a person like ourselves concerned with questions of ultimate meaning. Focusing conversation at this level, we can better appreciate why others express their beliefs as they do and recognize the similarities with our own. Finally, we may even dare to hope for some tentative agreement. Through the risk of truly listening to another person’s reflections on a classic religious symbol, we might come to see past the superficial differences to the deeper, underlying meaning, a meaning that we may very well share. In short, by stepping through the portal of the symbol into another’s “world,” we take the first step toward establishing peaceful relations in the wider world we all share.

Conclusion

Religion and religious difference cannot be ignored in today’s pluralistic and increasingly interconnected world. Therefore, religious communities who seek to prepare their young people for participation in the public sphere must teach their youth to engage the questions and

⁴¹ In the words of Gadamer, “To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (*Truth and Method*, 379). It involves a momentary letting go, stepping out from the illusory security of our creeds and doctrines into the uncertainty of the encounter with raw mystery. John Dunne puts it beautifully: “The union of minds and hearts based upon the sharing of insights...implies a compassionate understanding of the ambivalence of human feeling and a real conversion from the pursuit of certainty to the pursuit of understanding” (*The Way of All the Earth*, 61).

⁴² For a psychological perspective on human resistance to challenging new information, especially information that pertains to central aspects of the self, see Shelley E. Taylor and Jonathon D. Brown, “Illusion and Well-being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health,” *Psychological Bulletin* 103, no. 2 (1988): 193–210.

⁴³ That is to say, insofar as those doctrines are framed in particular, historically-bound language as they inevitably are. They may express a genuine truth, but they may express that truth in language that not all people recognize as disclosive of truth.

⁴⁴ As Richard Kearney has remarked, “The shortest route from the self to itself is through the images of others” (*Poetics of Imagining: Husserl to Lyotard* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 141, paraphrasing Ricoeur).

meanings that underlie particular expressions and to dialogue with others about them. I have argued that formation around classic religious symbols provides one promising means of promoting such conversation.⁴⁵ Undertaking this kind of reflective experience with young people will not only give them a model for how to engage in dialogue but also better dispose them to do so by habituating them to wrestling with issues of fundamental human concern. There is much more to be said about symbols in the formation process, for example, the danger of distorted symbolic thinking and the many potential pitfalls inherent in teaching with symbols.⁴⁶ However, for the present I merely propose that religious communities can better prepare their youth for participation in the public sphere by more intentionally forming them *for* and *through* deep reflection on classic religious symbols.

⁴⁵ This is by no means a proposal to abolish doctrine. As Tracy points out, doctrine is a necessary safeguard for ensuring the adequacy of a particular expression to the norms of a particular tradition. Still, doctrine is not the place to start the conversation. Because doctrine comes late in the process of interpretation, the doctrines of each tradition are less likely than their symbols to provoke a sense of familiarity in persons outside that tradition.

⁴⁶ Regarding the danger of distorted symbolic thinking, see Bernard Lonergan, "Religious Knowledge," in *Lonergan Workshop*, ed. Fred Lawrence, vol. 1 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 312; and Paul Ricoeur, "The Symbol: Food for Thought," *Philosophy Today* 4 (September 1, 1960): 203.

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ABSTRACT

Major studies of altruistic actions show that the self-understanding of one person can make the difference between disaster and hope for those involved. This paper is a heuristic-hermeneutical discussion of the values of altruism in analyzing material from the terror attacks in Norway July 22, 2011. It tries to identify clues to how such values can be focused on, fostered and supported in religious education. The conclusion points towards the significance of a narrative approach to ethics and to spiritual formation in a wide sense as one important perspective of religious education.

ONE PERSON MAKES A DIFFERENCE

A STUDY IN ALTRUISM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION:

On July 22, 2011, Oslo and Utøya Island in Norway became sites of terror, with 77 people killed by one man (Anders Behring Breivik) who claimed it to be a defense of Christian culture against a multi-culturalist society. The event and the responses to it have led to a self-searching process: How can a young person develop a value system that allows such an atrocity? Another question is also asked: What makes young people respond with hope and expressions of love instead of just call for retaliation? The now famous “love quote” by a young member of the Labour party: “If one man can show so much hate, just think how much love we all together can create”¹ was followed by many similar reactions (Sagberg, 2014). Both the event and the responses tell stories that are usually associated with altruism, that is, attitudes and acting out of the interest of others even at the risk of one’s own well-being.

Questions following the event and the response converge in two research questions: 1) *Can theories of altruistic love contribute to understanding the positive responses to the terror event?* 2) *How can this understanding be used in religious and spiritual education?*

In this paper I present and discuss main points from two major studies of altruism and love (Monroe, 1996; Sorokin, 2002 (1954)) in an attempt to develop some heuristics for understanding responses of altruism or related attitudes. These heuristics are used hermeneutically in a discussion of two kinds of material. The first consists of a collection of 50 stories from survivors and helpers from the July 22 event (Aftenposten, 2012). The second

¹ The authentic story about this “message of love” or “the love quote” can be found in the Norwegian newspaper Verdens Gang (Kjærlighetsbudskapet sprer seg i alle kanaler, 2011).

consists of messages laid down in front of Oslo Cathedral right after the event. I have analyzed a sample of 379 texts and drawings made by children. More than half of the messages express attitudes of being at one with the victims and with people from all cultures. About 10% of the messages analyzed have explicit references to religious motifs as well (Sagberg, 2014). In this paper I use just one example from this material.

HERMENEUTICS OF ALTRUISM

“THE HEART OF ALTRUISM” AND “THE WAYS AND POWER OF LOVE”

Kristen Renwick Monroe, American political scientist (born 1946), did a groundbreaking research on the phenomenon of altruism and its significance in political ethics, challenging the dominating view that human behavior is totally governed by individual self-interest (Monroe, 1996, p. 3). She interviewed people who 1) had rescued Jews during the second World War; 2) had shown other acts of heroism; 3) were philanthropists; 4) had achieved financial success while also helping others (entrepreneurs). These types served as archetypes of behavior on a continuum from self-interest on one end to pure altruism on the other end in a hermeneutical analysis of narratives. The results of her analysis were surprising in many ways. For the purpose of this paper the following are mentioned, related to five dimensions of a perspective on life:

Cognitive frameworks: There was no significant difference between rational actors and altruists in terms of perceived values or ethical systems. Virtually all interviewees claimed values of truthfulness, honesty, family and of being good role models.

Canonical expectations of ordinary behavior: Altruists thought they acted like any person would normally do, although they must have known that not everybody followed their example.

World view: Altruists had other perceptions of themselves in relation to others than those on the other places on the continuum. Monroe expected altruists to act out of a sense of belonging to a community or motivated by religious faith, but rescuers and heroes were just as likely to be loners, and varied in terms of faith. The most specific difference from other persons was a view of the world in which all people are one, whether you know them or like them or not. The only reason to help was that these people needed help (Monroe, 1996, p. 199). This seemed to be the only common factor “that refused to go away under the most careful scrutiny”, she says (Monroe, 1996, p. 206).

Empathy: The ability to see things in the perspective of others seemed to be of less significance in terms of motivation. It was not in question; rather, helping others happened spontaneously or out of a sense of necessity.

View of self: Altruists were not just “good people” in the sense of self-image or virtue ethics. Altruists were furthermore found across social classes. For example, some prostitutes in Amsterdam proved to take high risks in helping people during the war.

The first point may not be surprising - ethics in terms of perceived value systems or professed moral codes is less important than lived morality. It should, however, be a *caveat* in educational policy. The point is not to say that learning ethics is not important, but that the prime force behind ethical acts is not rational choice, but rather deep-seated predispositions in one's identity (Monroe, 1996, p. 218). Such predispositions are nourished more by example and narratives than by learning ethical theory. This result finds support in major educational and ethical theories (Bruner, 1996; Løgstrup, 1987).

Monroe admits that religion certainly has significance for how altruists view other people and society, but that it is not salient to altruistic acts more than to other acts. She identifies, however, one recurring trait in many stories across different family and group constellations: People who turn out to be heroes or rescuers as well as some philanthropists very often refer to *one person* from their childhood who meant a lot to them, most often a grandparent (Monroe, 1996, pp. 42, 43, 83, 85). One old and frail lady who rescued a girl from a rapist, at grave danger to herself, credits both God and her grandmother for her being able to see the need of all living things: “She [her grandmother] made me conscious that all things alive are worth saving, no matter what or what situation they were in” (Monroe, 1996, p. 83). The attitude that you just help when someone is in need also seems to have been present from an early age.

Canons of morality are often unconscious. This has, of course, major significance for education. Normal behavior in the eyes of altruists is not what any person does, but what any person is *expected* to do. This view supports what Jerome Bruner calls a psycho-cultural approach to education (Bruner, 1996). It also supports the idea of a radical ethical demand that precedes any ethical reason (Løgstrup, 1991 (1956)).

Empathy seems not to be a significant factor in altruism. Yet, others would say that altruists display a sense of empathy although their acts are not consciously motivated by it (Vetlesen, 1994).

Are we looking for “good people” when we try to understand altruistic behavior? The notion of “good” has changed during history, along with the contents of virtues and virtue ethics. The changes follow changes in canonical expectations. The question of how love and goodness develops remains a major educational task, but may be hard to study systematically. The Russian-American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968), although disputed in sociology, has given it an important try in a life-long task to advocate *the power of love* in social science.

Sorokin describes *seven aspects* of love: religious, ethical, ontological, physical, biological, psychological, and social. All expressions of love can, furthermore, vary in at least *five dimensions*: intensity, extensity, duration, purity, and adequacy of love’s subjective goal to its objective manifestations. Much of his study on love is done to show evidence of love as a greater power than evil (f. ex. Sorokin, 2002 (1954), p. 58). I find his five dimensions of love helpful to discuss values expressed verbally and in action in the material of this paper, while the seven aspects of love call for a broader discussion beyond my scope.

Monroe also suggests implications of her work on the study of social theory. Her main point is that self-interest provides an inadequate basis for a theory of human behavior. The study of altruism teaches us to see the human face, individual people, explore the dignity and integrity of each person and understand “why we should do good rather than evil in this world” (Monroe, 1996, p. 238).

There are important differences between the two studies. Sorokin ascribes to the “supraconscious” a supreme role not only in motivating altruistic love, but also in transforming the person who identifies with it. He describes this process of self-identification in terms that reveal his orthodox inspiration, talking about the “divinization” of mankind (Sorokin, 2002 (1954), p. 481). Monroe mentions religious teaching as one of many factors that can trigger or activate mechanisms of altruism, but not explain its genesis (Monroe, 1996,

p. 214). Again, there are links to other studies in ethics.² Leaving aside the more extensive philosophical discussion I focus on the fact that both Monroe and Sorokin have developed heuristics of love and altruism that can be developed and applied hermeneutically.

HEURISTICS FOR THE STUDY OF ALTRUISTIC LOVE

Considering Monroe's five dimensions I find it useful to connect *cognitive frameworks* with *world view*. Professed value systems may not be decisive for acting altruistically, but connected to the perceptions of self in relation to others a person's value system comes to the surface. The American theologian Ian Markham, discussing Christian ethics in a "cultural mode", prefers the concept of "world perspective" to "world view". This describes a readiness for acting that is not a result of conscious decision, but is discovered or revealed in attitudes and decisions we make (Markham, 1994, p. 20). I follow his lead.

I find the concept of *canonical expectations* very important hermeneutically. Altruists do what they expect anyone should normally do, while their actions often are breaking some canons of normal behavior. Jerome Bruner has shown convincingly how people make sense of their experiences with stories, making the narrative a key to understanding reality. Narratives arise when a canon of ordinary behavior is broken and a new canon of expected behavior comes into being (Bruner, 1996, p. 139). Stories from altruists are, therefore, of immense significance for understanding the formation of virtues and values, and the meaning of education.

The notion of empathy will not be central to the study of altruistic love, but may play a role in some cases. The concept of "good" in terms of virtue ethics plays a minor role in Monroe's study, or is left open to interpretation, but is important in Sorokin's thinking. He describes "techniques of altruistic transformation" (Sorokin, 2002 (1954), several chapters) in terms usually associated with virtue ethics. He also points to spiritual disciplines of prayer, mediation and the like, in many religious traditions.

STORIES FROM JULY 22 AND CHILDREN'S MESSAGES

The material from the event of July 22 and what followed is extensive and complex. The 50 stories mentioned are important because of their authenticity as witness stories and some reflection one year after the event, told to reporters in interviews. In all their variety they show some recurring elements of significance to the issue of altruism.

Almost all interviewees carry with them memories of young people helping each other. One story is told by a woman of 34 (Anne-Berit) who was on the island as a representative of Norwegian People's Aid: "I run out, towards the pump house. Someone shouts for help. I find a girl, severely wounded, shot five times, wounded in the jaw and in the chest. We are six or seven who hide in some high grass. The girl says that she can see in my eyes that she will die. There is chaos in the group. I can see that the girl will not survive on the cold and wet ground.

² "Because the demand is radical, its significance for the actual choice of the individual is hidden. Because the demand has content, it is related to social norms, about which one can talk philosophically. ... [I]n our culture there has been a preaching that has formulated the radical ethical demand and brought it to our mind." (Løgstrup, 1966, p. 151, my translation)

We put her on top of me. The group is asked to press on the wounds with their bodies, something that calms everybody down.” This girl survived.

Almost all survivors can identify people who have been of help to them both to survive and to come back to ordinary life. One of them (Lars, 20) says: “All who rescued us in boats from Utvika are heroes. They risked their lives for us.” Lars describes the support from the local people as outstanding. But one name remains with him: “I am so grateful that I found Christoffer [another boy]. He risked his life watching out for us all and making good decisions for us following him.”

All interviewees say that they want to live ordinary lives, not being thought of as helpers or victims. What is perceived as ordinary, involves for most of them changed value priorities. New canonical expectations are discovered, while their experience of just doing what is ordinary and expected has not changed.

In terms of *world perspective* these stories emphasize the importance of individuals who act spontaneously when they perceive the need of others. Why some people seemed more ready to act than others, is impossible to know, but some factors may be found. In the case of Anne-Berit, she was trained in first aid, but her act went far beyond her training. We know very little about Christoffer and all the rescuers who came with their boats, but one of them (Jørn) says: “I did what I felt was right in the situation. It would have been much worse to stay on land.” All stories about helpers seem to indicate that their behavior was *an integrated part of their personalities*, indicating a history of moral formation.

Recurring motifs in the material points towards the significance of virtue ethics as well as ontological-phenomenological ethics – ethical demand arising in the immediate encounter with people in need (Løgstrup, 1991 (1956)). There must be some elements of moral

formation in Norwegian society that should be explored and not taken for granted, as there are other elements as well marked by ethnocentricity and pure self-interest.³



The memory material offered by children after July 22 is full of expressed love to victims, family, the country and even to the terrorist's family. One might say that it is easy to express love in such messages, and that it is naïve to regard these children's texts as significant. I do not agree, using just one example from the material (©National Archives of Norway). The drawing of these 77 hearts by a 9 year old girl has the text: “I do not understand that this could happen. I am sorry for those who died. We must remember that all people have equal worth.” In the act of drawing 77 hearts she

identifies strongly with the victims. She protests against the violation of a basic moral view of being human, seeing the event not in isolation but as an attack on humanity in each human being.

From her position this is about as much as she can do in terms of altruism. It is an expression of ethical and ontological love: “Love is basically not an emotional but an ontological power; it is the essence of life itself,” according to Paul Tillich (in Sorokin p. 7). The great amount of

³ Geir Lippestad, defense attorney of the terrorist, received thousands of e-mails from people all over the world who actually support the world view of Breivik (Lippestad, 2013).

love messages in the memory material may be interpreted in the same direction. Most of them do not say much about emotions (besides sorrow), but a lot about identification and protest.

Expressions of love, verbally and symbolically, have less intensity than acts of helpers and rescuers, but may display a high degree of extensity. Many of them show a world perspective that extends far beyond group identification of even national identification.

How does this material relate to the criterion of adequacy? One of the survivors from Utøya, Fred Ove (17), says that he does not think much about the terrorist. "When people use very ugly words about him, I say: Why use so much energy on him when you have friends and family you can love? Use your energy there instead"(Aftenposten, 2012). That is an expression with high adequacy, less reflected extensity and intensity, but certainly a high degree of duration. Fred Ove's attitude has many parallels in the material.

The example of Anne-Berit shows an extreme degree of intensity and adequacy. She also shows duration in keeping in touch with the girl she saved and wanting to continue as a helper during camps. Her act may also be seen as high in purity – and we are then not talking about her emotions, but of her motivation.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

- Responses to the events of July 22 have shown that altruism is a living force in many people's morality, including that of children, calling for more focus in research and education.
- A narrative approach to ethics and to the study of world views stimulates moral formation of a deeper kind than what can be learnt in ethical theory. One person's view of self and others can make a difference between lifegiving hope and destruction.
- Religious traditions are not decisive factors in altruistic love, but have an effect of triggering altruistic values in a culture.
- The evidence of altruism calls for spiritual education in a wide sense, and for an orientation of religious education that goes beyond the confines of faith communities.

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Faith-based Schools: Is a critical engagement with social justice possible?

Abstract

Faith-based schools have been part of the education systems in many countries for centuries. The management and curricula of these schools were/are looked upon as foundations for good ethical behavior and the moral fiber of societies. The previous South African Christian National Education system, till 1994, serves as an example of political indoctrination through Religion in Education. This brings the promotion and sustainability of faith-based schools into question. Research since 1993-2008 on religion in previous public faith based schools and the processes for introducing a “new multireligious education” curriculum will be outlined. In this paper I will argue that faith-based schools have the propensity to create “artificial safe spaces” due to the particularistic notion of their belief and value system. The deficiency of interreligious interactions, teaching-learning activities, and the exclusive notion of a faith-based school, will impede a “religious conscience and literacy” that will exclude critical thinking and social justice discourses.

Introduction

When religion goes to school, what approach can create *safe spaces* and simultaneously create opportunities for critical engagement on social justice issues? When one argues in favor of faith-based schools, it remains one of the most important questions to be answered. Religion education in faith-based schools aims primarily to teach and inculcate children that the particular religion’s values, customs, rituals and world views are sacred. One needs to disrupt this notion and ask what the responsibilities of public or private schools in the 21st century are, and can we act as responsible educators to contribute to an open society for religious respect?

I would like to position myself within this debate (Roux & Van der Walt, 2011; Roux, 2013) as the arguments might augment my viewpoint that faith-based schools have the propensity to hamper the notions and desires of critical thought. The notion of a democratic classroom is also in question, with a sole mono-religious stance in classroom praxis that will influence the whole-school environment. I have, however, the propensity to distract social justice issues to become merely part of a religious philosophy and will lack critical engagement with the global social issues. A mono-religious stance can create a religious community with a more conformist and traditional outlook on society. Such as position in society, and its comments and roles concerning social justice issues, will impact on people outside the specific religious community.

Faith-based schools have been part of many education systems in different countries for about a century, faiths and religious communities. Traditionally, countries, societies and individuals formed

their political, economic, cultural and religious identifications in many forms of expressions, which one is outlined in their religious practices and philosophies. In the curriculum development of faith-based schools, it is looked upon as the foundations for good ethical behavior. It becomes an extension of the moral fiber of the religious community or society in order to “secure” the religious customs for generations to come. The well-being of a society is often measured by the moral fiber of their religious communities, as well as the state of their education system. It is interesting to note that when societies find themselves in a moral crisis, it is expected that educators will be the interlocutors for better fundamental and core values to educate the new generation in the particular moral code of society. This notion influences all sectors of education.

In order to engage in critical thought on religion, teachers’ training should be the vehicle for transformation and curriculum change in RiE (Roux, 2009). John Valk (in Sporre, 2010: 103-120) stated that the purpose of universities is changing and the fact that religion is making a comeback to society is noticeable. This will impact on the essence and curriculum development, as well as processes of teaching-learning applications for religion in schools and society. One should, however, acknowledge Geertz’s (1973) definition of religion as a “cultural system” that gives meaning to people’s lives, defines the world and give hope for the “unforeseen” of the future.

However, re-assessing research since 1993- 2004 and discourses in RiE in South Africa at present, I am arguing that faith-based schools are creating artificial safe spaces due to the particularistic notion of their belief and value systems. The deficiency of interreligious interactions, teaching-learning activities, and the exclusive notion of a faith-based school, will impede a religious conscience and literacy that will exclude critical thinking and discourses on social justices issues (Roux, 2010). I re-assess my own research because of the identification of repetitive notions on RiE after 20 years in this field of study. (See addendum for tables = to be discussed in presentation)

Religion and tradition: a particularistic notion

Traditions and enculturation into a tradition have many advantages, for example, by being part of a religious or cultural group that is being nurtured; one experiences a sense of belonging, especially in our globalized society constituted of Western individualism. Enculturation as an act of educating in a specific tradition can cause positive and negative outcomes. Given the history of religious education (faith-based and/or public schools’ religious education) in pre-1994 South Africa with its Christian National Education policies that were used for political gain, I question the notion of enculturation in public and faith-based schools. Although fundamental and religious communities from diverse religious convictions have different aims for establishing faith-based schools, there is a possibility that faith-based schools can become the defenders for a divided society within a particular view on social justice. The importance of being educated in a religion has two notions; one to be educated in one’s faith and tradition, and the other to act responsibly in a broader multi-religious and multi-cultural society and global environment. New interests and discourses on faith-based schools are part of the reasoning on so-called moral declines in societies, as some argue that moral decline is a result of a multi-religious approach to traditions, its values, and questioning practices.

The development of a multi-religious approach in public schools in Britain and Europe (Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, & Willaime: 2007) informed also religious education scholars in South Africa. The proclamation of the Reformed Act of 1988 in Britain, and the interaction of different theories on Religion in Education, introduced new initiatives to traditional faith-based schools and introduced aspects of multi-religious dialogue and multi-religious curricula with phenomenological, reflective and interpretative approaches, with its main aim to understand diversity. The deliberations on faith-based

school from 1997-2004 in Britain and the position of these schools in the education system were a long and intense debate (cf. Jackson, 2003; Levinson, 1999; Burtonwood, 2002; Hand, 2002). Arguments were raised from an education philosophical, curriculum and educational studies stance and motivated from a liberalist, communitarian or particularistic point of view. In analyzing these viewpoints and arguments, it seems that two notions on faith-based schools are prevalent. First, the integration of values and education and bringing children in contact with members of different belief and value systems, and defending the right to a cultural (religious) distinctiveness in a mono-religious or single faith school (cf. Burtonwood, 2002). Secondly, the right to explore and inculcate children with a specific religious, value or belief system's doctrines and parental rights for caring about their own religious beliefs support only in a particularist approach. The multi-religious approach in Britain began in many schools in 1988 with the support of the Reform Act.

In South Africa since 1994, taking the previous Christian National Education system (1960-1994) into consideration, the position of religious education in schools, change in the political dispensation, the missionary history, the public and academic discourse were socially driven, religiously laden and emotionally motivated. Academics in Religious Studies could, for the first time, become part of discourses on critical thought and socially just issues. It was clear that academics were officially divided into two lines of thought:

- those who argue for maintaining the system as it was before (public schools in CHE); and
- Those who argue for an inclusive RiE policy, with the purpose to heal the scars of our recent history, where race and division (churches and schools by race) and divided religions, do not exclude children from other religions will experience the full curriculum. The aim might also to keep them safe from religious indoctrination

With the acceptance of the policy on *Religion and Education* in South Africa (2003), including representatives of the majority religious convictions, the process was started to set a new direction for the scattered South African religious education scene. The implementation of the Policy and the subsequent years didn't seem to yield the outcome one expected (Roux, 2009).

Although the Life-Orientation curriculum in the school system gives room to a multi-religious approach, the hidden and null curriculum are still infusing the religious ethos of the school within the framework of the majority of parents, school governing bodies and teachers' belief system (faith). The most alarming aspect is that public schools in South Africa (especially Ex-Model C flagship-schools) are still offering and instill a traditional mono-religious school ethos and religious education, which is inherently the same as existing faith-based schools. If one analyses these approaches to devotion, curriculum interpretations, and extra-curriculum activities, very little has changed. Children and parents who do not adhere to the schools' ethos are still in a wilderness of adaptation and conflict.

Van der Walt, Potgieter and Wolhuter (2010: 39-40), argued that a "confessional pluralism" and "interreligious dialogue" is only possible when religious instruction (see this notion as mono-religious instruction/education/indoctrination) is part of the public school system. They give examples of places where religious intolerance still prevails, and specify that religious convictions are openly dialogued upon in these schools as "public spaces" (e.g. Nigeria). This argument can be contested with examples where religious intolerance in schools (Kenya) brings religious and gender conflict and no dialogue takes place due to the patriarchal composition of the Abrahamic religion and social fiber of the country (Atoyebi, 2012).

Confessional dialogue, in South Africa, according to Van der Walt, Potgieter and Wolhuter (2010: 39-40), is confined to religious institutions and parental care, as subscribed by the Policy (2003). Their

argument inclined that interreligious dialogue cannot take place in any discussions on confessional matters and/or traditional interpretations of religious practices, deities and other practices. They further stated that: “(I)nterfaith and interreligious understanding and tolerance cannot be promoted in the context of the state (sic) school, because of the ban on confessional sectarian religious education (instruction)” (2010: 39-42). This argument confirms that theorist in religion education in South Africa still believe that the previous education dispensation, with its discriminatory curricula and religious instruction, did justice to all in our diverse religious convictions. Opposing this stance I argue that: firstly, the position of RiE in South African public schools is at present not regarded as public spaces by its role players (Roux, 2009). If the ontology of public schools are taken as a given, any child in any public school has the right to practice her/his religious practices next to the religious practices of the so-called majority of school-goers (Policy, 2003; School Act //). There is still and on-going confessional approach towards religious practices in many public schools and tertiary institutions. Secondly, there is a lack of discourse on an ontology and epistemological of religion in public schools (excluding faith-based schools) and its position outside the current Policy Document (2003), (Prinsloo 2008, Roux, 2009; 2012). The continuous discourse, and actions and legal court cases against children from other religions (Van Vollenhoven & Blignaut, 2007) supported a gross intolerance stance in public schools. I argue that the particularistic notion of traditions in a faith-based school, also in our public schools, still remains the main denominator in RiE. From a pedagogical perspective, the current religious education approaches and inculcation of values in public and faith-based schools is contestable (Du Preez & Roux, 2010).

Artificial safe spaces – what does it mean?

In order to put the argument to the test, I retract a vision of Catholic Schools in South Africa that conducts a dual approach: first to embrace the faith with and secondly to develop an understanding of diversity. The vision statement reads:

“The Catholic School strives to make Christ visibly present in every dimension of its educational enterprise. Through Religious Education it does this by offering, in the Catholic tradition, a holistic programme as a light to illumine every learner's search for the meaning of life, and for the way to live it. In partnership with family and faith community, it leads learners to understand and value their own faith, and the faiths of others, while deepening their spiritual and moral appreciation of life.”

(Retrieved 15 July 2012: http://www.cie.org.za/areas_of_focus/religious_education/).

In an article *Religious upbringing reconsidered*, Michael Hand (2002) posed a question to colleagues on the liberal and conservative line of argumentation on the logic of a religious upbringing without indoctrination. The notion of religious upbringing is primarily to introduce children to the practices, beliefs and values of the religion. Therefore, religious practices and worship are the main step and action in religious upbringing. As Hand (2002:545) is arguing: “*To impart a religious belief one must use a form of leverage other than the force of evidence, and this it seems is necessary indoctrination*”. Hand (2002:545) argues that central to this problem is not the “logic possibility but rather the practical difficulty of giving children a religious upbringing without indoctrinating them”. The conflict remains between the rights of the parent/teachers/school environment to raise her/his child within her/his own worldview

In exploring the ontology of safe spaces in social justice research and the outcomes thereof in classroom praxis and social issues (Roux, 2012:31), the notion of safe spaces was based on elements of caring and the work of Nel Nodding (1984). Du Preez (in Roux, 2012:58) states that “the notion of safe spaces is often ambiguous and that this might have several implications for education”. Du Preez (2012:59) further argues that safe spaces are contentious and one needs to look at the ontology of safe

spaces. She states that we are “creating empty spaces when we view the right to education as mere access to education institutions, when we merely see the work of curriculum as the selection of contents and methodology, and when we attempt to safeguard learners against the social realities in which they are situated” (2012:59). Du Preez (2012:59) further argues that we have a “fixation with safety”, while it is “essentially about risk and danger”; we have an illusion of what a safe space in schools should be and view the classroom or a faith-based school (CDR) as a “presumably stable and safe space”, which is “safeguarded against the unstable outside world”. I concur with her that the safe spaces (in faith-based schools) are: “highly political”. She describes that the instability of the world engulfs with atrocities and warfare, and that “individuals tend to isolate themselves in an attempt to safeguard themselves from potentially dangerous contexts”. Many of these clashes are highly religious and culturally motivated and not being concerned about religious and social issues can create artificial safe spaces for learners. (cf. Boostrom, 1998:398). The global village is a high-risk environment and one needs to argue that isolation cannot help to engage in conceptualizing what risk environments mean and what they are (Jansen, 2009:274). I concur with Du Preez’s (2012:59) notion that “we know a space is safe when risks can be taken in such a space”.

In a search for new possibilities in religious teaching-learning we need to bring new dimensions to the classroom praxis and adapt new teaching-learning content and material. Exploring social justice issues and multi-religious content there should not be in conflict with social change and interactions with new social orders if these new social orders are responsible and democratic.

The complexity of this notion is how a teacher should use the new information, content and context, and how to facilitate an environment where explorative and constructive teaching-learning can take place and still be able to create a safe space for “risk taking” by the learner. This is a contentious issue when exploring a democratic and free society’s responsibilities towards educating the next generation. If one takes the previous arguments of traditional faith-based schools (ethos/vision) into consideration, it seems that faith-based schools should provide spaces for members of a specific religious community where risks can be taken and potentially controversial issues be handled.

Waghid (in Tayob & Weisse, 2011:28) explores notions on critical Islamic pedagogy in his chapter on Madrasah schools. He argues that critical pedagogy cannot be only “narrowly connected to nurturing”, which are one of the main aims of Islamic faith-based schools. Critical pedagogy needs to enhance critical thought on every aspect of the faith, religious content and values. Learners should not be satisfied to agree with everything she/he is taught, but should explore what makes sense and in the process have the ability to disagree and adopt questioning attitudes of the tradition (Waghid, 2011:28; Roux, 2012). One of the main risks in a mono-religious faith-based environment is that you are only concentrating on the tradition and its moral code. It is at this juncture that religious conscience and religious literacy will exclude critical thinking and discourses on social justice issues. My reasoning is that for three decades (1960-1994) one section of a nation’s critical discourse on the social injustices was silenced and never part of the curriculum, and an artificial safe space of the CNE public and faith-based schools became politically laden and socially barren.

Research in inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue (Roux, 1993-2004; Roux. et al., 2009) indicated that the complexity of dialoguing on religious traditions is not only related to learners’/students’ understandings of their own religion, but it is mostly due to the inadequate knowledge construct of the teacher on different interpretations of religious contexts (Ferguson & Roux, 2003, Roux, 2009). Professional teachers and schools could not associate with the new policy because they did not relate to a hermeneutical circle of understanding post-modern curriculum development, where teachers need to

understand “*the text, the lived experiences and the self in relation to the Other*” (Slattery, 2009:141; Roux, 2009a).

Conclusion

In my arguments and the tables of the research undertaken during the past 20 years, indicated that the concept of safe spaces has many meanings on different levels. The question however is how can religious education in faith-based schools, public schools; and we as researchers in RiE and RaE remember that the *education world out there* requires a type of learner, student and teacher that will cope with the needs of every individual and in different contexts. I think we all do realize that many faith-based schools or public schools, with a specific religious ethos, cannot guarantee a learner that will cope easily with belief systems other than their own. New teaching-learning approaches in faith-based schools hardly eradicate the religious, cultural and social differences, discrimination, homophobia or religious xenophobia. Critics of inter-religious and multi-religious education state that these initiatives have plunged our education system deeper into the abyss, but this will not change with only a re-introduction of faith-based schools. If critical thinking and creating spaces where deliberations on challenging the tradition is tolerable, it might change the consequences that fundamentalism can become part of the moral fiber of a society. Many examples exist on the African continent where religious convictions are intertwined with legislation. Social and economic unrest are sometimes based on homophobia and laymen’s interpretations of Christian principles. One then needs to carefully reconsider the outcome of religious indoctrination in schools where there is no hermeneutical interpretations of religious texts. Having said this, my main concern is when faith-based schools become the center point of our understanding of religious diversity we may infuse an artificial safe space where confrontation with the environment (social order out there) cannot take place. After re-assessing my own research projects, I am questioning now, more than before, the ability of critical engagements and rigor debates on religious diversity at any faith-based school or mono-religious curriculum. We must recognize the value and the voices of our history in education, and need to reconstruct a new dimension in understanding the diversity of the *here* and *now* – without blurring our awareness and *challenges of the future*.

In terms of Foucault’s notion of power relations (Ball, 1990), ‘voice’ could be considered as an expression of agency meaning that individual teachers could either entrench or change the religious dogma and the view the next generation will have of RE in the South Africa’s history.

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Listening in Religious Education: The Gift of Self in the Face of Uncertainty

Abstract. This paper ushers religious education into a debate regarding the apophatic as opposed to the exclusively cataphatic nature of listening. It traces the contours of this debate and presents a way through by situating it relative to studies of listening that have been conducted in the fields of philosophy and religion. Drawing on the work of Gabriel Moran concerning the call and response structure of revelation and responsibility, it suggests that listening is an exercise in responsibility, and that listening is best described as the gift of self in the face of uncertainty.

This paper begins an attempt to bring the resources of religious education to bear on the neglect of listening. It is a curious aspect of education—religious or otherwise—that listening, while the most utilized communication skill, is the least taught. This inverted curriculum persists because we assume that we listen much better than in point of fact we do. Listening is also subject to a negative correlation—the more teachers talk, the less students listen—which worsens as students progress in their schooling. Scholars in the field of education began to examine listening fifteen years ago, but they took aim at neither listening’s inverted curriculum nor its negative correlation. Instead, they sought to understand the role that listening plays in bridging differences and fostering democratic notions of participation and equity. Their efforts resulted in the publication of two books, three special journal issues, and a handful of other essays.¹

For their part, religious educators have had relatively little to say about the topic. Yet if listening is critical to teaching-learning—Parker Palmer has said that “the first task of an educator is not to talk but to listen” (2010)—then it will be important for religious educators to engage listening as a topic of research, a curricular concern, and a pedagogical disposition, lest our efforts remain structurally undermined from the very beginning. Toward that end, this paper will review the debate that has arisen in the field of education over whether listening is apophatic or exclusively cataphatic in nature (section one). It will then forge a way through by situating the debate relative to philosophical and religious studies of listening (section two). It will conclude by introducing the notion of listening as responsiveness with the aid of Gabriel Moran’s work concerning the call and response structure of revelation (section three). It suggests that as an exercise in responsibility, listening is best described as the gift of self in the face of uncertainty.

The Debate

Leonard Waks, professor emeritus of educational leadership at Temple University, initiated the debate over the apophatic as opposed to the exclusively cataphatic nature of listening. Put briefly, listening is cataphatic when it proceeds by means of pre-conceived categories; it is apophatic when it lays categories of interpretation aside. Waks distinguished these forms of listening from one another in response to a position that Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon, professor of education and social policy at Northwestern University, had set forth in her

¹ See, for example, Katherine Schultz, *Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Differences* (2003: New York, Teachers College Press), *Learning Inquiry* (2007, vol. 1, no. 2), *Teachers College Record* (2010, vol. 112, no. 11), and *Education Theory* (2011, vol. 61, no. 2).

2003 presidential address to the Philosophy of Education Society. In that address and in subsequent responses to Waks, Haroutunian-Gordon argues that every act of listening implies a question. Since we listen to understand, and since all understanding is predicated on questioning (a position that Haroutunian-Gordon adopts from Hans-Georg Gadamer), it follows that all listening entails questioning. Hence Haroutunian-Gordon's central claim that, "when one listens to a challenging view, it is because one is trying to resolve a question and seeks help in doing so" (2010, 2793).

It seems counterintuitive that what should motivate us to listen is not the desire to learn what the other values and thinks, but the desire to "resolve a question," meaning specifically our own question. In Haroutunian-Gordon's view, though, the school (the principal context of her research is teacher preparation programs) exists as an institution of democracy. As such, it serves to create meaning between people, not simply to foster familiarity with, much less adherence to, another person's view. To be sure, it's critical that we understand what the other says. However, questioning facilitates this more than listening because when we raise for inspection, and potential contradiction, our own tacit beliefs, we recognize the values and thinking that pose an obstacle to the creation of meaning between conversants. Concentrating on our own questions occasions the rude awakening, as it were, that makes us aware of how incomplete our understanding is. "When we open for question the truth of our prejudices, we allow the object to speak—to tell us what it can and in so doing, help us to evaluate whether our previously held, and perhaps heretofore unrecognized, convictions (prejudices) are justified true beliefs" (Haroutunian-Gordon 2007, 149). In short, we listen to another perspective not for its own sake, but because doing so enables us to discover the concerns of self that pose obstacles to the dialogue on which tolerance is predicated.

The principal problem with this view, according to Waks, is that it rests on the unwarranted presumption that "the human organism's every input has to be processed by conscious cognitive activity" (2007, 160). Indeed, the cognitive nature of Haroutunian-Gordon's listening model is apparent in its similarity to the Socratic method. There, questioning is the only legitimate means by which unidentified belief can be brought to the surface and influenced to change. Only when questioning has made us aware of our tacit beliefs can we decide whether we are justified in holding them. In contrast, Waks argues that listening functions at preconscious levels, where it is not attenuated by a constant internal dialogue of questions and categories. He draws on the experiences of artists, physicians, and athletes, as well as teachers, to demonstrate this, which he likens to intuition.

Waks characterizes the intuitive-like nature of listening as the habituation of prior learning. It functions not unlike an automatic reflex, and is evident in situations of mastery and expertise, where "conscious contents are channeled directly, without further cognitive mediation, to long-term memory, where they are subjected to multiple processes that become more effective with experience" (Waks 2007, 160). That listening can operate like intuition suggests that "knowing" transcends the cognitive. "Knowing a person is not construable as knowing a set of descriptive propositions.... Knowledge of a person may be ineffable—words may be inadequate to express it" (Waks 2010, 2748). Such knowing requires laying aside values and beliefs because, as much as we rely heavily on categorical distinctions to deal with myriad stimuli, hypotheses, and ambiguities, we also recognize that shortcuts, which categories provide, can be misleading, as when we think in terms of stereotypes.

Waks refers to the process of laying aside such categories as apophatic listening. Apophatic listening is a-categorical insofar as it suspends or withholds responses to stimuli, even

to the point of remaining still in the face of uncertainty. In the abstract this means that we no longer question whether X is a case of Y or Z. It may or may not be, but for the time being we are content to be indifferent to that knowledge. In practice this occurs when we lay aside the beliefs and values that are inherent to the roles we occupy. Roles, Waks observes, “employ criteria to sort utterances into predetermined categories that are linked to established practical response types... When listeners lay aside their roles and practical interests, however, they *eo ipso* lay aside or suspend the category schemata ordinarily brought into play by them and also the action steps following on those categorizations” (2010, 2748). It is to such a process that empathy, for example, rightly refers when it speaks of the ability to lay aside one’s viewpoint in order to adopt that of another.

Though it seems valuable, is it possible to lay aside one’s roles, beliefs, and values? Haroutunian-Gordon responds in the negative. She argues that what listeners experience when they appear to do so is merely a shift from one set of categories to another, with questions underlying every new set. However, Waks characterizes the apophatic from a vantage point that is not readily accounted for in Haroutunian-Gordon’s framework. Specifically, he offers evidence from spirituality, psychotherapy, and the arts. These fields demonstrate that listeners can be characterized by a general emptiness, suspend judgment so as to proceed without prefigured standards, and experience new possibilities of expression.

The first characteristic can be seen in mystical contemplation, where there is “no longer any expectancy of or receptivity to a certain kind of message, or even a desire for any kind of result” (Waks 2010, 2753). Such emptiness, Waks demonstrates, is characteristic of the preparation for teaching that Socrates, Jesus, and Gautama underwent. The emptiness of their radical openness to reality “cut through the dualism of subject/object and self/other... and made possible the unencumbered participation in the infinite intelligence and dynamic creativity that lies beyond well-bounded individual selves, at the core of being” (Waks 1995, 95). The second characteristic can be seen in therapeutic practices, where listeners, such as counselors or supervisors, bracket the values and beliefs that are associated with their roles so as to ready themselves to accept the other’s inner life in much the same manner “as the contemplative waiting in silence is ready to accept God” (2010, 2754). The third characteristic can be seen in music and literature, where listening is manifest by creative responses. Waks describes this in terms of the listener becoming “an empty womb”—like the echo chamber of a violin—that gives “birth to a newborn speaker” (2010, 2755).

A Way Through

One way through the debate is to broaden the perspective from which we view listening. This brings into consideration the research that began well before scholars of education took up the topic, and research that goes on outside the field of education. Indeed, research into what constitutes listening took place as early as the 1920s under the aegis of communication studies, where listening research originated. Taken as a whole, this research testifies to how difficult it has been to achieve conceptual clarity about listening. For instance, over the course of the 20th century scholars of communication approached listening first as a measurable activity, next as a teachable skill, and finally as a multi-staged process. These different approaches were largely determined by the contexts in which listening was being examined—daily activity, classroom teaching, and cognitive models, respectively.

Listening research was eventually taken up by academic philosophers. To be sure, the giants of philosophy have had insights into listening, but they never concerned themselves with it

systematically. In the 1990s, though, two scholars recognized that listening had previously been incorporated into the notion of rationality (Levin 1989; Corradi Fiumara 1990). However, contemporary rationality has emphasized speaking over listening, thereby neglecting the power that listening exercised in early Greek notions of rationality to gather, to keep together, and to pay heed—all dispositions that are critical to meaning. In philosophy, the research concern has been ontological rather than epistemic. Rather than being concerned with questions of how we know what listening is, it has followed the principle that to understand what it means to listen we must first be concerned with who we are and who we become when we do or do not listen. By assuming an ontological perspective, these scholars have argued that if it is the case that “language is the house of Being,” as Martin Heidegger states, then rationality leaves the human person and human society in an underdeveloped, perhaps even malformed, state when it neglects language’s listening half.

Listening is perhaps even more foundational to religion than it is to rationality when we take into account Abraham Heschel’s observation that “philosophy begins with man’s question; religion begins with God’s question and man’s answer” (1951, 76). This means that religion is predicated on listening, for it “begins with a consciousness that something is asked of us...a question addressed to us. All that is left to us is a choice—to answer or to refuse to answer. Yet the more deeply we listen, the more we become stripped of the arrogance and callousness which alone would enable us to refuse” (1951, 68-69). Prophets are those most affected by such a consciousness. The prophet’s ear, Heschel says, “is attuned to a cry imperceptible to others” (1962, 7).

In short, prophets are listeners par excellence. Whereas philosophers *question*, prophets *respond*. Indeed, the voice of the prophet is a singular reverberation of the Lord’s. According to Heschel, “the invisible God becomes audible” in the prophet’s words (1962, 22). His prophecy, which includes the totality of his life, adjures the people to heed to the word of God that he himself has heard (note that Heschel examines only male prophets). The prophet issues the call to listen with integrity because he himself is preeminently a listener: he responds to what he has heard by dedicating his life to it. Prophecy, then, has at least a partial aim to model for God’s people what it means to listen—to respond to the divine voice by embracing what it proclaims.

Hebrew scripture employs at least three verbs to describe the prophet enjoining people to listen: *azan* (to give ear), *qashab* (to incline the ears), and *shama* (to hear). The most frequent among them is the latter, which translates as hear, listen, hearken, and obey. Though *shama* is used to convey this range of related activities, its quintessential usage can be found in the prayer known by the very word itself, namely, the Shema. The Shema is a scriptural prayer by which observant Jews attune their life to the word of God at the start and end of each day. It begins with the interjection “Hear, O Israel!” (Deut. 6:4). This formulation resonates throughout the accounts of Israel’s prophets as part of an introduction to oracles. Because they are formulated in the imperative mood, these formulations do not merely appeal for attention. Nor are they peremptory. Rather, they serve to convict the hearts of a people who have transgressed the covenant relationship. For example, when the prophet Jeremiah says “Listen [*shama*] to the word of the LORD, house of Jacob! All you clans of the house of Israel, thus says the LORD” (2:4) he effectively serves God’s people with a subpoena. They are to appear before the Lord, as if in court, to be indicted for their infidelity, apostasy, and idolatry.

What enables the word *shama* to convey such a wide array of meaning? It is the basic principle that listening is fundamental to the social order, which is ultimately established by divine word. In this view, there would be chaos and folly, not order and wisdom, if the ancient

Israelites did not listen to the Lord. Because God remains essentially unseen, it is necessary to listen for and to the voice of the Lord. Indeed, the Mosaic law goes so far as to depict a lack of listening as giving free rein to chaos that it prescribes capital punishment for “a stubborn and rebellious son who will not listen to his father or mother” (Deut. 21:18). In contrast, “the wise by hearing [proverbs] will advance in learning, / the intelligent will gain sound guidance” (Prov. 1:5).

A Way Forward

When we recognize how prophecy is predicated on listening—an activity that ranges from hearing the divine word to responding to it—we are led to consider whether religion in general is not also predicated on listening. After all, the listening that the prophet epitomizes is the goal for all God’s people, and what brings this goal to fulfillment is religion. Religion is, in other words, a response to divine initiative. Prophets go about intensifying this response by deepening the people’s listening. Perhaps no religious educator has done more to intensify *response-ability* than Gabriel Moran. Indeed, he argues that the responsibility “underlies the Jewish and Christian sense of what a human being is: the being who listens and responds to the one who is creator of the universe” (2002, 136). For this reason, Moran describes listening as the first moment of responsibility, emphasizing that being responsive *to* someone is a condition for assuming responsibility *for* oneself. Moran is well known for his early writings on revelation, of course, but by turning to responsibility in later writings he has put the two terms into a mutually clarifying interplay. Responsibility rests on an earlier, Hebrew-rooted oral/aural metaphor for divine communication, while the revelation rests on a more recent, Greek-rooted visual metaphor. Though the latter metaphor has been predominant for millennia, Moran uses responsibility’s more primary metaphor to interpret visually-based revelation as a relation of presences, in other words, as a divine-human relation of call and response rather than a deposit of abstract propositions.

Put briefly, listening is an exercise of responsibility for those who seek to be responsive to divine mystery. Thomas Merton describes this succinctly when he writes, “My life is a listening. [God’s] is a speaking. My salvation is to hear and respond” (1976, 74). It would not, then, be too much to speculate, as a point on which to conclude, that listening might best be described from the point of view of religious education as the gift of self in the face of uncertainty. When we recognize that listening is a response to mystery, we recognize that listening is largely dependent on our comfort level with uncertainty. Research has shown, for instance, that if we minimize our exposure to uncertainty, we tend to manifest an overriding concern for identity (Michel and Wortham 2011). As a result, we listen cataphatically, and lends itself toward the reification of experience, the objectification of knowledge, and abstraction from presence. However, if we are willing to amplify uncertainty because we perceive that something lies within it that beckons us forward and bodes us well, then we tend to be motivated for mission. In other words, we listen apophatically so as to respond to that which calls us into being. In this we can recognize that apophatic listening, especially as it is exemplified by prophets, manifests the human desire to be grasped by the experience of knowing and by the known, rather than to know. For this reason, religious educators will likely find it profitable to retrieve from the treasury of religious education elements of a once-vital listening culture—in particular, dialogue, obedience, and contemplation. These practices can serve the discipline as listening pedagogies, and have the potential to answer the debate that has arisen over whether listening is apophatic or exclusively cataphatic in nature.

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Hope for Environmental Action

Abstract

Environmental consciousness-raising programs tend to emphasize the magnitude of imminent ecological disasters, if humans continue on their current trajectory. While these environmental literacy programs also call for action to avoid cataclysmic ecological changes, psychological research on “learned helplessness” suggests that information on the magnitude of ecological problems may actually present barriers to action, unless it is coupled with hope. We focus here primarily on Christian literature that finds hope for environmental action in the rhythms and beauty of Creation, in the biblical narratives of a people of hope, and in a faith community that worships and acts on behalf of the *shalom* of God on earth.

Introduction

Many contemporary efforts aimed at encouraging ecological action focus on consciousness-raising about the extent of current environmental problems. Impassioned exhortations from secular and religious leaders, including the three most recent popes, acknowledge the complexity of the issues involved and declare the moral obligation to care for the Earth. Documentaries on ecological devastation often visually shock the senses with a clarion call for action.

Effective action for ecological justice certainly requires such conscientization on the realities threatening the diverse species of our planet. But is this basic knowledge enough to spur action? Indeed, can an enlarged vista revealing the scope of environmental ills at times paralyze would-be actors into a deer-in-the-headlights kind of helplessness and a descent into a “what’s the use of trying” mentality?

Psychologist Martin Seligman and colleagues have identified factors that lead to helplessness and “giving up” in face of major life challenges. Their decades-long research on the antecedents of “learned helplessness” indicates that animals and people, when placed in situations where negative consequences cannot be avoided, often learn to stop trying in other situations where solutions are readily at hand (Seligman 21-23). As Carol Hooker describes it,

“Learned helplessness is the assumption of no control—the belief that nothing one does makes a difference” (194). Seligman’s team also found that a person’s perceptions regarding the *permanence* and *pervasiveness* of seemingly insurmountable situations determine whether or not a person will have hope that spurs action. People who “give up” believe that the problem they see will always be there (*permanent*) (44), and they also view the bad situation as *pervasive* or universal (46). Seligman concludes, “Finding permanent and universal causes for misfortune is the practice of despair (46).”

Immensity of the Current Ecological Crisis

Consider that these are only a few of the issues researchers have identified as currently threatening the earth:

- “Over the past 50 years the average global temperature has increased at the fastest rate in recorded history,” stressing all ecosystems (NRDC).
- “The world’s oceans are on the brink of ecological collapse” stemming largely from pollution and over-fishing (NRDC).
- “As many as 30 to 50 percent of all species [are] possibly heading toward extinction by mid-century” (Center for Biological Diversity).

In facing these impending realities, and others just as looming, where might the human community find the strength to overcome a paralyzing sense of “learned helplessness”? How can we avoid the pitfall of despair as we assess the potential permanence and pervasiveness of ecological damage? Most significantly, where might we find deep sources for hope in the midst of such massive and mounting data revealing the extent of damage inflicted on our earthly home and its glorious array of species? In this paper, we focus primarily on hope for action on behalf of the environment. We explore hope that emanates from a faith in God who whose actions often surprise us; hope informed by the self-organizing patterns, rhythms, and dynamics of creation; and hope that springs from a faith-filled community that joins together in worship and action.

We further propose that while hope is foundational to action, it must be accompanied by environmental literacy that grounds hope in the realities that must be faced. Finally, we propose an expansion of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) curriculum for elementary school education to a place-based STREAM curriculum (STEM plus Social Studies, Religion, English Language Arts, and Fine Arts), particularly for religiously-oriented schools.

Biblical Sources of Hope

Walter Brueggemann points out that “the Jewish Bible, the Christian Old Testament, is fundamentally a literature of hope” (72). He further notes that “Jews (and Christians after them) are a people of hope, but they can be a people of hope only if they are not alienated from and ignorant of their tradition” (73). And the hope that Brueggemann speaks of is not other-worldly. Scriptural narratives show that the hope of both Jews and Christians finds fruition in this world as people walk in faith and act in response to God’s call.

As Brueggemann reflects on biblical hope in both Jewish and Christian contexts, he notes that hope is born in the margins, away from those whose interests involve maintaining the *status quo*. The prophets are those who voice a critique of the current system and poetically offer

images of the reign of God, a *shalom* where right relationships abound. The hope they depict creates a communal imagination open to new possibilities beyond the present arrangement, and this hope-filled imagery often includes a restoration of creation (e.g., Isa. 41:18-20). Significantly, Brueggemann points out, hope arises when the oppressive conditions, pain, and loss are publicly mourned and lamented. He highlights the “pivotal power of pain” and calls it “the Bible’s most dangerous insight” (19).

Who keeps the present open to new interventions from God and in what contexts? The hope tradition in ancient Israel suggests this answer: *hope emerges among those who publicly articulate and process their grief over their suffering* (84).

This biblical insight shows that hope does not involve denial of the current problems nor of the pain that results from the *status quo*. Authentic hope does not create escapes from the harsh realities that the current system creates. True hope involves facing the suffering and impediments that exist and mourning them publicly as a community. The prophetic imagination then helps the community move forward with openness to a new vision, the call of the reign of God. With respect to environmental action, this insight calls communities of faith to learn the extent of our ecological damage and also gather together to mourn the loss of our natural habitats, beauty, and fellow creatures.

In ancient Israel, the prophets often acted as the catalysts for seeing current reality clearly. Beyond helping the people face their current reality and grieve the pain that it caused, the prophets called the people to attune themselves to God’s plan for both community and nature and act accordingly. When the people fell out of right relationships, the prophets warned the community to amend ways or suffer disaster. The hopeful vision of the reign of God does not call for passivity but for action. The people are urged to follow the covenant and move forward in faith.

Jesus reminds us that the reign of God is “like a mustard seed... It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants” (Matt. 13:31-32). Transformative action in accord with God’s reign does not require armies. It usually begins small. As community consultant Margaret Wheatley points out,

Change begins from deep inside a system, when a few people notice something they will no longer tolerate, or respond to a dream of what’s possible. We just have to find a few others who are about the same thing... Gradually, we become large... We don’t have to start with power, only with passion” (*Turning* 25).

Community is essential to the biblical tradition; it is also essential to transformative action in the world. A fierce sense of individualism may be one of the greatest barriers to hope that we face in today’s world. There are others, and as religious educators and pastoral leaders, we need to be aware of them.

Returning to Our Biblical Roots

Jürgen Moltmann begins his theology of hope with the assumption that Christian hope, since the time of Augustine, has been “reduced by the Church to saving the soul in a heaven beyond death and that, in this reduction, it has lost its life-renewing and world-changing power” (3). While affirming the reality of the resurrection, Moltmann asserts that eschatology

throughout the major part of Christian history has focused almost exclusively on “individual eschatology,” personal salvation in eternity, with questions such as “What will happen to me in death and in the judgment of God? How will I become saved? Is there a life after death?” (3). If these are the primary focus of our theological concerns, Moltmann asserts, then “community becomes irrelevant, as also do the body and the earth” (3). In such a paradigm, “Hope, then, for political liberation and peace on earth, hope for the reconciliation of humanity with nature disappears from Christian hope” (3).

In contrast, Moltmann offers a biblical notion of hope that highlights the resurrection of the body and a harmony in creation. Hope for Moltmann is not the “‘opium of the beyond’ but rather...the divine power that makes us alive in this world” (4). He presents an understanding of hope “that is founded on Christ, that embraces temporal life and the cosmos, and that is oriented toward the future of the kingdom of God” (4). Salvation, for Moltmann, is the “shalom in the Old Testament sense” which includes “the eschatological *hope of justice*, the *humanizing* of man [sic], the *socializing of humanity*, and peace for all creation” (4).

Moltmann suggests that focusing primarily on personal salvation gives rise not only to disinterest in this-world transformation but also to a privatization of spirituality that impedes communal reflection on current realities and action (*praxis*). In the context of the U.S., where individualism dominates as the cultural norm (Bella et al.), privatization of religion synergizes with individualistic interests to subvert authentic community development and action.

Anne Clifford, CSJ, echoes a similar concern for an over-emphasis on individual human redemption to the exclusion of remainder of creation and notes that Christianity’s response to the rise of science gave impetus to the neglect of the nonhuman world in theological reflection. As science challenged the credibility of literal biblical interpretations, theology virtually surrendered nature and the entire cosmos to science and focused more on salvation of the soul (Clifford 21).

In theological writings, the cosmos became simply a backdrop to what Scripture scholars named as “salvation history” – the redemption of the human from its original and subsequent sin (Clifford 22). And uncritical readings of the Genesis 1 creation narrative seemed to give humans free reign to “subdue” the earth (Gen. 1:28) and use it in whatever way human desire would unleash. Much of the literature linking human redemption with all of creation had been ignored in post-Enlightenment Christian theology. Yet, Clifford notes that emerging contemporary scholarship is recovering the creation-centered passages of the Bible in the psalms, Wisdom tradition, Pauline writings, and in Genesis itself, revealing the interrelationships between human action, redemption, and the whole of creation. God clearly “is the one that sustains and redeems not only humans but all creatures” (36).

“Ecologist” Thomas Berry often characterized the latter half of the twentieth century as an era of “autism” with respect to our awareness of the earth and its living inhabitants. “Autism has deepened with our mechanism, our political nationalism, and our economic industrialism” (17). He contrasts this insular lack of awareness with the ken of indigenous people, who tread the earth lightly with gratitude, sensitivity and intimacy with all creatures and know deeply “the mutual presence of the life community in all its numinous qualities” (14-15). A major challenge, then, for people of faith in industrialized nations is how to overcome the sense of alienation from nature that has arisen with technological development.

Theologian John Haught reminds us that the universe itself is a sacrament, a revelation of God's glory and presence. Through nature we encounter our Creator, and as gift and sacrament it deserves our reverence and care, for to dishonor the gift is to dishonor the Giver. It is our trust in this Giver of life that births our hope for the future, a hope that is "the fundamental ecological virtue." Haught refers here to the U.S. Catholic Bishop's statement, *Renewing the Earth*, that includes the following, "Hope is the virtue at the heart of a Christian environmental ethic. Hope gives us the courage, direction, and energy required for this arduous common endeavor" (qtd. in Haught 10).

We act in hope because it is the only holy response we can make to the God who gives all hope and who embraces the entire cosmos in sustenance and promise. The challenges of religious educators are to awaken communities of faith to their intimate relationships with Creator and Creation, to hear biblical connections between the story of human redemption and the life of the cosmos, to form authentic community where losses may be grieved and imagination for action may spring forth, and to act in solidarity with the earth and all of its creatures.

A Model Rooted in Spirituality, Community, and Ecological Action

While not explicitly biblically rooted, the Findhorn community in Scotland offers a model for ecological action in a community rooted in spirituality and hopefulness. The community emerged in the 1960s when three adults, unemployed, found themselves living in a "caravan" (small trailer) in a sandy, desolate area of Scotland. Through their meditative practices, they felt guided to plant a vegetable garden in what seemed to be the most inhospitable land. As their meditations continued, "this guidance was translated into action with amazing results" (*Findhorn Visitor's Guide* 2); the garden grew 40 pound cabbages and other over-sized plants that attracted curious visitors. This simple beginning led to the formation of a spiritually-grounded eco-village that today engages in educational, artistic, and ecological activities, including the project of planting one million trees to reforest eastern Caledonia. At the heart of the Findhorn community is a spirituality that affirms the sacred interconnectedness of all of creation. Community, spirituality and ecological action form its sustaining mission (*Findhorn Foundation Workshops* 4).

While not for everyone, the Findhorn experiment demonstrates one model of how spiritually-based communities may reverence the sacredness of the natural world and work for its healing. Those who wish to participate in workshops offered by the Findhorn Foundation must first engage in a week-long experience that introduces visitors to the spiritual and communal foundations of the eco-village. Perhaps other communities of faith might learn from this approach and incorporate in their initiation and "new member" practices a wider view of the sacredness of the human interconnectedness with the entire cosmos.

The religious education of our youth offers a particular opportunity for inculcating a sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world in concert with gratitude to the gracious God who provides such a variety of life and magnificence. Youth are often seen as the "hope" for the future. Their education is crucial for how humans will interact with the natural world in the critical years to come. We provide here one possibility based upon the place-based educational model adopted by one Catholic school in Kentucky.

A STREAM Model for Place-Based Elementary Education

The St. John's Educational Wetlands Restoration Center is located in the north Elkhorn Creek Watershed, outside of Georgetown, Kentucky. The project center has twin goals of ecological restoration of the wetlands and education. A primary educational goal is to provide an outdoor "classroom" available to St. John's Catholic Elementary School and other schools in the area. St. John's School is also expanding the national STEM curriculum (emphasizing Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) to become STREAM (adding Social Studies, Religion, English Language Arts and Art). The educational center will also prepare teachers to cultivate environmental literacy across the curriculum.

The students of St. John's School engage in hands-on, place-based, interdisciplinary education at the wetlands restoration site. Place-based education immerses students in local heritage, cultures, and landscapes as a foundation for all other curricular areas and emphasizes learning through participation. Through direct engagement with the natural world, students learn to cultivate environmental awareness and stewardship. Because St. John's is a Catholic school, teachers have the freedom to incorporate religious education in the context of this place-based schooling, combining an appreciation of spirituality with ecological action.

Preliminary baseline research (DeMoor and McCauley) showed that younger children (fourth grade) have greater attitudes of environmental stewardship, environmental literacy, and connectedness with nature than the older seventh grade students. If such a relationship holds in further research, it may indicate that awakening a sense of connectedness with nature at an early age and continuing the engagement with nature in later grades is crucially important, if such lessons are to deepen. DeMoor and McCauley also found ample research showing the benefits of place-based education, but a dearth of attention to the role of *hope* in fostering and sustaining ecological action. Perhaps this lacuna springs from the separation again of science (ecology) from spirituality (religion) in many instances of place-based education.

Hope on the Edge

Brueggemann reminds us that hope emerges on the margins and not in the royal courts of Jerusalem. Hope begins with a public outcry that something is wrong with the current social order (16), that it is causing pain and does not conform with God's *shalom* on earth. It is those on the margins who critique the current state of affairs and hope for something more (75).

DeMoor and McCauley speak of "hope on the edge" for ecological action. They point out that edges are meeting places for species, soils, and boundaries. Citing Mollison and Slay's *Introduction to Permaculture*, they note that edges, such as those found in reef ecologies where coral and ocean meet, are places that spawn some of the most diverse and abundant of areas of ocean life. They add,

In the case of the St. John's Education Wetlands, the edge is the ever-changing border wherein the wetland pools and the land meet; a constant negotiation... In terms of a STREAM curriculum, it is a place where science and religion, as well as other content areas meet and interact (12).

With so many looming issues threatening the future of life on this fragile planet, only a spiritually-rooted hope nourished by a community in action will support the perseverance necessary to continue, when overwhelming odds may tempt us to give up. Care of Creation is a biblical imperative, and hope in God's guidance and energy will sustain us on the edges as we participate with the Spirit in renewing the face of the earth.

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Thick Descriptions and Common Goods:
MacIntyre and Dewey on the (Im)possibility of Educating for Justice in a Liberal Democracy

ABSTRACT: With liberal democracy's commitment to the individual's freedom to pursue his or her particular conception of the good life, many have questioned whether educating for the Common Good is still possible. This paper examines John Dewey and Alasdair MacIntyre on the limits and the possibilities of educating for civic virtue in the United States today. Recognizing similar challenges, MacIntyre calls for local communities of practice, while for Dewey, democracy is both the end and means of education. Both offer important insights for the potential and roles of public and religious education today.

Since Greek antiquity, philosophers have recognized education's powerful potential for shaping the moral character of the community. This insight has gained new vigor with the emergence of service-learning pedagogies and practices. In both public and private institutions, from grade school through higher education, community service opportunities are available through extracurricular activities, as components of courses, and increasingly, as a requirement for graduation. The impetus behind these trends is the noble desire to promote a heightened sense of citizenship and community engagement in the next generation. Yet beyond vague notions civic virtue, the content of this moral character is perhaps not as evident as it first appears.

In our contemporary context, promoting and passing on an inherited system of moral ideals is not the unambiguous good that it once was. An historical appreciation for the development of ideas and the undeniable plurality within society has undermined the authority of any single received tradition. Moreover, as a political structure, liberal democracy is grounded in a commitment to tolerating others' moral traditions and a refusal to endorse any particular vision of the good life. Under such conditions, many have begun to question whether education for the common good is still possible. This essay will examine two of the most prominent voices from the 20th Century on the limits of liberal democracy and possibility of civic education. Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of the Enlightenment project and call for a return to a tradition-based method of inquiry has been heralded as one of the most significant contributions to political and educational thought in recent times. Yet, writing nearly a century earlier, John Dewey identified many of the same challenges and opportunities. Though there is much upon which the two authors agree, their areas of contention lead to significant disagreement on the possibility and means of educating for civic virtue in both contexts of public and religious education.

This paper briefly sketches the historical interpretation of modernity offered by the two authors, beginning with MacIntyre's more familiar appraisal of the 'Enlightenment Project. Next,

I identify ways in which Dewey anticipated MacIntyre's concerns with political liberalism, but offered drastically different conclusions about the goals of education. I compare the similarities and differences of both authors, but also point to valid critiques against both of their works. The essay concludes by identifying implications for religious and public education in the United States today.

MacIntyre begins his seminal work *After Virtue* with a dire vision of our contemporary political climate.¹ It is not merely that we frequently fail to agree upon the best means toward achieving a mutually desired goal; rather, the social vision we are hoping to achieve is itself a matter of disagreement. Further, what qualifies as legitimate foundations and sound principles in an argument is likewise contested. We use the rhetoric of justice, dignity, and rights with no shared understanding of what these terms mean. When your interlocutors share neither your goals nor your sense of reasonableness, it is little surprise that recourse to political maneuvering appears necessary.

In MacIntyre's purview, how we arrived at such an impasse requires a long narrative of good intentions and unforeseen consequences.² The turning point was the dawn of modernity and subsequent Enlightenment period. Following the religious wars that devastated Europe, it became clear that moral consensus could no longer be achieved by recourse to religious authority. Differing views of human nature and destiny provided Europe with its first modest experiences of pluralism. Thus, Enlightenment philosophers sought to ground morality in universally available and accepted rational principles such as desire, duty, utility, or self-interest (each carrying an implicit view of human anthropology). One's particular vision of the good life was relegated to the private sphere and no longer an admissible element in the discussion.

This was a radical shift from the classical method of ethical inquiry, which takes as its point of departure a vision of the human good or *telos* toward which we strive as individuals and communities. Ethicists have traditionally asked three related questions: *Who are we?* *Who ought we become?* and *How do we get there?* What Enlightenment philosophers had essentially done was greatly truncate our answer to this first question and render inadmissible any answer to the second. We are not clear on where we're starting from and cannot say where we are going, but are nevertheless trying to articulate a comprehensive set of directions. Under such conditions, it is not simply the fact that these modern moral traditions *happened to* have failed to establish a universal discourse, but rather that they *had to* fail. The reason, claims MacIntyre, is that it is in our nature to think in terms of the ends we seek – both immediately in any given action, and more broadly as we strive to articulate the narrative unity of our lives. Thus MacIntyre is not surprised that though Enlightenment philosophers offered distinctly differing foundations for their moral enquiry, the content remained that of Northern European Protestants. Early modern thinkers never lost their vision of the good life; they simply developed new rationale for its promotion. Still today, we cannot avoid smuggling our particular vision of the good into our shared moral discourse.

Our choice, in such a context, is to either acknowledge the role that the *telos* plays in our deliberations, or accept the necessity of imposing our views on society through whatever

¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 6.

² *Ibid.*, 37.

political means available.³ Yet, MacIntyre readily acknowledges there are good reasons for leaving Aristotle's classical method behind. The religious wars were themselves testaments to what becomes of any attempt to enforce a single vision on society, and Aristotle held a metaphysical biology and vision of society (in which good life is only attainable by select few) that we would find unacceptable. MacIntyre's constructive proposal seeks the possibility of returning to a method of inquiry that again places our vision of the good at the center of the process. He begins by articulating a highly specific notion of practices that warrants quoting in full:

By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.⁴

What MacIntyre has in mind are practices such as medicine and law: complex and coordinated activities that maintain standards of entry and excellence. Through these, practitioners come to know and experience a set of goods that are only available through participating in the shared endeavor. For MacIntyre, the virtues are those excellences of character (habits and dispositions) that enable the community to further its pursuit of the goods internal to the practice. Thus, though MacIntyre is credited with heralding a return to the virtues, it is important to note that they actually play a secondary role in his theory. What is primary is the sustained vision of the good.

Practices establish mechanisms for incorporating new practitioners into the field passing on inherited visions of the good. Yet, this vision is never settled. Through time and in response to new challenges and opportunities, the practice's vision of excellence evolves, becoming a tradition. Therefore, and importantly for this essay, a second set of virtues is required: those which are necessary for the tradition to continue to evolve and develop. Honesty and courage undoubtedly play a role in practicing medicine well, but they are vital in establishing the trust necessary to enter into a discourse about how to move the practice forward. So it is with moral traditions. Rather than abandon our claims to the good life, MacIntyre argues for moral communities and traditions that sustain a thick vision of the human *telos* and cultivate the virtues necessary to bring these visions into open and public debates. As with professional practices, these moral communities commit to ongoing conversations both internally and externally about the goods they seek and virtues necessary to reach them.

MacIntyre builds on his understanding of the development of traditions further in his subsequent work, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*⁵ Here he traces the close link between our visions justice and practical reason, and offers his most sustained critique of liberal democracies. As with any moral tradition, MacIntyre argues, liberalism has articulated a distinct vision of the good life (one committed to procedural justice and in which all particular moral horizons are

³ Ibid., 109.

⁴ Ibid., 187.

⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

privatized) and a corresponding set of virtues (with tolerance receiving the highest value). Rather than escaping moral traditions all together, MacIntyre concludes, we have settled for a thin and procedural notion of justice that can only provide abstractions that “are far too thin and meager” to shape the moral imagination of a community.⁶ Though the critique he offers may appear severe, MacIntyre contends that this liberalism is the closest we have come and are likely to come toward realizing the Enlightenment’s ideals. MacIntyre strongly resists the communitarian label that is often ascribed to him, and is wary of any program that would enforce a particular vision of the good onto a pluralistic population. His is more a program of articulating the challenges we face and offering resources for survival.

It is not surprising that MacIntyre’s philosophical work has been embraced by educators – particularly those within religious spheres who readily view the Church as the sort of moral community MacIntyre proposes. Yet his work offers cutting critiques of the American democratic project and the character of community we are cultivating. One location in which this become clear is his aptly titled essay “How to Seem Virtuous Without Actually Being So,”⁷ in which he considers the possibility of educating for civic virtue in a liberal setting with no particular vision of the good. He articulates his thesis frankly: “There can be no rationally defensible shared programme for moral education for our society as such, but only a number of rival and conflicting programmes, each from the standpoint of one specific contending view.”⁸ Thus, while civic education and service-learning in a liberal democracy may promote a particular set of pro-social behaviors, it cannot provide thicker elaborations or justification for *why* these activities are desirable. Students may learn that a set of behaviors pleases their instructor or helps to attain educational goals, but will not be able to generalize from these acts to a more fundamental moral disposition. What they will not learn is how to recognize when it is necessary to act in a way that displeases authority or sacrifices one’s own good.

The contemporary portrait that MacIntyre offers seems bleak. His is an ethic of resistance and survival in a time of fragmented and confused discourse. In a liberal setting, the best that we can offer is a thin and commonplace vision of citizenship that cannot withstand vested interests (be they political or more frequently, commercial) that impose their own vision on society. Even in a context such as religious education, which embodies a moral tradition but is also often committed to serving a diverse population, the challenge can seem insurmountable.

One might expect John Dewey, a 20th Century hero of the liberal tradition, to be a stark contrast to MacIntyre’s position. Yet many of the concerns that MacIntyre raises were addressed by Dewey nearly a century earlier. Like MacIntyre, Dewey traces many of the challenges we face to the Enlightenment.⁹ Yet, for Dewey, the project was not so much a necessary failure as it was left incomplete. This is due in part to the early success of liberalism in the United States. The first rights established were largely negative: freedom *from* coercion and suppression. While these rights have been largely secured in our society, Dewey seeks to go further. The true measure of society is not liberty, Dewey argues, but the flourishing of the individual (an image

⁶ Ibid., 334.

⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, “How to Seem Virtuous Without Actually Being So,” in *Education in Morality*, ed. J. Mark Halstead and Terence H. McLaughlin (London: Routledge, 1999), 118–131.

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1935), 13.

for Dewey that is much richer and communal than today's rugged individualism). Dewey recognizes that technological advancements have greatly increased our capacity for interaction and communication. Yet he argues, "The Great Society created by steam and electricity may be a society, but it is no community."¹⁰ The creation of a great democratic community in which the full nature of each individual is empowered to flourish requires much more than negative rights. It requires the conscious and intelligent efforts of all of society.

Much of this work begins in our method of educating. For Dewey, the means and ends of education ought to be one and the same: democracy.¹¹ The degree to which students become contributing members of society is dependent upon the extent that their education relates to the challenges and opportunities in society. In this way, Dewey calls for a method of educating which models the ideals of citizenship and actively engages students in real-world problems (insights central to service-learning pedagogies). We are social by nature, yet democracy is a skill and character that we must learn. Education is an opportunity to intentionally intervene in society and cultivate these desired characteristics.

From MacIntyre's perspective, what Dewey offers is a thicker vision of liberalism as a moral tradition. While Dewey is committed to diversity and the cultivation of individuality, it is clear that his vision of democracy functions as the operative *telos* in his moral imagination. Dewey did not join a congregation after leaving Chicago; for him, democracy was his religion. Indeed, throughout his writings Dewey calls on local communities such as families and churches to offer their resources for the strengthening of the democratic project.¹² Dewey values these smaller social groups, but it is clear that for him they fulfill a secondary and supportive function to the larger shared project.¹³

This short discussion begins to highlight some of the key areas of agreement and disagreement between the two authors. Both raise concerns about political and economic interests dominating civil discourse. Yet whereas Dewey still believes that the Enlightenment project could be successful, MacIntyre views it as impossible from its very inception. Further, Dewey believes that a common civic education is both possible and vital for our future as a society while MacIntyre doubts that such an endeavor could ever get beyond superficial and commonplace rhetoric. Nevertheless, both hope for a free and open exchange of ideas and view free discourse as an essential aspect of our progress.

This becomes readily apparent in MacIntyre's later writings in which he moves beyond and openly acknowledges some of the faults of his earlier works. In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre admits that any attempt to construct an ethic that does not take our biological reality into account is a mistake.¹⁴ Comparing and contrasting humans and other intelligent species, MacIntyre holds our rationality and mutual dependence as critical aspects that all people share. Perhaps more important than what he finds distinctive, this acknowledgment of our

¹⁰ John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1st ed. (Denver: Swallow Press, 1954), 98.

¹¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

¹² Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 215.

¹³ George Albert Coe carries many of these commitments to their logical conclusion in his image of religious education promoting the 'Democracy of God.' George Albert Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education: -1917* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969).

¹⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), x.

shared nature creates space for a dialogue across traditions about the virtues and obligations demanded by our shared human nature. This avenue may not be as fruitful as we hope however. It must be admitted that each tradition may consider distinctive aspects of human nature as essential and others peripheral. In this case, each tradition still offers a distinct narrative that must be judged against others.

A more promising approach is already implicit in *After Virtue* and developed further in his later works. As mentioned above, beyond the virtues that are constitutive of a given practice, MacIntyre affirms a secondary set of virtues: those that are needed for a tradition to adapt and develop over time. These virtues of ‘conversational justice’ help a moral tradition acknowledge and engage the challenges that are raised within the community and by those of a rival tradition.¹⁵ In this sense, MacIntyre offers a set of democratic virtues that are very similar to those endorsed by Dewey. Both would endorse a model of education which helps the student to cultivate the skills and virtues of what MacIntyre terms an ‘independent practical reasoner.’¹⁶ Moreover, against MacIntyre’s earlier dismissal of the belief in human rights as “one with belief in witches and unicorns,”¹⁷ and given our nature and what is required for human flourishing, MacIntyre now affirms the necessity of certain liberties and the security of primary goods as essential to our participation in this moral discourse. When we are deprived of the freedom of expression or access to critical education, we lack the resources necessary to contribute to this civic conversation.

This emphasis on the skills and virtues necessary to participate in a shared conversation concerning the good life in community brings Dewey and MacIntyre together around a shared set of common interests. Yet, it must be acknowledged that the two authors may also share a common set of shortcomings. One of the most substantial critiques that both authors face is from the perspective of critical pedagogies rooted in the thought of Paulo Freire.¹⁸ In short, neither fully address the reality of marginalized and excluded voices in a meaningful way. Dewey, for example, upholds the American experiment as diverse populations coming together in shared conversation. He does not consider, however, those who through colonialization or globalization are forced into political discourses and economic relationships that they neither chose nor benefit from. Similarly, MacIntyre is largely content to identify the operations of power and coercion with little discussion on how they may be overcome. Freire places the struggle for liberation and justice at the center of his pedagogical program, with far ranging consequences. In practice, this has shifted the emphasis to conscientization and helping the disempowered to find their voice. Though Freire speaks of a similar desire for the cultivation of the democratic skills and habits that are sorely needed by those on the margins,¹⁹ his shift in perspective is a necessary corrective.

The challenges and opportunities that MacIntyre and Dewey identify are crucial to public and religious efforts toward educating agents of change in society. Denying the role of moral traditions in public discourse only creates the possibility for these visions emerging in more

¹⁵ Ibid., 111.

¹⁶ Ibid., 74.

¹⁷ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 69.

¹⁸ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Edition (New York: Continuum, 2000).

¹⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000).

nefarious ways. The public is far better served when individuals and communities are able to investigate, articulate, and defend their moral horizons clearly.

Though religious institutions stand within a distinctive moral tradition and vision of the good, they are also committed to engaging in a common civil discourse. In most religiously affiliated colleges and a growing number of high schools, a single faith background is neither expected nor desired from the students. The challenge of honoring commitments to both the tradition and broader public is not easily resolved. One tempting solution would be to settle for the cultivation of MacIntyre's secondary set of virtues – those which would aid any tradition in articulating and adapting its vision of the good life. Though MacIntyre and Dewey would agree that these skills are essential regardless of tradition, they neglect the full richness of a moral tradition. Moreover, the truth is that many today have not been raised in any moral tradition with an explicit, thick vision of the common good. Critical skills may help to interpret the social challenges, but offer little solid footing from which to stand. Thus many today know what they are against, but are not certain what they are for.

A second approach would be to bring visions of the good life directly into the conversation. Without enforcing or imposing a view on others, religious institutions can sustain what they admit is a particular *telos*. These traditions carry a clear theological vision of our supernatural end, but also sustain a vision of the common good which should be advanced in temporal society. Implicit in this view of our life together is an anthropology and set of principles and virtues. This approach sustains a clear vision for society without attempting to impose it on others. However, it also goes beyond merely theoretical presentation. Between objectives studying a tradition and proselytization, there is a range of ways in which it is possible to learn from the tradition. Faith communities sustain visions of the dignity and rights of human persons that resonate deeply with even the most secular of worldviews. By bringing this moral vision directly into the discussion, students have the opportunity to engage a tradition and consider where they differ. They are given one potential language with which to make sense of their moral impulses and instinct. Students need not accept or adhere to a particular faith tradition, but may at least know where they stand relative to it.

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A Feminist Christian Perspective on Teaching About Religion in American Public Schools

Abstract

“Put prayer back in school!” is one of the rallying cries of the American Christian religious right, but if prayer and religious instruction are part of public school curriculum, they must represent public, multiple religious viewpoints, not merely those of the religious right.

However, research from literature-based methodology and insights from my community of practice (the United Methodist Church) demonstrate how problematic that representation would be, especially for feminists for whom some religious viewpoints would be abhorrent, as in faiths that promote the subjugation of women. While “learning about” is not the same as indoctrination, in actual practice instructors often do not provide a dispassionate presentation.

In addition, attempts to find common denominators among religions would make one faith indistinguishable from the other, giving the impression that it doesn’t matter what faith a student practices.

It follows, then, that state-mandated religious practice and/or religious instruction have no place in the American public school classroom.

In a country with compulsory education like the United States, any attempt to provide instruction about religion in the public school curriculum must represent multiple religious viewpoints in an increasingly multi-faith population. These perspectives are not what many on the American religious right have in mind. However, it is crucial that public education not be corrupted by attempts to teach religious instruction, a practice that belongs to families and places of worship.

There are several reasons to oppose the teaching of religion in public schools. Among these are the inability to insure neutrality in religious instruction, the lack of consensus about what constitutes morality, the irresponsibility of offering up freedom from religion on the altar of saving public schools from student exodus, the need to put to rest the false claim that omitting instruction about religion in the public school curriculum gives the impression that religion is unimportant, the importance of discounting supposed common beliefs as reason enough to violate the Constitution, and opposing the claim that disagreement about religious views is no different than disagreement about political views.

This paper will briefly comment on each of these reasons for opposing teaching about religion in the public school. However, the reason with the greatest emphasis in this discussion comes from a feminist perspective.

***Neutrality:** While it is theoretically true that teaching “information about” is not the same as indoctrination, in actual practice many instructors find it difficult to be dispassionate. In addition, some instructors have a deliberate indoctrination agenda. Witness this recent (January 22, 2013) account of an overt religious and prejudiced agenda in several Texas public schools:

According to a recent report by the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, several public schools in the state are quietly teaching students a literal, right wing interpretation of the Bible.

Classes purporting to focus on the Bible’s impact on history are in fact evangelizing children with a literal interpretation of the Bible; namely, that the Earth is 6,000 years old, Judaism is a “flawed and incomplete religion,” and Black people are descendants of Ham. (Reported in www.blackyouthproject.com/2013/01/texas-publicschools...)

In addition, anecdotal evidence from some of Florida’s public schools suggests that Texas is not the only state to flagrantly violate the prohibition against teaching religion in the public school, *and to not face prosecution*. That this is happening is appalling. It is also all the proof we need that opening the door to teaching about religion in the public school is opening the door to proselytizing. This may be no problem at all to the Christian religious right, but it is a very big problem to others.

There are some who claim that teaching religion in public schools does not violate the Constitution as long as the school is neutral in its teaching, and that neutrality demands that all religious views be taught. However, we know that we would not want to teach all religious views. Would we teach that the sacrifice of children is one of many neutral religious practices that students could choose in their religious quest? Of course not. Then what are the boundaries of the curriculum and who decides those boundaries? In addition, anyone who has ever been in a public school classroom knows how seldom neutrality is expressed. A roll of the eyes, a shrug of the shoulders, derisive laughter shared between students and teacher, all make short work of any attempt at neutrality presented by carefully-crafted curriculum.

A 1951 attempt at using a neutral prayer in New York State schools was ruled unconstitutional because its reference to “Almighty God”

does not suit those who believe in many or no gods; and a watered-down prayer that does not refer to Jesus offends some Christians who believe that true religion centers on Christ. Although states could give tax benefits to all religions, schools are incapable of discovering devotional practices that are equally acceptable to all religions. (Greenwalt 2005, 50)

***Character education:** Another supposed reason for teaching religion in public school is that religion forms the basis of character education. Claims that character education demands that

teachers model and teach the civic values beg the question “Whose civic values?” Is female deference to males a civic value? Many in our country would say “Yes.” Is the proper place for women in the private sphere, supporting men in the public sphere? Again, there are those who would affirm that position? Should females keep themselves covered up (and to what degree?) so they don’t tempt males? “Absolutely!” is the position of many in our country.

***Saving the public schools:** Saving the public school has been presented as another rationale for teaching religion in public schools. Some have opined that the exodus from public schools is fueled in large measure by dissatisfaction with how schools address issues concerning religion and values. If we act now to reverse that dissatisfaction, we can save the public schools. (Nord and Haynes, 9)

However, there are at least two things wrong with this line of reasoning. First, an alternative view of the reason for dissatisfaction with the public schools is that conservative parents do not want their children exposed to the supposed “liberal” positions of “promoting” homosexuality, racial equality, and the liberation of women from sex discrimination.

Second, providing or not providing education about religion in public schools is not an issue in service to saving them. Freedom from religious instruction should not be offered up on the altar of sacrifice for the health of public schools.

***False impression:** The claim that omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life is insignificant or unimportant is short-sighted. To the contrary, students can be told that facts about religion are *so* important and so varied that instruction in them is reserved for the family and religious authorities.

***Similiar core beliefs:** Attempts to find common denominators among religions, for example, “Don’t do to others those things you would not want done to you,” would result in such a watering down of doctrine that one faith would be indistinguishable from the other. This practice would give students the unfortunate impression that it doesn’t matter what faith people practice.

***Religious views like political views:** Claims that disagreements about religious views are no different than disagreements about political views completely miss the point that political views are part of a public education that prepares citizens in a democracy, whereas religious views are to be omitted from that discussion for very good reasons. Indeed,

(p)erhaps the teacher is better off stressing that he or she is only talking about political and secular moral ideals, that religion is a different subject, and that many excellent citizens adhere to religions whose structure and tenets differ significantly from the parallel norms of liberal democracies. (Greenwalt 2005, 41)

Debunking these myths about teaching religion in public schools would be reason enough for an outcry against it. However, for those with a feminist perspective, there are important additional reasons to strenuously object to any such attempts.

Feminist Concerns

As a feminist I am located as an adult, white, middle-class, highly-educated, married, progressive Christian, parent, clergywoman, and United States citizen. From those perspectives it

occurs to me that claims that various Associations (“representing a broad spectrum of religious and political views”) have upheld the principle of instruction about religion in the public schools are meaningless to feminists such as myself who suspect that no feminist voices were invited to participate in those associations.

Feminists may or may not object to the usual sources of disagreement - sex education, religious holidays - but many do object very strenuously to other issues, some that proponents of teaching religion in the public school may have not even considered, such as exclusively male references to God and misogynist expectations of women.

To give one example, the American Academy of Religion Guidelines for Teaching About Religion published in 2010 doesn’t even mention what pronouns the teacher should use when referring to God. Even when there is no overt curriculum whose agenda is to persuade, there is what has been coined a “null curriculum,” (Boys, educating in faith, p.8)) meaning those ideas that are omitted from the curriculum.

In *God in the Classroom* (Murray 2007) 304 pages are devoted to nine controversies associated with the issue of teaching about religion in public school classrooms. (Thomas 2007) Absent from the conversation is any acknowledgment of feminist concerns of the gender ascribed to God and misogynist depictions of women.

The focus of this paper is the necessity of rejecting attempts to teach about religion in the public schools because, from a feminist perspective, to do so would necessarily emphasize both the concept of a male God and misogynist descriptions of the role of women. Examples given are limited to issues within the Christian religion, itself, despite the applicability of similar issues within other faiths.

***Exclusively male references to God:** God is spirit, and spirit, by definition, does not have gender. Indeed

Because the word sex and the terms male and female have to do with biological characteristics, it is rightly said that God has no sex and that God is neither male nor female. (Duck 1991, 33)

Yet in our public discourse not only is God invariably referred to by the male pronouns *He* or *His*, but also to refer to God with the female pronouns, *She* or *Her*, most often elicits a hostile response. As a clergywoman offering my parish non-male images of God, I was rebuked by my bishop (a woman) who demanded I cease and desist. At first I was incredulous; then I was ashamed of how naive I had been when I had thought I could make changes within such a male-dominated institution.

While the Jewish and Christian scriptures do employ male terms for God, they also use female and genderless metaphors. God is reported as having created humankind male and female in God’s own image (Gen 1:27.) When Moses asked God what he should call the Holy One, God replied “YHWH,” whose translation is “I AM.” (Ex. 3:14), a genderless reply. Male Bible transcribers translated YHWH into English as Lord, a masculine term.

In the Bible, God has self-identified as a woman in labor (Is. 42:14), pregnant woman (Numbers 11:11-15), midwife, a female position at the time (Ps.22:9-10), woman who gave birth

(Deut. 32:18), mother (Is. 66:13), and mother eagle, (Deut. 32:11).

The Bible also refers to God with such gender-neutral terms as rock (Ps. 31:3), advocate (Jn. 14:26), light, (Jn. 8:12), bread (Jn. 6:32), creator (Eccl. 12:1), first and last (Rev. 1:17), fountain (Jer. 2:13), lamb (1 Pet. 1:19), life (1 John 11:25), fortress (Ps. 31:3), and savior (2 Sam 22:3).

Yet, all these gender-neutral and female images for God have been jettisoned in public parlance in favor of male references. The fact that instruction about religion in public schools would undoubtedly refer to God as *He* reinforces the notion that God is male, and it omits the possibility that God can be thought of in female terms. It is appalling to even consider the possibility of the public school legally reinforcing those images.

***Misogynist expectations of women:** Feminists are rightly concerned about the misuse of sacred texts to support women's subjugation and male privilege. One need look no further than the Jewish and Christian Bible's second story of creation in Genesis 2 where "man" is created in God's image and given power over the animals. Subsequently, the woman is created from the man's rib to be his "helpmate." According to the story, she is the one who is deceived by the snake, and she is the one who tempts the man, thus insuring their eviction from the garden. Not to worry, however, for she "will be saved through child bearing." (1 Tim. 2:15)

This story has been used for centuries as proof text for women's secondary position and as the rationale for portraying women as intellectually impaired, gullible, infantile, and in need of male guidance. The fact that there is a very different, more egalitarian creation story in Genesis 1, or the fact that other interpretations can be given to the second story, matter little, for it is this commonly-accepted understanding that has shaped much of the misogyny in Church and society.

Further "proof" of the proper place for women is found in the New Testament of the Christian Bible where one finds the assertions that women should be gentle and quiet ("very precious in God's sight") (1 Pet. 3:4), are to be subject to their husbands (1 Pet. 3:1), that women are the weaker sex (1 Pet. 3:7), that women should not teach men (1 Tim. 2:11), that a bishop must be a man (1 Tim. 3:4), and that women should be silent in the temple (1 Cor. 14:34). Those who would use these verses as indications of God's will, fail to confront the reality that Christ, Himself, commanded a woman to "go and tell" (John 20:17), that bishops should also be married with children (1 Tim. 3:4) and that the contemporary reality is that Christians do not worship in the temple, and Paul's prohibition to one or two talkative females in the first century does not apply to women today. Furthermore, those who oppose women's ordination, on the grounds that Jesus' disciples were male, conveniently overlook the fact that Jesus' disciples were also Jewish, yet the Church today does not insist that its clergy be Jewish.

The system of patriarchy, itself, so prominent throughout so many religions, is problematic for many feminists. Patriarchy:

constitutes a form of structural or systemic violence against women by using the force of ideology and social structures in ways that harm women by failing, for example, to consider that women have the right to autonomy, including the right to construct culture, to control property, to maintain bodily integrity, to make their own decisions, and to express their own views. (Bowen 2006, 190)

The patriarchal issues we have identified here are a problem because they do not reflect the truth about the whole Biblical record. As has been mentioned, there is a wide variety of Biblical references for God, many of which are gender neutral and female. To emphasize only one male model to the exclusion of female and genderless models is to intentionally portray God in a way that favors only the male gender. This untruthful Biblical view has the effect of robbing women of a deity with whom they could have commonality as women.

There is also a wide variety of Biblical roles for women, many of which do not reflect Timothy's insistence that women should be quiet and gentle. One thinks of the boldness of Ruth (Ruth 3:9), the courage of Esther (Esther 7), and the enthusiasm of Mary of Magdala and Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matthew 28). Restricting women to a limited sphere and a narrow range of appropriate emotions and actions based on a biased view of a few Biblical writers has the effect of robbing women of opportunities and self-understanding enjoyed by men.

Words can be very powerful, and the words used in the Bible to describe the place of women and the nature of God can and do shape us. Writing in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World* (Day and Pressler, ed., 2006) Christine Cozad Neuger tells the story of a meeting at the Vatican to discuss inclusive language proposals for English liturgy. She writes:

A Representative of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith stated "The angry, irritated and resentful women of the United States are systematically attempting to change the gender of God." His words hung in the air, most of us were astonished. A representative of the highest doctrinal body in the Church was suggesting that God had a gender. How had this conviction formed in him? I submit that it was probably because of the power of words to shape reality. I suspect that language that regularly, consistently, and exclusively referred to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in masculine terms led this man actually to conceive of God as masculine, as gendered. (Neuger 2006,161)

If someone with the education and religious conscience of this Representative of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith can be so blind-sighted about God by "mere" words, what hope is there for those with lesser credentials, including students and their teachers? And if only one conservative Biblical view of women is emphasized

how are we to understand the relation between civic equality for women and religious rules against ordaining females, as well as the traditional view of many religions that wives have special responsibilities within the family?" (Greenwalt 2005, 40)

What is at stake in this discussion is the identity of who decides what beliefs are taught to our nation's children. Will girls and boys be taught the erroneous and crippling views that God is a man, and that females must dwell in a limited sphere because they are females? Will they learn that females are the weaker sex and are intended to be ruled over by males? These views have no place in public education in a democracy.

While the Christian religious right may want to use our country's public schools to proselytize young children to their point of view, that is not their prerogative. Indeed, they are expressly forbidden to do so by the very design woven into the fabric of our Constitution. No

reconceptualization of religious education as neutral instruction, character education, a panacea for saving public schools, concern for religion's reputation, an impression of similar core beliefs, or framing religious differences as no different than political differences, will change that fact.

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Coming Out with Stories: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Storyed Religious Identity Formation in the Public Discourse

Abstract

Asian and Asian North American women have long been estranged, marginalized, and silenced in the public discourse. And yet they have struggled to break their forced silence by telling their own stories with creative imagination. Story-telling and identity-formation, for them, are two sides of the same narrative coin; their identities are storied identities. This paper probes and describes the nature and functions of storied identity from the perspectives of philosophy, psychology, and theology based on the work of Paul Ricoeur (narrative identity), Jerome Bruner (meaning making), and Choan Seng Song (story theology) respectively. On the basis of this analysis, it draws out a relational, both/and, and multi-centered understanding of storied identity, focusing on the power of story to relate, connect, and weave the self, the world and God. Then it introduces Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng’s work on the practice of narrativity in Christian education.

Asian Women’s Story-telling and Their Storied Identities

At the seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) held in Canberra, Australia, in 1991, a daring young Korean woman theologian, Chung Hyun Kyung, artfully presented a controversially imaginative keynote address on the Assembly theme “Come, Holy Spirit-Renew the Whole Creation.”¹ Believe it or not, the Holy Spirit did come down in her presentation to renew the creative way of doing theology if not the whole creation!

According to Kwok Pui-lan’s astute observation, “Chung’s presentation demonstrated the need for a paradigm shift in doing theology” by “[giving] an unequivocal signal that a new women’s theology was emerging in Asia.”² What is new in her presentation is her theological imagination and hers is *an embodied imagination* that emerges from Asian women’s womb (read: context and social location) where they struggle to know and represent themselves and to suffer and hope. And Kwok also perceptively notes that Chung’s embodied imagination hinges on “the narrative nature of theology and women’s storytelling.”³ All in all, Asian women tell stories “generated by their epistemology from the broken body” that receives, records, and remembers

¹. Chung Hyun Kyung, “Welcome the Spirit; Hear Her Cries. The Holy Spirit, Creation, and the Culture of Life,” *Christianity and Crisis* 51, nos. 10/11 (1991): 220-223.

². Kwok Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000), 25.

³. *Ibid.*, 87.

historical realities.⁴ That is to say that their lived experiences become truthfully concretized, embodied, or incarnated as they narrate their stories.

Like it or not, Asian women's stories are worth telling or, to put it in a contemporary jargon of literacy and journalism, "tellable" or "reportable." Though the tellability of their stories relies not only on their "(detached) content" but also their "contextual (embedded) relevance" for the listeners,⁵ however, estranged and marginalized Asian women's stories have been disregarded and dismissed as chitchat (small talk) in the public discourse. The rationale is: they are not big (important) enough, so they do not deserve to be heard. They have simply been silenced. Regarding some Christian observers' labeling of Chung's presentation as "paganism, apostasy, or syncretism in the pejorative sense [as] a form of silencing," Kwok claims, "We Asian women have been silenced for a long, long time."⁶

It was on behalf of long silenced Asian women that Chung broke their forced silence and told their "root story" in her presentation. Their "root story" is a story that tells "what it means to be women in their own specific history and land."⁷ Asian women's "root story," as Chung sees it, is all about their silenced *han*-ridden suffering that has taken a heavy toll on their womanhood. Chung argues that the purpose of doing theology, for Asian women, is "*han-pu-ri*"—"the release of *han*"⁸ and that *han* is believed to be released by storytelling. Storytelling, therefore, is the most powerful tool for doing theology from the perspective of *han*-ridden Asian women. Asian women's storytelling is not so much an informative socializing act (chitchat) as a transforming theologizing practice (God-talk).

Asian women's identities are *storied identities* in the sense that they are who they are when they tell their stories and that they find their home where they tell their stories.⁹

4. Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 104.

5. Neal R. Norrick, "Conversational Storytelling," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 134.

6. Kwok Pui-lan, "Gospel and Culture," *Christianity and Crisis* 51, nos. 10/11 (1991): 224.

7. Chung, "Your Comfort vs. My Death" in *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, eds. Mary John Mananzan et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 132. One might like to change the metaphor from "root story" to "root song." The latter is "a song that can be sung by everyone in the community, thereby creating a sense of belonging." Su Yon Pak, Unzu Lee, Jung Ha Kim, and Myung Ji Cho, eds., *Singing the Lord's Song in a New Land: Korean American Practices of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 27.

8. Chung Hyun Kyung, "'Han-pu-ri': Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 59. This article was originally published in *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sun Ai Lee Park (Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Center for Culture and Theology, 1989). For detailed study of *han*, see Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993). Here Park refers to *han* as "an Asian, particularly Korean, term used to describe the depths of human suffering" and defines it as "the abysmal experience of pain" (15).

9. There is a Bible study published in Korean based on the concept of storied identities and a story-weaving method: *Searching for Home in the Bible: Home is the Place Where Our*

Paul Ricoeur and Narrative Identity

Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), a French philosopher who combined phenomenology and hermeneutics in order to understand the meaning of life,¹⁰ claims that any religious community is a *hermeneutical* community of remembering and storytelling around its sacred text.

Among different genres in the Bible, Ricoeur is most interested in narrative texts.¹¹ He believes that a narrative can interpret what it intends to proclaim¹² and furthermore that, like all founding narratives, biblical narratives “constitute the identity of the community . . . as a narrative identity.”¹³ People of faith are a *storied* people.

Ricoeur’s narrative identity is based on a philosophy of mediation. He stands against the unmediated Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) way of understanding the self. He argues that “there is no self-understanding that is not *mediated* by signs, symbols, and texts; in the final analysis self-understanding coincides with the interpretation given to these mediating terms.”¹⁴ According to an interpreter of Ricoeur, a uniquely Ricoeurian thesis about identity formation is that the self arrives at selfhood by way of its willing interaction with and reception from new “text-worlds” that it encounters in its journey in the world.¹⁵

Narrating is the self’s way of making sense of human finitude; narrating is self-making. The self interacts with the narrative and a narrative identity is formed out of this interaction.¹⁶ The world of the self (to be precise, the story-world of the self) is in the ongoing process of refiguration in contact with the world of the text and this process of refiguration turns the former into “a cloth woven of stories told.”¹⁷ The refiguration by narrative of the self’s story-world is

Stories Are Told (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1999). This book is published by the Resource and Information Center for Empowerment. According to its editors, this book “links together biblical stories, early immigrants’ stories (from the early 1900s), and contemporary Korean American women’s stories.” Su Yon Pak et al., eds., *Singing the Lord’s Song in a New Land*, xvi.

¹⁰. Relying on Ricoeur’s work on narrative identity, Heinz Streib elaborates a “proposal to understand and accentuate religious education in terms of narratology, to talk of *narrative religious education*.” The “narrative approach,” he argues, “is one of the most adequate in our ‘communities of remembering and storytelling.’” Heinz Streib, “The Religious Educator as Story-teller: Suggestions from Paul Ricoeur’s Work,” *Religious Education* 93, no. 3 (1998): 324.

¹¹. Paul Ricoeur, “The Bible and the Imagination,” in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 145.

¹². Paul Ricoeur, “Interpretive Narrative,” in *Figuring the Sacred*, 181.

¹³. Paul Ricoeur, “Toward a Narrative Theology: Its Necessity, Its Resources, Its Difficulties,” in *Figuring the Sacred*, 241.

¹⁴. Quoted in Bernard Dauenhauer’s entry “Paul Ricoeur” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/#3.4>). These words come from Ricoeur, “On Interpretation,” in *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 15. Dauenhauer modified the words of the English translation in light of the original French.

¹⁵. Mark I. Wallace, “Introduction,” in Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 2.

¹⁶. Athena Gorospe, *Narrative and Identity: An Ethical Reading of Exodus 4* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 37.

¹⁷. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 3: 246.

necessary, for, as Ricoeur sees it, “the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly, through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts.”¹⁸ His point is that knowledge of the self is mediated and interpreted through storytelling. For Ricoeur, “there is no other way to arrive at understanding the world and at self-understanding than taking the ‘detour.’”¹⁹

The “detour” is the roundabout way or the third path. The task of religious education, in this regard, is to help students take “the detour of listening and relating to symbols and narratives” so that they might not fall prey to “the exclusivity of *rational explanation*” or “the illusion of *immediate understanding*.”²⁰ And this self-making is not an individual journey but a communal one, for our stories and others’ stories are caught up with one another.

Jerome Bruner and Meaning Making

Jerome Bruner (1915-), an American psychologist who is a life-long student of the mind, promotes a psychology of process thinking and pays particular attention to the constraining function of culture through its symbol systems, particularly narratives, in the process of meaning-making by the human mind.

The most important educational fact, as he sees it, is that “human beings make sense of the world by telling stories about it-by using the narrative mode for construing reality.”²¹ Human beings are hardwired for story and the narratives that the self constructs in order to make sense of the world and the self are not necessarily real stories. In his interdisciplinary study of narrative, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, Bruner notes that even “fictional narratives” shape things in the real world and often entitle them to be real.²² It is through the narrative construction of reality that the self makes the world real. That is to say that the self is related to and relates itself to the world by narrating.

Drawing on story’s power to relate, Bruner maintains that “stories are a culture’s coin and currency.”²³ If we want to live meaningfully and related to others in this world, we should use this common coin. But no culture has only one currency by which it relates its members to one another. It has many stories. As it changes, so do the stories that reflect it. There are no absolute stories. All stories are particular stories told from a particular cultural perspective. Bruner’s etymological study of the word “to narrate” confirms this point: “‘to narrate’ derives from both ‘telling’ (*narrare*) and ‘knowing in some particular way’ (*gnarus*)-the two tangled beyond sorting.”²⁴ What is amazing in the narrative construction of reality, however, is that some stories we tell are of particular imprints and yet have a universal reach that the mind makes possible.

¹⁸. Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (1991): 80.

¹⁹. Streib, “The Religious Educator as Story-teller,” 319.

²⁰. Ibid., 326, 318 (original emphasis).

²¹. Jerome S. Bruner, *The Culture of Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 130. For the detailed treatment of “the narrative mode for construing reality,” see Jerome S. Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 1-21.

²². Jerome S. Bruner, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 8.

²³. Ibid., 15.

²⁴. Ibid., 27.

Bruner's approach to narrative is a constructivist one that takes the primary function of the mind to be world-making and self-making. Both the self and the world are constructed and reconstructed by the mind. The mind does this by telling stories about the world and the self. The mind, in short, is a factory of making stories. The self, in its continuous interaction with the world that shapes it, engages in a cognitive and linguistic process that makes and tells its life narratives or autobiographical narratives in order to make sense of life.²⁵ "In the end," Bruner argues, "we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives."²⁶

Our identities are storied identities and our meaning-making within the relational web of culture hinges upon mutual learning based on interactivity or, better put, "intersubjectivity-how people come to know what others have in mind and how they adjust accordingly."²⁷ The narrative construction of reality is a cooperative mutual process. What really matters in our meaning making is a "shared" narrative by which our storied identities are constructed and reconstructed in the public domain.²⁸

Choan Seng Song and Story Theology

Choan Seng Song (1929-), a prominent story theologian from Taiwan, argues that story has "a magic power" that enables us to see hidden things, even God, "to cross the boundaries of our physical senses to turn to our spiritual senses."²⁹ To put it in an image of Buddhism, story opens to us "a third eye" by which we see through the surface of a thing and find its meaning.³⁰ Song not only refers to the capability of story to help us cross the boundaries of languages (the prominent huddle of human communication) and to connect us to the real world of blood and flesh, but also alludes to its sacramental potential. The story that relates us to the world and the world to us, he believes, also relates us to God and God to us. In the stories to which he has "listened attentively," he comes to see "human beings in search of God" and "God in the company of human beings."³¹

It is Song's firm belief that people meet God in their particular contexts and social locations. Just as the marketplace was Jesus' "theological arena," our daily experiences are "the location of God's revelation."³² Song's theology is contextual theology and everything human is theologically significant for him. All Asian theologians have to do is to listen to and tell the stories of Asian contexts and social locations with the ears and tongue of the Compassionate God. To make his point, Song uses an imagery of the heartbeat: "A theology echoing God's heartbeats

²⁵. Bruner, "Life as Narrative," in *In Search of Pedagogy: The Selected Works of Jerome S. Bruner*, 2:129.

²⁶. *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁷. Bruner, *The Culture of Education*, 161.

²⁸. Bruner, *Making Stories*, 107.

²⁹. Choan Seng Song, *And Their Eyes Are Opened: Story Sermons Embracing the World* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2006), x.

³⁰. Choan Seng Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 26, xiii.

³¹. Choan Seng Song, *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), xi.

³². *Ibid.*, 12.

in the heartbeats of other Asians and in your own heartbeats-this is contextual theology.”³³
Theology starts “where God is.”³⁴

Song’s trust in people theology is so deep that he regards people, particularly the marginalized, as “*theo*-logical beings” with whom God dwells-“signs of Immanuel in Asian history and culture.”³⁵ Their stories, full of suffering in hope, are parabolic in the sense that they points to God’s reign that can be experienced in real life.³⁶ This is why he regrets that people’s story-parables are not valued in traditional theology.

Song’s story theology is a theology of *imaging* not imagination. Theological imaging, he argues, should not be frozen with images but always in the making. For Song, there is no theological taboo in imaging theology and any image, except for the ever-evolving image of Jesus Christ, has no absolutely binding power. Song’s story theology recognizes the significance of every particular perspective of imaging Jesus Christ and invites all of them to what he calls “a theological world of stories, or better, the divine-human world of stories.”³⁷ The world of stories is where theological biases and prejudices are emptied and particular storied identities blossom.

Analysis of the Nature and Function of Storied Identity

What we have learned from Ricoeur, Bruner, and Song is that human beings, in essence, are storied beings and stories help human beings form relational selves within the framework of a connectional living. Stories are, to quote Ricoeur, “the guardian of time, insofar as there can be no thought about time without narrated time.”³⁸ Human beings here and now cannot do without making stories. Bruner finds evidence for this argument in a neurological disorder called dysnarrativia whose sufferers lose “not only a sense of self but also a sense of other.” This disease proves that self-identity is not only fundamentally narrative but also “profoundly relational.”³⁹ The concept of storied identity refers to the narrative construction of self-identity in the company of the other based on the power of story to relate, connect, and weave the self and the world. Song extends the narrative other (companion) further: stories connect not only people but also people and God. Theologically speaking, storied identity means to get “our context and God’s revelation [the text] connected.”⁴⁰

Since *storied identity is a self-identity narratively constructed in the company of the other*, it is not self-centered; it is rather other-oriented, if not other-centered, with multiple centers recognized and embraced. It is not about one metanarrative but about many small narratives. It is also not about the “I” but about the “We.” It presupposes what Kwok calls “the democratizing of

³³. Choan Seng Song, *Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective* (1984; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 37.

³⁴. Song states, “God is everywhere. God speaks out of everywhere. And God is at work everywhere.” Choan Seng Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (1986; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, n.d.), 96.

³⁵. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

³⁶. *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁷. Song, *The Believing Heart*, 69.

³⁸. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3: 241.

³⁹. Bruner, *Making Stories*, 86.

⁴⁰. Song, *Tell Us Our Names*, 42.

the interpretive process,”⁴¹ in which my stories and others’ stories are interwoven and become “our” stories. And it is also about home and story theology is home-based theology. And yet, theological home, at least from the perspective of border-crossing Asian North American women, should not be a ghettoized cultural enclave. It should be a diasporic journey itself in which we celebrate our cultural diversity and lift every silenced voice. For estranged, marginalized, and silenced Asian American women, storied identity is about our individual and collective *journeying home*. It is always in the making, on the verge of *becoming* in the company of the other.

There are three functions of the concept of storied identity. First, the concept of storied identity helps us interpret and integrate traditional and contemporary beliefs, values and outlooks that are fundamentally different from and often incongruous with one another. The function of integration means that stories give a structure, pattern, or framework by which a person or a group could arrange, rearrange, and integrate the “disparate element of our lives” to form a narrative identity.⁴²

Second, the concept of storied identity helps us to preserve memories, particularly “dangerous memories,” from our forgetfulness and empowers people, particularly those who are silenced, to tell their stories. Story-telling, for the silenced, is a struggle to become a liberative voice. The concept of storied identity implies that we have to lift up the voices of “no-body” and help the silenced become “somebody” and also that stories from the heart have a transformative power. “Voices from the heart, once heard, can change other hearts.”⁴³

Third, the concept of storied identity helps us forge new relationships with others and build a polyphonic community among people who share stories. Through stories one encounters many others and becomes oneself in the company of others. Stories build a narrative community in which self forms its new identity or, better put, identities. The plural form *identities* as “evolving constructions” highlights the significance of the “continual social interactions” for the process of identity-formation.⁴⁴

In short, storied identity is a self-identity narratively constructed in the company of the other. It functions as a *hermeneutic* principle to interpret and integrate disparate elements of life, as a *liberative* principle to reconstruct the suppressed memories and empower the silenced voices, and as a *communal* principle to build a narrative community where multiple stories and multiple identities evolve and develop.

Storied Religious Identity Formation and the Story-Weaving Process

⁴¹. Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-biblical World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 36.

⁴² Dan P. McAdams, *Power, Intimacy, and the Life Story: Personological Inquiries into Identity* (New York: Guilford Press, 1988), 18.

⁴³. Mingshui Cai and Rudine Sims Bishop, “Multicultural Literature for Children: Towards a Clarification of the Concept,” in *The Need for Story*, ed. Dyson and Genishi (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1994), 68.

⁴⁴. Theodore R. Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 131.

Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng (1936-), a first-generation immigrant Chinese Canadian scholar, reads the Bible critically through “a postcolonial lens.”⁴⁵ Any biblical interpretation, as she sees it, is “culturally defined and historically determined.”⁴⁶ She argues that “the Bible and traditional interpretations could be part of the problem as well as part of the solution.”⁴⁷ She does not separate feminism from racism and advocates an “oppositional” reading that resists the conventional reading and attends to unheard voices and unrecorded incidents. She believes that an Asian North American woman should set her identity “in historical perspective.”⁴⁸

Ng’s understanding of identity is contextual and culture-specific. As she articulates her own “bamboo theology,” she clearly states her theological standpoint “at the outset”: “I must ‘come out’ with *the particularities of my identity and social location*, because my theological understanding and perspective, like those of anyone else, are grounded in my particular heritage, generation, and context.”⁴⁹ As an immigrant struggling daily with her own cultural identity in diaspora, she draws her readers’ attention to the “darker” aspects of the “underside” of Asian North American immigration history that belong to what Elliot Eisner calls a “null curriculum.”⁵⁰ She is eager to study various faith communities to write histories of religious education and thereby present a “properly contextualized set of texts” as “a different mirror” from the “centrist” historical accounts.⁵¹ Her call as an educator is to raise a postcolonial diasporic feminist consciousness among Asian North American women and teach them a postcolonial diasporic feminist imagination so that they could formulate their own perspectives, find their own voices in reading and interpreting the Bible from these perspectives, and figure out God’s message to them.⁵²

It should be noted that Ng emphasizes both the culture-specificity and the intercultural transaction of stories in diasporic identity formation. Education, as she sees it, should help

⁴⁵. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Salmon and Carp, Bannock and Rice: Solidarity between Asian Canadian Women and Aboriginal Women,” in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religions and Theology*, eds. Rita Nakashima Brock et al. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 204.

⁴⁶. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Inclusive Language in Asian North American Churches: Non-Issue or Null Curriculum?” *Journal of Asian and Asian American Theology* 2, no.1 (1997): 29.

⁴⁷. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Reading through New Eyes: A Basic Introduction to Reading Scripture from a Feminist, Postcolonial Perspective for Anti-racism Work,” *Making Waves* 4, no. 2 (2004): 29.

⁴⁸. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Beyond Bible Stories: The Role of Culture-specific Myths/Stories in the Identity Formation of Nondominant Immigrant Children,” *Religious Education* 99, no. 2 (2004): 132.

⁴⁹. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Land of Maple and Lands of Bamboo,” in *Realizing the America of Our Hearts: Theological Voices of Asian Americans*, ed. Fumitaka Matsuoka and Eleazar S. Fernandez (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003), 100.

⁵⁰. “What schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach.” Quoted in Wenh-In Ng, “Inclusive Language in Asian North American Churches,” 21.

⁵¹. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Contextualization of Religious Education in an Age of Disbelief” *Religious Education* 92, no. 2 (1997): 199.

⁵². Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Toward Wholesome Nurture: Challenges in the Religious Education of Asian North American Female Christians,” *Religious Education* 91:2 (1996), 243.

students learn to “read” their own world, to “name” themselves as subjects not as objects, to critically and constructively “recover” their sociocultural traditions, to critically and contextually “interpret” the Bible, to “lament” life-denying forces and “affirm” life-affirming forces.⁵³ As a multicultural teacher, she attempts to integrate her students’ stories of struggle into her curriculum.⁵⁴ She encourages her students in diaspora to claim and reclaim their own “culture-specific stories,” for she believes they need their stories “for more *holistic* identity formation.”⁵⁵ For her, being culture-specific for Asians in diaspora means being culturally defined, not culturally confined. She refuses to accept cultural essentialism. In the process of globalization, diverse cultures converge and change. She notes that in our daily lives we need to “cross boundaries” and “adopt a strategy of ‘hybridity’.”⁵⁶ Or, to put it in the poetic words of her bamboo theology,

It is learning to choose from among
Graeco-Roman-Euro-Anglo-German . . . traditions
which strands to discard
which strands to preserve
which to *weave* into our new fabric.⁵⁷

What Ng suggests is a culture-specific and cross-cultural “story-weaving” process based on the *storied identities* of border-crossing Asian North American women in their postcolonial context and diasporic social location.

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⁵³. Ibid., 250.

⁵⁴. Ibid., 249.

⁵⁵. Wenh-In Ng, “Beyond Bible Stories,” 125. She explains, “The acquisition of one’s own religiocultural stories, whether in a family, school, community, or church context or a combination of all four, can assist in this development; without such acquisition, young people run the danger of failing to arrive at the stage of their bicultural/multicultural identity.” (128)

⁵⁶. Wenh-In Ng, “Land of Maple and Lands of Bamboo,” 103-04.

⁵⁷. Ibid., 106 (my emphasis).

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Using Hybridity to Create Space for Coming Out Religiously: A Case Study

Abstract

In introductory theology courses—where a plurality of religious perspectives and varying levels of religious knowledge are the norm—how do we to introduce students to the religious traditions upon which our schools are founded, while also creating space for them to "come out religiously" *and* to practice respectful engagement with others who do not share their religious identity? The notion of hybridity, particularly in relation to course approach and learning environment, is a crucial concept for forming learning communities that meet students where they are, assist them in constructing religious subjectivity, and promote appreciative, critical, and transformative dialogue across religious difference.

Introduction

As philosopher Charles Taylor has argued, in our secular age people simultaneously search for meaning and assent to the premise that belief in God is just one of a myriad of possible religious or spiritual worldviews.¹ Even in a Catholic university, it can no longer be assumed (if it ever could) that students self-identify as Catholic, have a basic familiarity with Christianity, or even believe in God. In introductory theology courses in this setting—where a plurality of religious perspectives and varying levels of religious knowledge among students are the norm—how do we to introduce students to the religious traditions upon which our schools are founded, while also creating space for them to "come out religiously" *and* to practice respectful engagement with others who do not share their religious identity? The notion of hybridity, particularly in relation to course approach and learning environment, is a crucial concept for forming learning communities that meet students where they are, assist them in constructing religious subjectivity, and promote appreciative, critical, and transformative dialogue across religious difference.

Impediments to Coming Out Religiously in an Introductory Theology Course

Methodologically, this paper is a case study Theological Questions, a required introductory theology course I teach at Saint Catherine University—a small, Catholic, women's college in the Midwest.² The students are adult undergraduates, a population courted by Saint

¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2007).

² Saint Catherine enrolls around 3500 undergraduate and 1500 graduate students; is located in a residential neighborhood of a major metropolitan area in the Midwest; and draws almost exclusively a regional student body, with over 90% of the students coming from in state. Over the past decade, the student body has become more religiously diversified, with a marked increase in Muslim students and Hmong students, many of whom practice Christianity alongside traditional spiritual practices like shamanism and ancestor veneration. See http://www.stkate.edu/pages/aboutstkates/quick_facts.php (accessed August 15, 2013).

Catherine through the Evening/Weekend/Online program (EWO).³ In an effort to make coursework more flexible for this non-traditional population, in fall 2012 Saint Catherine shifted the format of EWO classes to a hybrid one in which face-to-face class sessions are combined with online learning components.⁴ In this model, students still build relationships with faculty and each other during face-to-face sessions, but they also have more flexibility in terms of when they do their work, and less time on campus is required.⁵

Saint Catherine's students are required to take two theology courses for graduation, and the course I teach is the entry point into theology for a majority of EWO students.⁶ In this context, coming out religiously, at its most basic, involves claiming a religious or a-religious identity. But based on what students write in their pre- and post-course essays,⁷ coming out religiously is much more complex, and a number of factors undergird students' reticence to do so:

1. Cultural Taboo: Even though the United States is the most religious industrialized nation in the world, students see religion as a private matter that is taboo to discuss in public settings.⁸ Even in a theology course, students fear speaking too personally about their religious lives, and many come without much practice talking about religion in a setting of diverse religious identities.
2. Image of Catholicism: The strong Catholic identity of the university leads many students to assume that they will learn and be asked to regurgitate only one form of theology—conservative Catholic doctrine. For example, one student writes that she was apprehensive that she would "be confronted with Catholic rhetoric and a moralistic list of should-do's and must-not's" in the course. Add to this the fact that many students do not

³ The average age of EWO students is thirty-five; many work full- or part-time jobs and are raising children while they complete a baccalaureate degree. See http://www.stkate.edu/pages/aboutstkates/quick_facts.php (accessed August 15, 2013).

⁴ For an excellent introduction to hybrid learning environments, see D. Randy Harrison and Norman D. Vaughn, *Blended Learning in Higher Education: Framework, Principles, and Guidelines* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

⁵ In the EWO undergraduate program at Saint Catherine, in a fifteen week semester, students attend eight, three-hour on-campus class sessions, scheduled every other week, and then complete seven online weeks of the course on the alternate weeks between the face-to-face sessions. See <https://www2.stkate.edu/ewo-admission/schedule> (accessed August 15, 2013).

⁶ According to the description in the course catalogue, Theological Questions is "a class for first-time students, designed to familiarize them with the Christian tradition—its scriptures, history, and documents—as well as with the resources and methods of Christian theology." Please see Appendix A for a brief summary of the four units that focus my iteration of Theological Questions. Please see Appendix B for the full syllabus from the spring 2013 section of this course.

⁷ In this course, students write a pre- and post-course essay. In the pre-essay, which they bring with them to the first face-to-face session and which is graded pass/fail, students write about what they are looking forward to in the course, anything about which they are nervous, their previous experience with religion, and their goals for the course. In the post-course essay, which is graded using traditional letter grades, students self-assess their learning in the course, focusing on readings, themes, and discussions that stand out in their minds and what has changed in their view on and practice of religion, if anything. All quotations from students in this paper come from students' pre- and post-course essays.

⁸ For an interesting study on students' willingness to communicate about religion, see Mariam F. Alkazemi, "Students' Spiraling Silence and Willingness to Communicate about Religion in the United States: An Exploration of the Media's Role in Stigmatizing Religion," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 2, no. 1, <http://jrmdc.com> (accessed July 30, 2013).

understand how this required theology course could be relevant to them, and many begin with a defensive and resentful mindset.

3. Lack of (Religious) Education: Many EWO students come back to college after a long absence or are beginning for the first time. Generally, they are nervous about keeping up with the course load and satisfactorily completing assignments. Additionally, few have had any formal religious education since high school, if they have ever had any. They fear that they will appear dumb in the face of "others" who know more about religion; as one student communicates, "I felt that I'd never measure up to the people who enrolled in this course that were Catholic because I was into pieces of religion and I didn't attend service every Sunday."
4. Past Religious Experience: Students' past experiences with religion are a major deterrent to coming out religiously, namely because times of hurt propagated (or at least implicitly supported) by religious communities and individuals lead the student to believe she has no place for religion in her life. For example, a number of students report have left organized religion behind when it was made clear to them that their sexual orientation left them outside the bounds of the community. These students come ready to protect themselves against more pain wrought in the name of religion.
5. Current Religious Identity: Students' current religious identification is a factor in their reserve in the theology classroom. Students covering the spectrum of religious traditions, from Pentecostal to atheist, worry that their religious viewpoints will not be respected, and this is heightened for students who belong to non-Christian traditions.
6. The Face of the Other: Finally, students articulate concern with being attentive and accountable to the variety of religious identities represented by students and conversation partners in the course, even as they claim their own religious identity. In other words, their reserve in coming out religiously is related to a desire to do so in a way that makes room for others to claim their own religious identities.

Understanding Hybridity

These students' experiences of coming out religiously in relation to their own complex histories and experiences and in relation to the complex histories and experiences of their classmates indicates that hybridity is an important concept for conceptualizing religious subjectivity and shaping our pedagogical approach in introductory theology courses. In her consideration of hybridity and religious identity, Michele Saracino explains that hybridity is often invoked in relation to human identity, particularly ethnic identity.⁹ Writes Saracino, "Hybrid identity here is largely an effect of the political, economic, and technological processes associated today with globalization, namely those systems that have led one to encounter many cultures, stories, and so on, and integrate them into oneself."¹⁰ Mai-Anh Le Tran argues that in "our current postmodern, postcolonial, transnational, globalized world," religious educators must

⁹ Saracino is clear that hybridity is not just trendy academic jargon. Rather, it goes back to Mendelian research on genetics in the mid-1800s. As she elucidates, "From Mendel's early experiments, it became clear that in hybrid plants the genetic material of both progenitors was present, even if it was not visible to the naked eye. In other words, hybridity existed even if the organism did not have a hybrid phenotypic effect." So in its origin, hybridity emphasizes the mixture of traits within an individual organism, even when this mixture is not readily apparent to the naked eye. Michele Saracino, "Hybridity and Trespass: With Jesus at the Borders of Identity," *Horizons* 33, no. 2 (2006): 226.

¹⁰ Saracino, 223.

begin from the assumption of the "hybrid subjectivities" of those we teach.¹¹ While hybridity is most often considered in relation to ethnicity,¹² it also makes sense to think of religious identities as hybrid in nature.¹³ When I am asked about my religion, I find only a series of stories can begin to approximate an answer: "I was baptized Roman Catholic, attended Roman Catholic elementary and secondary schools, had a series of feminist awakenings, did all of my post-secondary education in Protestant institutions..." Religious identity involves a multitude of stories and voices that cannot be collapsed into a neat, linear narrative, let alone a pure identity. Additionally, it may just be that hybrid identity is at the heart of Christianity, that is, who Christ is and who we are called to be.¹⁴

If our students necessarily have hybrid religious identities, then our pedagogical processes need to attend to this. As HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Joanne Doi explain, "Raising awareness of these complex identities, individual and communal identities, is the role of religious educators. It is our conviction that hybrid and hyphenated multiple identities need to be affirmed in religious education discourse and pedagogy."¹⁵ As I demonstrate below in returning to the case study, using a hybrid course approach and learning environment creates space for students to claim their hybrid religious identities. It fulfills the tasks Tran outlines for religious education with those of hybrid identity:

To "make accessible" the multiple and varied religious sources from which individuals may draw for the construction of their "personal myths" (life stories) in ways that offer deep psychosocial truth; and to "make accessible" the sources considered "normative" to the faith community so that the truth, goodness, and beauty found within individual personal myths could be held in dialogic imagination with communal narratives of faith.¹⁶

Hybrid Course Approach

Hybridity shapes the construction of Theological Questions in two particular ways: course approach and learning environment. First, in terms of course approach, I explicitly

¹¹ Mai-Anh Le Tran, "Narrating Lives, Narrating Faith: 'Organic Hybridity' for Contemporary Christian Religious Education," *Religious Education* 105, no. 2 (March-April 2010): 188.

¹² Religious educators HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Joanne Doi offer personal reflections on their experiences of intercultural hybridity, explaining that hybrid identity means living "as a multiply situated person, unable to have only one identity." See HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Joanne Doi, "Intercultural Threads of Hybridity and Threshold Spaces of Learning," *Religious Education* 107, no. 3 (May-June 2012): 263. Their stories offer two important cautions in discussing hybridity. First, hybrid identities often are related to patterns of colonization, and thus any consideration of hybrid identities needs to be attentive to power dynamics and varying levels of freedom that people have in claiming their particular hybrid identities. Because hybrid identities have been forced on some groups, because they often come from situations of oppression and thus carry shame with them, we need to be vigilant not to characterize hybridity romantically, as Saracino reminds us (228). Stemming from this, secondly, hybrid identities are "mixed blessings," as Kim-Cragg names them (264). The path to embracing a hybrid identity must pass through mourning a sense of belonging in any one place and a loss of security in one unified and pure identity.

¹³ Saracino explains how religious identities become multiple thus: "Yet, more often than not, religions overlap and converge; that is to say, there are border crossings among religions," 222.

¹⁴ It is no small point that Saracino and Kim-Cragg and Doi argue that a hybrid identity is at the heart of Christianity, that is, who Christ is and who we are. This is seen in the multiplicity of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life, as well as Jesus' hybrid identity as Jesus and the Christ.

¹⁵ Kim-Cragg and Doi, 273.

¹⁶ Tran, 196. Tran notes that these tasks point back to the work of Mary C. Boys, *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*, 1st ed. (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1989).

combine a religious studies and a theological approach. This blended approach is introduced the first week of the course through an on-line lecture that makes it clear that students do not need to claim a religious identity in order to study religion. To this end, a religious studies approach is outlined in which scholars approach religion from a perspective of curiosity, wanting to know more about this important aspect of people's lives and the larger culture.¹⁷ Then, following Anselm's understanding of theology as faith seeking understanding, theology is defined as a second order reflection on people's lived experiences of faith. Here it is emphasized that theology is not only an academic endeavor, but also that it arises from the realities of people's lives and can be done by anyone interested in reflecting on the theological implications of life. Two aims of theology, which shape the goals of the course, also are enumerated: transmission, that is, passing on ideas from the tradition, including biblical narratives, histories, and practices; and transformation, that is, doing critical reflection about the tradition so that it continues to speak to people's faith and experiences of the religious tradition.¹⁸

This combination of approaches, which then is carried through the course in readings, online discussions, and in-class activities, responds to some of the main stumbling blocks to students coming out religiously. The perspective of religious studies makes a way for students who consider themselves non- (or only marginally) religious to participate in the course; it deflects some of their defensiveness while gently inviting them to practice a thoughtful and respectful engagement with religion. Further, taking a ground-up approach to theology enables students to see how theology is born in "the understandings of religious practitioners, in the flow of actual religious experiences,"¹⁹ and, thus, how it might be something they can do and something that might be illuminative of their own experiences. Finally, speaking of transformation of theology upfront, along with the introduction of feminist theologies, helps students understand that they will not be asked to embrace a singular theological vision through the course and that critique of religious traditions will not only be accepted but encouraged.²⁰

Crucial to the success of this hybrid approach is that students begin the course as religious studies scholars, investigating religious traditions with which most are not familiar. Looking at Buddhism and Hinduism levels the playing field, so to speak, so that students work together through online discussion boards and in-class small group activities to develop better understanding of how suffering is explained by adherents of these traditions. After the first unit on world religions, students continue to utilize the skills they build in this religious studies work

¹⁷ In the background here is an ethnographic approach to studying religion. As theologian Christian Scharen and ethicist Aana Marie Vigen put it, "Learning deeply and authentically from the field is a central commitment of ethnographic study," and ethnographers are called to practice "humility amidst sustained, attentive, and careful observation." See Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2011) 236, 17.

¹⁸ Here my thought is heavily influenced by Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Education for Continuity and Change: A New Model for Christian Religious Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

¹⁹ Jeremy Posadas, "Ethnographic Possibilities for an Introduction to Christian Theology," *Practical Matters* 6 (Spring 2013), <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/issue/6/teaching-matters/ethnographic-possibilities-for-an-introduction-to-christian-theology> (accessed May 15, 2013).

²⁰ Feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, and Asian feminist theologies are named as just a few of the forms of theology that have assisted in the transformative work of theology. Feminist theological methods allow students to develop what Serene Jones names a "double vision," so that they balance critique of the ways in which Christian traditions have harmed women with appreciation, recovering, and reconstruction of the powerful resources within Christianity to support women's flourishing. Serene Jones, "Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law," in *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology)*, eds. Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 19-39.

as we move to consider major questions of Christian theology from the perspective of those who profess belief, but also considering what these questions mean for themselves, if they so desire to claim this religious identity. Further, the movement between the two approaches invites a reflexivity that advances students' own processes of naming and claiming religious identity, even if that identity is an agnostic, atheist, or undecided one.

Two other features of the course support this hybrid approach. First, online discussion boards invite students to take the perspective of religious studies scholars, biblical scholars, feminist theologians, ethicists, and in the final few weeks of the course, to speak from their own perspective about the place of (or lack thereof) religion and religious practices in their own lives (or the lives of people they know). Second pairing online quizzes, which test content knowledge, with written unit reflections, which focus on personal appropriation of course material, insures that students are assessed on both their knowledge of course content and on their critical engagement with the material. The unit reflection prompts assist students who are interested in articulating their religious subjectivity, but are also written in such a way so as to engage those who do not wish to use this course for that purpose.²¹

Hybrid Learning Environment

A second way hybridity shapes Theological Questions is through the hybrid learning environment, and there are two features of this environment that increase students' ability to come out religiously. First, Theological Questions utilizes a combination of written, asynchronous discussion during the online course weeks and spoken, synchronous discussion during the face-to-face sessions. Part of each in-class session is devoted to small-group work, and then students participate in online discussion boards with the same small group in the following online class week.²² In class, students literally see each other's faces and contend with the embodied existence and experiences of those who are different than they are. Having come face-to-face with their conversation partners and knowing they will see these people in person again, students have added incentive to take up differences of opinions in respectful ways in online discussions.

But simultaneously, because they do not literally have to face each other as they participate in online discussions, students are willing to share aspects of their religious identity and experience in discussion boards that seem too intimate for face-to-face class sessions.²³ Further, the act of composing written answers to discussion questions and the requirement that students respond to at least two posts from others in their discussion group leads to a particular depth of discussion, with many students continuing the conversation beyond the required number of posts (and even beyond the time period designated for the discussion on certain occasions).

²¹ The unit reflection paper prompts appear on pages 18-19 of this paper, in Appendix B.

²² Discussion groups were shuffled three times during the course, so that students could spend long in enough in one small group to reach a deeper depth of discussion but could also get to know most of the members of the class during the course of the semester.

²³ To offer just one example, one student came into the class hoping to "gain avenues for understanding the unexpected and mysterious death" of her father years ago. While she never mentioned her father in our face-to-face classes, the questioning of her faith that accompanied his death came up on discussion boards, and she commented in her post-course essay that she "received this blessing [of avenues of understanding] in every online discussion." This situation demonstrates how important it is for instructors to actively monitor, if not also participate in, online discussion boards and to have at their fingertips pastoral care and counseling resources information to pass on to students who may be experiencing crisis. In this particular case, the student's discussion groups were incredibly supportive, and I was able to refer her to a spiritual director on campus.

For these reasons, hybrid learning environments improve upon the ability of solely face-to-face or online course formats to create space for coming out religiously and for respectful discussion about religion in situations of plurality. In these bounded yet open spaces, students practice constructing and disclosing religious identity, making this religious identity understandable to others, and conversing and learning from those who do not necessarily share the same religious convictions.

Second, hybrid learning environments often use an instructional strategy called castling, so that online and in-class learning activities are "arranged in a particular sequence so that the energy for learning increases and accumulates as students go through the sequence."²⁴ Ideally, online activities lead into in-class activities, which lead back into online activities and so on, so that there is integration of material throughout the course. In Theological Questions, students are sent forth from a face-to-face session with a reading guide, which includes pre-reading questions to stimulate their interest in the topic at hand as it related to their life experience, and the assignment to do their reading using the reading guide, view an online narrated PowerPoint lecture related to the reading material, and participate in an online discussion board. When students come to the next face-to-face class session two weeks later, I am able to address questions or holes in their understanding of course material that are apparent through the discussion boards. But then much in-class time can be devoted to students working together on activities that encourage them to put what they learn into practice, and thus to practice expressing religious viewpoints to a variety of imagined public audiences.²⁵

Additional Features That Promote Responsible Religious Subjectivity

In addition to the hybrid approach and design of the course, two additional features of Theological Questions are crucial for encouraging students to come out religiously and responsibly in a plural world. First is the pre-course essay, which students complete prior to the first face-to-face class session.²⁶ These pre-essays encourage students to begin narrating their religious experience, make room for the discussion of emotions in relation to religious identity, and help to build trust in the learning community, particularly when the instructor strives to respond to the essays in supportive and non-judgmental ways.

Second, student presentations carve out space in face-to-face sessions for students to teach the class about an aspect of religion that is important to them. Many students opt to learn more about aspects of their own religious upbringing, including speaking in tongues in the Pentecostal tradition, self-flagellation in Filipino Catholicism, and shamanism in the Hmong community. One student taught her class about the role of women in Laestadian Movement churches, of which the church in which she was raised is a part. Reflecting on this experience, she writes,

²⁴ L. Dee Fink, "A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning," http://edinnovation.wisc.edu/content/uploads/2013/02/9_other_resources.pdf (accessed September 17, 2013), page 27.

²⁵ Here is one example of this type of small-group work: after we read Catholic social teaching on economics and the environment, students work in small groups to come up with a brochure, poster, presentation, skit, etc, that gets people interested in and thinking about the issue and how it relates to their lives; helps them connect the issue with Christian faith, especially biblical teaching and Catholic social tradition; details at least three specific action steps they can take in their own lives to address this issue; provides a means of community support for these action steps; and envisions one larger project the community could work on together in response to the issue at hand.

²⁶ See footnote 7 above.

One of the ways that I found my voice this semester was by sharing my religious upbringing and childhood experiences with my classmates. It was incredibly difficult. I thought about changing the topic of my presentation many times, but I knew that it was something I needed to do. It was scary and liberating at the same time, and I no longer feel like I have a shameful past that I am carrying around with me.

Not only are these presentations useful for the students who prepare them; a majority of students list the class presentations as one of their favorite aspects of the course, as it exposes them to a variety of religious viewpoints, traditions, and experiences that go well beyond what we could normally study in one course. One student puts it well:

I really enjoyed listening to my peers. Although I didn't always agree with everyone all the time, I found that I was not judgmental. I felt I was able to accept other people's views and beliefs while still keeping my belief system. I felt it was a safe environment to ask questions and explore other religious views without being discriminated against.

Conclusion

For the adult undergraduate students who take Theological Questions, coming out religiously involves coming to terms with their religious upbringings and pasts and imagining futures that build on glimpses of life-giving religious practice from the course. It requires a critical construction of a religious subjectivity that makes sense of and within their current life situations. But it is not only a process isolated to the individual; it happens in relation to others who are also claiming religious identity. In this context of hybrid religious subjectivity, a hybrid course approach and learning environment seem particularly relevant to the aims of supporting students' construction of religious subjectivity and ability to engage religion intelligibly and respectfully in the public sphere.

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Appendix A

Summary of Course Units in Theological Questions

- Unit 1: What is religion? Exploring what religion is through the lens of encounter with mystery and looking at how the reality of suffering is addressed in Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam using John Haught's *What Is Religion?*
- Unit 2: Who is God, who are we, and does the Bible tell me so? Investigating images of God and humanity in the Hebrew Scriptures and introducing a critical hermeneutic for biblical study, focusing on reading biblical texts along with feminist commentary.
- Unit 3: Who do you say that I am? Images of Jesus. Inviting students to understand Jesus in his historical context, using Donald Senior's *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait* as an accompanying text to selections from the New Testament.
- Unit 4: What is the church, and do the church and theology matter in the world? Examining women's religious lives, both in traditional faith communities and in their personal spiritual practice, along with the Catholic church's response to social issues, such as economics and the environment, through Catholic social teaching.

Appendix B

Theological Questions Syllabus Spring 2013

THEO 1000: Theological Questions
Spring Semester 2013
Hybrid Format | Classroom: Whitby 120B

Instructor: Claire Bischoff, Ph.D.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 5-5:45 p.m. and by appointment. Please e-mail me to set up an in person, phone, or virtual meeting; daytime, evening, and weekend hours are available.

Office: Whitby 214

E-mail: cebischoff@stkate.edu (best way to reach me)

Phone: 612-600-8205 (cell, please use sparingly)

Skype: [claire.e.bischoff](https://www.skype.com/people/claire.e.bischoff) (You will have to request me as a contact/friend in order for us to meet virtually on Skype.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“A class for first-time students, designed to familiarize them with the Christian tradition—its scriptures, history, and documents—as well as with the resources and methods of Christian theology. Taught every semester, it provides a foundation of readings and skills to prepare students for further study of theology.” --*Saint Catherine University Course Catalogue, 2008-2009*

By nature, human beings ask questions. It is how we learn. We ask questions in order to make sense of ourselves, our relationships with others and the world around us, and our encounters with mystery. Theology arises from these questions, as people throughout the ages have asked about who human beings are, whether there is more to life than what we can see and touch, and the purpose of it all. In this course we will consider a variety of theological questions. You will have the opportunity to ask your own theological questions, as well as to consider those questions that are central to established theological study. Everyone is welcome in this course, regardless of your religious upbringing or current religious or non-religious perspective. No prior background or previous study of theology is necessary. All that is required is that you come with an open heart and mind, ready to read, discuss, and write about the questions that arise from our being.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. You will examine definitions of religion, as it is lived through five expressions of religion, and develop your own definition of religion.
2. You will learn to use interpretive tools to read the Bible and gain a broad overview of the book and its history. Further, you will be able to recognize and discuss key figures and stories in both the Hebrew Scripture and the Christian New Testament.
3. You will become familiar with a broad overview of the origin and growth of the Christian church and articulate a modern understanding of the Christian church and its place in the world.
4. You will encounter key questions with which theology grapples, as well as name and wrestle with your own theological questions.
5. You will become familiar with the methods and results of feminist theology and examine the role of women within Christian communities, both past and present.
6. You will participate in a constructive, respectful learning community, both face-to-face and online, that contributes to your intellectual and spiritual growth.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. John F. Haught. *What Is Religion? An Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.
2. Donald Senior. *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait*. New and revised edition. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992.
3. A quality study Bible. You do not need to purchase a new Bible for this course, but it is required that you have a high-quality, academic translation. Please ask if you are unsure about the translation you will be using.
Acceptable translations include: New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the New Jerusalem Bible, and the Common English Bible (CEB).
Unacceptable translations include: The Message and the NLT.
It is also possible to read the entire Bible on-line. [Bible Gateway](#) is a good site; if you choose this option, make sure you select the New Revised Standard Version when you search for a passage.
4. Additional readings to be distributed in class or posted on our D2L site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

| | |
|--|-----|
| Attendance and Face to Face Participation | 10% |
| Participation in Online Discussions | 20% |
| Pre-Course and Post-Course Learning Assessment | 5% |
| Presentation | 10% |
| Church Visit Reflection | 5% |
| Unit Reflections | 30% |
| Unit Quizzes | 20% |

READING

Reading is harder than it seems! Reading for good comprehension takes time and effort. For most reading selections, I will hand out a reading guide beforehand that includes questions to guide your reading of the text. In order to really comprehend what you are reading, you need to interact with the text. You can do this by asking yourself the following questions while you read:

- What is the point of this paragraph/section/chapter? (You may want to make note of this in the margins or on a separate paper.)
- Are there any words you do not know? (Consult a dictionary.)
- How does this reading fit with the topic for the week? With the course objectives?
- What names/dates/places/terms do I need to remember for quizzes?

Take notes in the margins of the text or on your reading guide.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND FACE TO FACE PARTICIPATION

A major portion of our work together will be discussion, both in person and online. For this reason, attendance in class is important, not just for your own learning but for our whole learning community. We cannot learn from you if you are absent! Please make every effort to attend our face-to-face sessions and to be actively present in our online community.

In the event that you must miss class, please notify me via e-mail in advance and arrange to get the class notes from one of your classmates. After you have done this, I will be happy to meet with you to answer any remaining questions. I know that you are all busy adults and that "life will happen" at some point during the semester. Because of this, you may miss one class for any reason (illness, family event, etc.) without negatively affecting your participation grade.

Your Participation Grade: Attendance and participation in face-to-face sessions counts for 10% of your grade in this course. A grade for each face-to-face session will be recorded on our D2L site, and these grades will be averaged for your overall participation grade. The following descriptions provide a rough outline of the kinds of participation which are associated with each grade:

- A: Frequent, interesting, respectful, thoughtful, contributions to class discussion. These people have done the reading, are clearly prepared for class, and arrive on time. They always speak up during class discussion, listen respectfully, and engage with other points of view. They are very helpful contributors to small group work.
- B: Respectful listening to classmates and good engagement in small group work. These people contribute regularly to class discussion (almost always), are clearly prepared for class, and arrive on time.
- C: Generally listens to others, but occasionally falls asleep, ignores the comments of others or responds inappropriately. May sometimes be tardy, responds when called on, but does not volunteer. Sometimes unprepared for class (has not done the reading).
- D: Occasional disrespectful behavior while others are speaking (tardiness, phone use, web surfing, etc.). Minimal participation in small group and large group discussion. Often unprepared for class (does not have the text, has not done the reading).

PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

During our online weeks of the course, online discussion boards will be our primary way of interacting with each other and discussing the material for that week. Online discussions will account for 20% of your final grade. I will read and participate in every discussion forum. I will also grade each discussion board using the discussion board rubric that is attached to this syllabus. For the first few discussion boards, I will provide detailed feedback on your discussion board participation through our D2L site.

Discussion boards are a great way for members of the class to learn from each other based on the readings, different life experiences, and unique perspectives gained from studying course materials. It also assists adult learners in learning how to effectively convey ideas to a group in a professional and respectful manner.

Each online week of the course will include one discussion board, as well as some of our face-to-face weeks. You will be assigned to smaller discussion groups under the discussion tab on our D2L site. These groups will rotate throughout the course. The directions for the discussion boards will also change from week to week. Some weeks you will be asked to offer your opinion about a key point from the reading; other weeks you might be asked to find an image on-line that relates to our reading. Directions for the on-line discussions will be posted under the discussion tab on our D2L site each week.

Initial Post: What will stay the same for each online discussion board is that I will provide you with a specific discussion prompt. Each student is asked to answer the prompt in an answer of 150-250 words. This is not a lot of words, so you will need to be clear and concise in your writing. (An answer a little over 250 words is fine, but too much over means you may need to revise in order to make sure your answer is clear and concise. Similarly, an answer that is a few words under 150 is okay, but too much under means you have not developed your ideas sufficiently.) For A-level participation, you are required to submit your initial post early in the week to generate discussion and provide time for others to respond to you.

Two Responses: In addition to your initial post, you are also required to respond to two other classmates' posts with a 50-100 word response. You can use these responses to ask a classmate to clarify a point or to extend it. You may point out a connection to the reading she did not see. You may disagree with her. For A-level participation, you must go beyond this benchmark, frequently participating in the online discussion and responding to direct questions put to you by your classmates and me.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT PRE AND POST ESSAYS

Pre-Essay: Prior to our first face-to-face session on February 5, please read through the entire syllabus and flip through the required reading for the course. After you have done this, consider the following questions:

1. What is your reaction to what you have read in the syllabus and glanced at in the books?
2. What are some things that interest you about this course?
3. Does anything worry you?
4. What previous experiences do you have with religion that you will bring with you to this course? This can be informal experiences (like being particularly moved by a film with religious themes) or formal experiences (like attending Confirmation class for two years). A non-religious upbringing certainly "counts" as something you will bring with you to this course, as that influences the eyes with which you engage in the course.
5. At this point, what do you hope to get out of the course?

Please type up your answers to these questions using 150-250 words (one paragraph to one-page long). Bring a printed copy of your response to class on **February 5** to hand in. This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis. You will earn a pass if you turn the assignment in and if your answers indicate you have read through the syllabus and glanced at the required texts.

Post-Essay: Use this 2-3 page essay (500-750 words) to assess your learning in the course. Here are some questions to guide your assessment, though you do not have to limit yourselves to these questions for the essay. This post-essay is due to the online drop box on our D2L site by 11:59 p.m. on May 21.

1. Which readings most appealed to you? Least appealed to you? Why?
2. Is there any one insight or new bit of knowledge that particularly stands out to you at the end of this course?
3. Was there anything said in class or written about online by a fellow student or the instructor that sticks in your mind?
4. Has your view of any of the major topics covered in this course changed as the course unfolded?
5. Is there a topic, theme or question that came up in the class that you would have liked to explore more?
6. Has this course met your expectations and goals (refer back to your pre-essay)?
7. Has your spiritual or religious life changed in any way because of this course?

PRESENTATION

Each person will be responsible for one 6-8 minute presentation to be given at some point during the semester. The purpose of this assignment is not only to have you working closely with the course texts but also to get you familiar and comfortable with oral presentation. You should plan to create a discussion or activity to illuminate, enrich, and complicate our thinking about the questions raised in the readings assigned for your topic. In other words, you do not need to lecture for the entire time! Try to find a creative way to help us engage the texts in a new way. While you do not have to “cover” all the texts for the theme, you should make it clear how what you are doing in your presentation connects to the readings. You must present your ideas to me at least 48 hours in advance of your presentation day. I am also willing to talk through ideas with you, but please do not wait until the last minute to do so.

In addition to the presentation to the class, a short written reflection will be due within one week of the presentation date (please turn in to the D2L drop box labeled "Presentation Reflections"). Attached to the syllabus is the grading rubric I will be using for grading your presentations and your short written reflection.

Tips for Good Presentations:

- *Know your topic:* Are you comfortable with what you are going to talk about? Does your presentation provide others with new and useful information? Did you read your material thoroughly?
- *Use key phrases about your topic:* Good presenters use key phrases and include only the most important information. Though your topic may be vast, choose the top three or four points.
- *Be creative:* Your presentation can involve hand-outs, posters, slides, movie clips, activities, and/or any other creative medium. Please do not simply read from power points slides or index cards.
- *Theological concerns:* Does your presentation make significant connections to the theological topics at hand?
- *Appropriate length:* Do time yourself in advance, and practice in front of friends or roommates.

Here are some ideas for your presentations:

- Choose a practice, that is, something people do that is associated with the reading and introduce it to the class
- Interview someone who knows something about the topic and present results of the interview, e.g. interview someone who is an adherent to Judaism
- Research someone who is known as an exemplar in relation to a topic, e.g. MLK Jr. in relation to religious action, and describe how this person's life exemplifies the topic
- Find a piece of popular culture (movie clip, song, advertisement, etc.) or recent news that connects to the topic for the day and lead us in a discussion
- Collect images of artwork that relate to our weekly topic or question
- For weeks in which we read biblical passages, you could do a close reading of a passage, researching various interpretations of it

Presentation Topics

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| February 19 | Judaism | _____ |
| | Islam | _____ |
| | Hinduism | _____ |
| | Buddhism | _____ |
| | Religious Mysticism | _____ |
| | Religious Silence | _____ |
| | Religious Action | _____ |
| March 5 | Gen 1:1-2:4 (Seven days of creation) | _____ |
| | Hebrew Bible Book/passage | _____ |
| | Modern Day Prophet | _____ |
| | Modern Day Usage: Psalms | _____ |
| | Women and in the Hebrew Bible | _____ |
| March 19 | World of Jesus | _____ |
| | Followers of Jesus: Then and Now | _____ |
| | Jesus' Teachings | _____ |
| | Images of Jesus | _____ |
| | New Testament Book | _____ |
| April 2 | Jesus and Miracles/Healing | _____ |
| | Death and Resurrection of Jesus | _____ |
| | Womanist Theology | _____ |
| | <i>Mujerista</i> Theology | _____ |
| | Asian Women's Theology | _____ |
| April 16 | Period of or Event in Church History | _____ |
| | The Church around the World | _____ |
| | Women and the Church | _____ |
| | Sacraments | _____ |
| April 30 | Church and Economics | _____ |
| | Church and the Environment | _____ |
| | Church-related organization visit | _____ |
| May 14 | Prayer | _____ |
| | Christian Practice | _____ |
| | Exemplar of Living Faith | _____ |
| | Politics and Faith | _____ |

CHURCH VISIT REFLECTION

During the course, you are asked to visit one faith community for a worship or prayer service. You may choose to visit a faith community that represents any faith tradition: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or others. I ask that you choose a faith tradition that is different than the one you grew up in or currently participate in. (If your background or current faith is some form of Christianity, it is fine to visit a different denomination than your own.) If you want help selecting a site, please let me know.

After your visit, please write a 1-2 page reflection on your experience. Please provide both a description of the faith community (where it is, what it looks like, who is part of the community, what they do together) as well as some analysis about the community. Questions you may wish to consider include:

- How do you think that the community would talk about who they are, that is, their identity?
- How do you think that the community would talk about why they gather together? That is, what do they see as their purpose?
- What seemed appealing about this community to you? Why do you think people like this community?
- What was not appealing about this community to you? What might turn people away from this community?
- What questions were raised for you by this visit?

Your written reflection can be turned in at any time during the course to the drop box on our D2L site. The final due date for this assignment is **May 14**.

UNIT REFLECTIONS

At the end of each of the four course units, you will write a unit reflection based on the topics, readings, and discussions for that unit. These unit reflections should include references to and/or quotations from the assigned texts for that unit. They may also include your own informed opinions, as well as references to ideas presented by others in the class. Below are questions to guide your reflections for each unit. Please answer all or some of these questions. You may also include your own reflections which do not explicitly address these questions.

Each reflection should be 2-3 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, and 12 point font). The grading rubric for writing assignments is attached to the end of this syllabus.

Unit 1: What is Religion?

During the first two weeks of this course, please take some notes on *where* you hear religion talked about—in the music you listen to; in television shows or movies you watch; in newspapers, magazines, or blogs you read; in conversations you have, etc.—and *how* religion is talked about.

Then in your reflection for this unit, address the following questions:

- How is religion understood in the broader culture that you paid attention to these past two weeks? (You can focus on just one example of where religion is talked about OR look for overall themes that emerge.)
- How is this understanding of religion similar to or different from Haught's understanding of religion? How is it related to how Haught understands mystery? Do you agree with Haught's argument?
- What is your definition of religion? Does it relate to mystery, as it does for Haught?

- What theological questions have these readings raised for you?

Unit 2: Who Is God? Who Are We? Does the Bible Tell Me So?

1. Choose one biblical story or passage that we have read OR one that interests you from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and read it.
2. Find a commentary about this passage. If you are uncertain about your commentary, please e-mail me to check it out. Possible commentaries include:
 - Women's Bible Commentary
 - Interpretation Commentary series
 - WorkingPreacher.org
 - EntertheBible.org
 - ONScripture.org
3. For your reflection, please address the following questions:
 - List the passage or story that you chose and give a brief explanation of it.
 - What does your commentary say about this passage?
 - Do you agree with this interpretation of the passage? What other interpretations do you have of the passage?
 - What is it about this story/passage that interests you?
 - What aspects of the story/passage do you think would resonate most strongly with people today?
 - What does this passage reveal about who God is and/or who humanity is, from the perspective of the passage's author?

Unit 3: Who Do You Say that I Am? Images of Jesus

You have multiple options for this unit reflection. The focal question is one that Jesus puts to his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" For this reflection, I put this question to you, and you may answer it from whatever perspective you choose (as a Christian believer, as a non-Christian believer who knows something about Jesus, etc.). You can also answer the question in a medium that makes sense for you: e.g. poetry, sculpture, music, dance, painting, video, etc. If you choose to take an artistic approach to this assignment, I ask that you turn in a one-page reflection with the artistic product that explains a bit about how your piece speaks to this question. Please refer to ideas from Senior, other readings, and specific biblical passages as appropriate.

If you choose to take a more traditional, written approach to this assignment, imagine that you are writing a letter (or a blog post) to someone from a different religious tradition who wants to know more about who Jesus was in his lifetime, his relationship to Christianity, and what he means to Christian believers. In your reflection, please refer to ideas from Senior, other readings, and specific biblical passages we have read to support your points. In your reflection, you may wish to address some of these questions:

- Who was Jesus during his life on earth? What are the most important things he did or said?
- Who is Jesus for Christian believers after his death?
- What did Jesus require of those who became his disciples?
- What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus today? What do Christians do and say that demonstrate their Christian identity?
- How did Jesus relate to women in his time? How do you or other women in our time relate to Jesus? Do you think the "maleness of Jesus" is problematic for Christianity?

Unit 4: What Is the Church? Do the Church and Theology Matter in the World?

For this reflection, please write about what your ideal church/faith community would be, that is, a community that would best support your spiritual life where it is today and help you continue to grow on your spiritual journey. Questions that you may wish to consider for this reflection include:

- Who would be a part of this community?
- Where would this community meet? What would its space or spaces look like?
- What central activities would be a part of this community?
- What is the mission or purpose of this community?
- How does this community relate to the contemporary world? What contemporary issues can it help to address?
- Does this community look like other faith communities that you know of from history or the present? Does it fit with any image of church we have discussed in class?

Unit reflections will be graded on a regular grading scale. Please see the unit reflections grading rubrics that are attached to this syllabus. There is a specific rubric for each unit reflection.

UNIT QUIZZES

The course is divided into four units. There will be one quiz administered online on our D2L site for each unit. The quizzes are designed to assess your comprehension of the reading and presentations for that unit. They are open book and notes. You have a full week to complete each quiz; this time frame is provided so that you can complete it at a time convenient for your schedule. Please allow 2-3 hours for each quiz.

Quiz #1: "What is religion?" Opens 6 a.m. **February 20** and closes 11:59 p.m. **February 26**

Quiz #2: "Who is God? Who are we? Does the Bible tell us so?" Opens 6 a.m. **March 5** and closes 11:59 p.m. **March 12**

Quiz #3: "Who is Jesus?" Opens 6 a.m. **April 10** and closes 11:59 p.m. **April 16**

Quiz #4: "What is the church?" Opens 6 a.m. **May 1** and closes 11:59 p.m. **May 7**
(This quiz only covers readings and presentations for April 16, April 23, and April 30.)

LIST OF IMPORTANT DUE DATES

| | |
|----------------|--|
| February 5 | Pre- Learning Assessment due in class |
| February 20-26 | Unit 1 Quiz online |
| March 5 | Unit 1 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m. |
| March 6-12 | Unit 2 Quiz online |
| March 12 | Unit 2 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m. |
| April 10-16 | Unit 3 Quiz online |
| April 16 | Unit 3 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m. |
| May 1-7 | Unit 4 Quiz online |
| May 14 | Church Visit Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m. |
| May 21 | Post- Learning Assessment due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m. |
| May 21 | Unit 4 Reflection due online in D2L drop box by 11:59 p.m. |

ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. You may be guilty of plagiarism if you (accidentally or deliberately) represent someone else's words or ideas as your own. This is both dishonest and unfair. Note that uncredited use of someone else's work is still plagiarism even if the author has given you permission to use the work. Unless you cite your sources clearly with quotation marks, attributed paraphrases, and parenthetical citations or notes, you are still dishonestly taking credit for what someone else has done. If you have any questions about what plagiarism is or how to cite source material, don't hesitate to ask me.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are in need of academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Resources for Disabilities at 651-690-6563. They will be able to take care of the paperwork and we will work to provide whatever accommodations you need in this class. Please do this early in the semester so that matters can be addressed in a timely fashion.

LATE WORK POLICY

For the purpose of fairness, 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted for each day that any written work is handed in late. (An A paper becomes an A- paper when it is one day late, a B+ paper two days late, etc.)

GRADING SCALE

| | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| A+ = 97-100 | B+ = 87-89 | C+ = 77-79 | D+ = 68-69 |
| A = 94-96 | B = 84-86 | C = 74-76 | D = 66-67 |
| A- = 90-93 | B- = 80-83 | C- = 70-73 | F = 0-65 |

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note: readings and assignments are due on the date listed below.
(Subject to change)

UNIT I: WHAT IS RELIGION?

| WEEK 1 | | |
|---|---|--|
| February 5 Face-to-Face | Who are we? What are we doing here? | |
| | Reading | 1) Syllabus 2) Glance through course texts |
| | Writing | Learning Assessment Pre-Essay due in class today, bring hard copy to class to turn in |
| WEEK 2 | | |
| February 12 Online | How do we approach mystery? How does religion get expressed? | |
| | Reading | John Haught, <i>What Is Religion?</i> , 1-11, 15-20, 158-170, 30-78 (please read the selections from Haught in this order) |
| | Discussion | Online discussion board 1.1 |
| | Lecture | View Panopto lecture on "Studying Religion and Theology" |
| | Unit 1 Reflection Preparation | During the first two weeks of class, please take notes on: 1) <i>Where</i> you hear religion talked about— in the music you listen to; in television shows or movies you watch; in newspapers, magazines, or blogs you read; in conversations you have; 2) <i>How</i> religion is talked about |
| WEEK 3 | | |
| February 19 Face-to-face | How is religion lived? | |
| | Reading | 1) Haught, 81-142 2) Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have Been to the Mountaintop," http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/ive_been_to_the_mountaintop/ |
| | Writing | Unit 1 Reflection, bring rough draft to class |
| | Discussion | Online discussion board 1.2 |
| | Unit 1 Reflection Preparation | During the first two weeks of class, please take notes on: 1) <i>Where</i> you hear religion talked about— in the music you listen to; in television shows or movies you watch; in newspapers, magazines, or blogs you read; in conversations you have; 2) <i>How</i> religion is talked about |
| Quiz for Unit 1: Opens 6 am February 20, closes 11:59 p.m. February 26 | | |

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|---|
| Unit 1 Reflection: Due March 5 by 11:59 p.m. in D2L drop box |
|---|

UNIT 2: WHO IS GOD? WHO ARE WE? DOES THE BIBLE TELL US SO?

| WEEK 4 | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| February 26 Online | What is the Bible? What story does it tell? | |
| | Lecture | View Panopto lecture on "Introduction to the Bible" |
| | Reading | Catherine Cory, "Issues of Interpretation," in <i>A Voyage through the New Testament</i> , 17-26, 35-37 (optional reading) |
| February 26 Online | What happened in creation? How did humanity fall? | |
| | Lecture | View Panopto lecture on "Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures" |
| | Reading | <p><i>*Please read in order</i></p> <p>1) Selections from the Bible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 1:1-2:4 (Seven days of Creation) • Gen 2:4-2:25 (Creation of Adam and Eve) • Gen 3:1-3:24 (the "Fall") <p>2) Anne Clifford, "A Reconstruction of Eve's Story," in <i>Introducing Feminist Theology</i>, 66-73</p> <p>3) Chung Hyun Kyung, "Struggle To Be the Sun Again: Asian Women's Theological Reflections on Humanity," in <i>Struggle To Be the Sun Again</i>, 36-52</p> |
| | Discussion | Online discussion board 2.1 |
| February 26 Online | How does God relate to God's people? | |
| | Reading | <p>1) Selections from the Bible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exodus 1:1–4:17 (Call of Moses) • Exodus 13:17–15:21 (Crossing the Red Sea) • Exodus 19:1–23:13 (Sinai) <p>2) "An Asian Feminist Perspective: The Exodus Story (Exodus 1:8-22, 2: 1-10)," in <i>Voices from the Margin</i>, 255-266</p> |
| | Unit 2 Reflection Preparation | <p>1) Choose a passage or story from the Hebrew Scriptures, one we have read or one that interests you</p> <p>2) Find a biblical commentary that addresses this passage</p> |
| WEEK 5 | | |

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|--|------------|--|
| March 5 Face-to-Face | | How does God speak to humanity? |
| | Reading | 1) Gale A. Yee, <i>Women's Bible Commentary</i> , "Hosea," 207-215 2) Selections from the Bible: Hosea 1-1 |
| | Discussion | Online discussion board 2.1 |
| | Writing | Unit 2 Reflection, bring rough draft to class |
| March 5 Face-to-face | | How does humanity speak to and about God? |
| | Reading | 1) Selections from Psalms: Psalms 1-5, 22, 63, 137, 147 2) Anne Clifford, "Major Names for God," in <i>Introducing Feminist Theology</i> , 98-109 3) Roberta Bondi, "Wearing Away the Heart: Praying to God the Father," in <i>Memories of God</i> , 21-49 |
| | Writing | Unit 2 Reflection, bring rough draft to class |
| Quiz for Unit 2: Opens 6 a.m. March 6, closes 11:59 p.m. March 12 | | |
| Unit 2 Reflection: Due March 12 by 11:59 p.m. in D2L drop box | | |

UNIT 3: WHO WAS JESUS?

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|---|
| WEEK 6 | | |
| March 12 Online | | What was the world of the New Testament like? |
| | Reading | Donald Senior, <i>Jesus: A Gospel Portrait</i> , 1-46 |
| | Video | <i>Frontline: From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians</i> |
| | Discussion | 1) Online discussion board 3.1 |
| | Reading | 2) Luke 4-14, 18 |
| WEEK 7 | | |
| March 19 Face-to-face | | Who was with Jesus? What was Jesus about? |
| | Reading | 1) Senior, "Jesus and His Own," 47-73 2) Chung Hyun Kyung, "Who Is Mary for Today's Asian Women?" in <i>Struggle To Be the Sun Again</i> , 74-84 3) Senior, "Jesus Speaks," 74-99 |
| | Discussion | Online discussion board 3.2 |

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| | Lecture | View Panopto lecture on "Introduction to the New Testament" |
| WEEK 8 | | |
| April 2 | Who do you say that I am? What do women say? | |
| Face-to-Face | | |
| | Reading | 1) Teresa Okure, "Jesus and Mary Magdalene," 312-326 2) Kwok Pui-Lan, "Christology," in <i>Introducing Asian Feminist Theology</i> . 79-97 3) Anne Carr, "Feminism and Christology," in <i>Transforming Grace</i> , 158-179 |
| WEEK 9 | | |
| April 9 | How does Jesus heal? What does the death and resurrection of Jesus mean? | |
| Online | | |
| | Reading | 1) Senior, "Jesus Heals," 100-116 2) Senior, "Death and Victory," 117-142. 3) Roberta Bondi, "Out of the Green Tiled Bathroom: Crucifixion," 111-144 4) Selections from the Bible: Mark chapters 14-16 |
| | Discussion | Discussion Board 3.3 |
| | Lecture | View Panopto lecture on "Atonement Theology" |
| Unit 3 Quiz: opens 6 a.m. April 10 and closes 11:59 p.m. April 16 | | |
| Unit 3 Reflection: Due April 16 by 11:59 p.m. to D2L drop box | | |

UNIT 4: WHAT IS THE CHURCH? DO THE CHURCH AND THEOLOGY MATTER IN THE WORLD?

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| WEEK 10 | | |
| April 16 | What happened after Jesus? | |
| Face-to-Face | | |
| | Readings | <i>*Please read in order</i> 1) Selections from the Bible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts 1:1-4:35 (beginning of the Church), 9:1-22 (Conversion of Saul), chapter 10 (Peter's vision) 2) Senior, 143-158 3) Justo Gonzalez, <i>Church History: An Essential Guide</i> , "Overview," 11-22 4) Selections from Hildegard of Bingen, "Scivias" |
| | Lecture | View Panopto lecture on "A Sprint through Church History" |

| WEEK 11 | | |
|---|---|---|
| April 23 Online | What is the Church? | |
| | Reading | 1) Putnam and Campbell, "Vignettes: The Old and the New," from <i>American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us</i> , 37-71 (handout) 2) Mary E. Hines, "Community for Liberation: Church," in <i>Freeing Theology</i> , 161-184 |
| | Video | These are two short videos about the churches described in the "Vignettes" chapter: 1. (10 minutes) http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/multimedia?video=9tYmQwMjpTC_vhXu866rTt0AmCOHpIAF 2) This is a long video, so please just watch the first 10 minutes: http://www.saddleback.com/mc/m/3d1dd/ |
| | Discussion | Discussion Board 4.1 |
| Week 12 | | |
| April 30 Face-to-face | What does the church say about issues that are important in society? Focus on Catholic social teaching, economics, and the environment | |
| | Reading | 1) U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops, "Economic Justice for All," vi-xi, 1-15 (the handout goes through page 22, but you can stop at page 15) 2) Sharon Daloz Parks, "Household Economics," in <i>Practicing Our Faith</i> , 43-58 3) U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops, "Renewing the Earth," 223-243 |
| Quiz for Unit 4: opens 6 a.m. May 1 and closes 11:59 p.m. May 7 | | |
| WEEK 13 | | |
| May 7 Online | What does it mean to live as Christian? How do Christians pray? | |
| | Readings | 1) Marjorie Suchocki, "The Question of Prayer," "Images of God," and "Conditions of Prayer," 1-41 in <i>In God's Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer</i> 2) John Haught, "Conclusion: Prayer," 251-255 3) Stephanie Paulsell, "Honoring the Body," 13-27 in <i>Practicing Our Faith</i> , see directions below for accessing, I will also e-mail pdf |
| | Discussion | Online discussion board 4.2 |
| | Lecture | View Panopto lecture on "Christian Practices" |
| WEEK 14 | | |

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|--|---|--|
| <p>May14 Face-to-face</p> | <p>How do women live their faith in the world?</p> | |
| | <p>Reading</p> | <p>1) Kay Turner, "Preparing a Place: Defining the Personal Altar," in <i>Beautiful Necessity</i>, 27-41 2) Brennan Hill, "The God of Homelessness: Dorothy Day," 41-82 in <i>8 Spiritual Heroes: Their Search for God</i></p> |
| | | |
| <p>Unit 4 Reflection: Due May 21 by 11:59 p.m. to D2L drop box</p> | | |
| | | |
| <p>Post-course Assessment Essay: Due May 21 by 11:59 p.m. to D2L drop box</p> | | |

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Goodbye to Gadamer? Classical Pragmatist Resources for the Philosophy of Religious Education in a Pluralist Age

Abstract: Instead of the Continental tradition exemplified in the hermeneutics of Gadamer, I suggest that a framework of classical American Pragmatist can make contemporary religious education both more intelligible, and more capable of meeting the challenges of contemporary life. I critique Don Browning’s *Fundamental Practical Theology* as overly dependent on this flawed hermeneutical model, with its metaphor of “conversing with texts” and its persistent and confusing dichotomies. In their place, I offer a triadic, semiotic hermeneutics as theologized by the late Donald Gelpi SJ. Gelpi’s pragmatist metaphysics of experience, his focus on pneumatology and conversion, and his openness to embodied creativity suggest a better metaphor for religious education: learning to improvise responsibly with traditions and texts.

Introduction

In this paper, I raise the possibility of a fresh framework for the philosophy of Religious Education. I argue that Don Browning’s influential text, “A Fundamental Practical Theology,” aptly frames Religious Education as a “strategic” moment within a broadly practical process of theological action and reflection. But by grounding that theological reflection in the traditions of Continental philosophy, Browning makes contemporary religious education more difficult – not easier – to understand and to practice.

I approach Browning by way of a metaphor. I propose that religious educators should abandon the popular metaphor of interpretation as a “dialogue” or “conversation” with the text. This metaphor exemplifies a philosophy that obscures the relationship among texts, persons, and interpreting communities. In its place, I propose a different metaphor: we should teach believers to “improvise responsibly” with Christian tradition and Scripture. Responsible improvisation, and the hermeneutic that makes it coherent, offers religious educators a clearer, more workable framework for the challenges of contemporary life.

I start with the work of Don Browning because his *Fundamental Practical Theology*,¹ has shaped religious educational thinking for more than a decade. Browning adopts the metaphor of

¹ Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

“conversation with the text” from Hans Georg Gadamer,² taking with it some basic dichotomies from the broader Continental tradition. I point to the limiting effects of these philosophical dichotomies in the work of Browning and also of Tom Groome. I then sketch an alternative approach which sidesteps these troubling dichotomies.

As a Roman Catholic religious educator, I appreciate the value of reflection that links the *lex orandi*, the *lex credendi*, and the *lex agendi*. Thus I find the systematic theology of the American Jesuit Donald L. Gelpi (1934-2011) quite philosophically helpful. Gelpi’s pragmatist metaphysical system takes up the best parts of the North American cultural outlook: it is grounded in feeling, experience and practice; it is democratic and evolutionary in outlook; it is rooted in community, construction, and conversion.

Browning and Gadamer: Hermeneutical Trouble?

Browning argues convincingly that theology is a basically practical endeavor. Our “fundamental[ly] practical” theologizing has four distinct but mutually supportive moments: (1) thick description, (2) *resourcement* or the retrieval of historical resources, (3) systematic reflection on the “monuments” of our faith tradition, and (4) the strategies and tactics of responsible ministry and discipleship. These four movements are held together and underwritten by a process of “practical reasoning,” whose “overall dynamic” is interpretation and application.³ Drawing strongly from the writings of Gadamer,⁴ Browning adopts a key tenet of contemporary philosophies of practice – namely, that interpretation and application are always, inextricably linked.⁵ Interpretation is always grounded in bona fide questions and directed at bona fide challenges (even if the question is “Aren’t I right?” or the challenge is merely getting published). However, the *ways* that both Gadamer and Browning model the interpretive process make it harder for practical theologizing and religious education to work.

I begin with the dubious metaphor that interpretation resembles a dialogue between person and text. Browning believes that understanding requires a kind of “conversation” or

² This metaphor is close to the heart of Gadamer’s entire textual hermeneutics. Browning points out how Gadamer “has developed the idea” that all forms of human investigation are “rooted” in the fundamental dynamics of “dialogue” and “conversation.” Browning, 37. Gadamer himself, gathering up many of his key hermeneutical themes, writes that “in dialogue spoken language – in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other’s point – performs the communication of meaning that, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics. Hence it is more than a metaphor; it is a memory of what originally was the case, to describe the task of hermeneutics as entering into dialogue with the text.” Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second, Revised Edition, trans. and revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald C. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 1989), 361-2. My point here is not at all to enter the convoluted discussion – stretching from Plato through Derrida – concerning the nature and relative value of written and spoken communication; it is to question the coherence and value of this metaphor, and to explore the conversational / dialogical nature of interpretation more clearly.

³ Browning, 10-11.

⁴ Gadamer is clearly a key source for Browning’s practical theological project. His name appears on the second page (2) and the second to last page (292) of *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, and in every chapter but one; and he features prominently in Browning’s discussions of understanding / practical wisdom (37-52), hermeneutics (80-82), psychoanalysis (83-85, 247-248), non-foundationalism (173-5), and Christian education (212-22).

⁵ “Our present concerns” always “shape the way we interpret the past.” Browning, 35; “Application is neither a subsequent nor a merely occasional part of the phenomena of understanding, but co-determines it as a whole from the beginning.” Gadamer, 321, cited in Browning, 39.

“dialogue” with the text.⁶ “The hermeneutic process aimed at understanding any kind of human action - a classic text, work of art, letter, sermon, or political act – is like a ... conversation.”⁷ By adopting this perspective from Gadamer, Browning underlines several salutary points. First, interpretation is always rooted in particular linguistic and cultural traditions;⁸ second, interpretation is an investigative process; third, this investigation proceeds via question-and-answer,⁹ via the iterative testing of our understandings. Many theologians join Browning in embracing this metaphor of hermeneutical dialogue between people and texts.¹⁰ For example, Thomas Groome uses it as one of several models to describe the movement of critical correlation in the process of Shared Christian Praxis.¹¹

⁶ “In dialogue spoken language – in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other’s point – performs the communication of meaning that, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics. Hence it is more than a metaphor; it is a memory of what originally was the case, to describe the task of hermeneutics as entering into dialogue with the text.” Gadamer, 361-2. “The hermeneutic process aimed at understanding any / kind of human action - a classic text, work of art, letter, sermon, or political act – is like a moral conversation, when the word *moral* is understood in the broadest sense.” Browning, 38-39, original italics.

⁷ Browning 39; original italics.

⁸ “Practical reason is always tradition-saturated.” Browning, 11.

⁹ Gadamer, 361-362, 370.

¹⁰ Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd edition (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999) writes, “The critical interpreter enters into a genuine dialogue with the text ...,” 175; “In [*Truth and Method*], pp. 387-389, ... Gadamer explains how the text, though not a person, can be taken up into the dialogical dynamic, the hermeneutical conversation ...,” 179 n. 29. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) writes, “hermeneutical understanding can be understood on the model of authentic conversation” 100-101; Tracy applies the model of conversation to “all true understanding (including, therefore, the reading of text, the reflections of a solitary thinker,” 102. For a reading of Thomas Groome that characterizes his critical-correlation theology as a “hermeneutics of conversation,” see the discussion by his student Tim O’Malley in “Educating for Faith Appropriation in a Pluralistic Context: The Theological Methodology of Shared Christian Praxis and Christian Practices,” Religious Education Association, 2009 Meeting Papers, http://old.religiouseducation.net/proceedings/2009_Proceedings/33OMALLEY.pdf. Katherine Turpin describes Groome’s method as a “conversation” between current action and the “theological categories and understandings” of tradition. Katherine Turpin, “Consuming,” *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. by Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Blackwell, 2012), 72. Clare Wolfeich writes of “facilitating a critical conversation” between “classic texts” and “contemporary contexts.” Clare Wolfeich, “Spirituality,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. by Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Blackwell, 2012), 330. My point is obviously not that all of these nuanced and thoughtful scholars embrace the Gadamerian Continental tradition in its entirety but rather to point out how easily and unremarkably the idea of a “conversation” between persons and non-persons crops up in our hermeneutical discussions.

¹¹ “Seen as conversation” Groome’s “movement 4 is a dialogue by participants between their own stories/visions and the Christian Story/Vision,” an “encounter with the text in which one recognizes oneself as interpreter and interpreted.” Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 251, 224. However, Groome clearly downplays the metaphor of “dialogue with the text” in favor of the more specific model of “critical reflection” (passim); for example, he describes movement 4 more precisely as “critical reflection by participants on some form of Christian Story / Vision.” Groome, 253. Nevertheless, it is not difficult for those who use Groome’s work to pick up on the metaphor of hermeneutical conversation with non-human partners; it may seem like a convenient shorthand to describe Groome’s method of critical correlation as putting people into conversation with the Christian tradition or its classical texts.

Where Browning and Gadamer get into trouble is by using this metaphor to make one further point: that interpretation is always an interpersonal project.¹² Here the metaphor becomes a distraction: people do not usually talk to their Bibles, and Bibles do not usually talk back. Of course, Gadamer is quick to admit this;¹³ but I am reluctant to let him off the hook. In the first place, the metaphorical slippage between texts and real people can “disguise and amplify” the power of interpreters.¹⁴ It is only persons (whether human or divine ones) who can forward interpretive agendas; a text merely produces effects. In addition, Kenneth Stickers points out a curious “absence of the other” in Gadamer’s hermeneutical reflections. Gadamer’s analysis of interpretation tends to focus on a *solo* scenario: the preacher composing a sermon, the scholar alone in his study, the lawyer composing a brief. As concerned as he is with community tradition, “the paradigm of Gadamerian hermeneutics often appears to be that of a solitary reader, alone with a text.”¹⁵ This metaphor starts to look like scar tissue. What is it in Gadamer’s program that recommends such an analogy, with its curious and dubious limp?

It may be that one of the reasons Gadamer connects interpretation with real-life conversations, is that for him the only alternative would be to understand textual discourse as a process of soulless, positivistic endeavor. Many have noted the profound dualistic dichotomies endemic to Gadamer’s philosophical tradition, stretching through much of Enlightenment, Romantic, and Modernist thinking.¹⁶ Dualism “distinguish[es] two interrelated realities in such a way that their real relationship to one another becomes subsequently” incomprehensible.¹⁷ When the European philosophical tradition imagines a gap between an utterly free human spirit and an utterly iron-bound natural law, it is not surprising that Gadamer places both persons and texts on the same side of that unbridgeable chasm. For Gadamer, texts belong under the rubric of “understanding” and humane conversation, not the rubric of mechanical, scientific “explanation.”¹⁸

¹² Browning observes that Gadamer has moved beyond the individualistic understanding of interpretation espoused by his mentor Heidegger, “bringing us to the threshold” of a fully communal and social understanding of interpretation as found in the work of Charles Sanders Peirce and Josiah Royce. Browning, 50.

¹³ “When we try to examine the hermeneutical phenomenon *through the model of conversation between two persons*, the chief thing that *these apparently so different situations* – understanding a text and reaching an understanding in a conversation – have in common is that both are concerned with a subject matter that is placed before them. Just as each interlocutor is trying to reach agreement on some subject with his partner, so also the interpreter is trying to understand what the text is saying.” Gadamer, 370, emphasis added.

¹⁴ Roy Herndon Steinhoff-Smith, “Dialogue: Hermeneutic and Practical,” *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 45, no. 6 (1997): 442.

¹⁵ Kenneth W. Stickers, “Royce and Gadamer on Interpretation as the Constitution of Community,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 15 no. 1 (2001): 17; cf. Gadamer, 306-310.

¹⁶ On dualism in Western philosophy see Richard J. Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn* (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity, 2010) 140; Andrea Nye, *Feminism and Modern Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 45-46, 64-83 passim, 144.

¹⁷ Donald L. Gelpi, *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1984), 17

¹⁸ On the putative difference between (scientific) “explanation” and (humanistic) “understanding,” see Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), Ch. II, “Interpretation,” 41-74. Proudfoot draws a stark separation between the “hard” and “humane” sciences. The pragmatist tradition that I adopt below seeks to erase this stark contrast between science and the humanities – not to make the humanities positivistic, but to undermine radical positivism.

Thoughtful believers, of course, are no strangers to these very same types of divisions: bifurcating humane understanding from the sciences, or equating humane understanding with a positivist image of truth. This is the path to religious and secular fundamentalism; to religio-scientific aporiai and historical-critical goose-chases; to no end of confusion and grief. Gadamer's metaphor and his broader hermeneutics offer scant help in addressing these challenges, whether for believers or for religious educators.

Does Browning address them any better? He notes that Gadamer's magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, was designed to clarify the nature of humanistic interpretation, to articulate its proper relationship with scientific method.¹⁹ He also notes rather wryly how Gadamer did not succeed: "Gadamer never really answers the question of the relation of hermeneutics to method. ... [In fact,] Paul Ricoeur ... questions whether 'the book ... ought not instead to be titled *Truth OR Method*.'" ²⁰ Browning seeks to articulate "a dialectical model" for understanding the "analogous" tensions between "truth and method," "interpretation and explanation," "hermeneutics" and the "harder empirical sciences." In a dubious move of his own, he extends the reach of this endemic dichotomy by adding one more antinomy: "narrative and theory."²¹

To overcome Gadamer's philosophical shortfall, Browning proposes a dialectic that is based on his own radical rethink of practical reasoning. For Browning, the process of practical reasoning includes an "inner core" and an "outer envelope." The core is an abstract, Golden-Rule type of ethic which provides "general principles" of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.²² This core is always sheathed in an outer envelope of inherited "narratives and practices" (e.g., the data of Christian and Old Testament history).²³ While sacred traditions and stories subtly "shape" the inner ethical core, it can always be "distinguished" from its narrative envelope.²⁴

Unfortunately, this is not so much a dialectic,²⁵ as a Kantian ethic informed by tradition.²⁶ Browning maintains a stark separation between abstract ethics and organic habits and narratives; he conceives of practical reasoning mainly as the process of abstracting a message.²⁷ The

¹⁹ Browning, 82.

²⁰ Browning, 82, citing Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 60.

²¹ Browning, 82.

²² "The reversible reasoning to be found in the love commandment that reads 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Mt 19:19 [cf. Lev. 19:18, 34; Mt 22:39] exhibits this inner core as does the analogous golden rule, 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.' (Mt 7:12, Lk 6:31)." Browning, 11; cf. 105-6.

²³ Browning 11, cf. 105.

²⁴ Browning, 11.

²⁵ Browning does point to a more properly dialectical movement when he describes the academic rigors of historical theology as "technical, explanatory and distancing maneuvers" or "temporary procedures" that are necessary part of the more humane "hermeneutical effort;" he cites the work of David Tracy and Paul Ricoeur as key proponents of such distancing tactics. Browning, 49. However, he does not use the back-and-forth between distancing and understanding as an overall dialectical model for practical reasoning.

²⁶ Browning says that his model of practical reasoning "blends certain strands of Kantianism with certain strands of Aristotelian teleology ... in such a way as to subsume the teleological to the more Kantian or deontological perspective." Browning, 11. His detailed descriptions of practical reasoning bear this out. Its inner ethic is loving, "reversible" and essentially universal, 10, 177-178; it is subtly shaped and made vivid and enticing by the religious narratives that convey it, 158-160.

²⁷ Browning speaks of the need to "abstract the theory from the practice." 6, et passim. He says of a particular congregational culture, "These practices have meanings or theories." 41.

metaphor of outer envelope and inner core merely reinscribes a Kantian dualism in late twentieth century terms.

Subtle Dualism in Groome's Movement 4

The problem of dualism that Browning cannot seem to escape is also at work in Tom Groome's Shared Christian Praxis. Groome reinscribes his own kind of dualism when he describes the process of "critical appropriation." For Groome, Jesus' proclamation and enactment of God's Kingdom is the eternal heart of the Christian tradition. Although he avoids an explicitly Kantian turn to universal ethical precepts,²⁸ Groome still insists that Shared Christian Praxis rests on a critical correlation between two "stories": the story of our own experience, and the Christian Story (with a capital "S"). This amounts to a dialectical comparison between two highly abstracted and thematized narratives (one of which represents an unchanging essence); the primary vehicle for this correlation is question and answer, dialogue, written and/or spoken word.²⁹ Groome affirms the place of the senses, the imagination, and creativity in the process Shared Christian Praxis; he affirms the importance of wanting, remembering, and dreaming.³⁰ But these dynamics do not find little place in the core movement of critical correlation. One way of painting this picture is to say that Groome's model of critical correlation reverses Browning's abstract Kantian schema; Groome places a narrative – not an ethic – at the "core."

Part of the trouble with Groome's appeal to "the Kingdom" is that it represents too univocal an interpretation of Scripture. The Bible comprises numerous genres (not only the gospels and narratives); it contains numerous testimonies and counter-testimonies about the way God has worked with God's people.³¹ By appealing to the Kingdom of God, Groome appeals to the culmination of Salvation History; but as Mary Boys pointed out long ago, Salvation History is too simplistic a biblical pedagogical rubric.³² Christians need a more spacious approach by which to interpret and teach their rich, varied, and often ornery Scriptures.

An Alternative Approach

Thus far I have made four (I hope, plausible!) critiques: that the metaphor of "conversing with the text" may be of more trouble than use; that our vision and educational style needs to undo the putative gap between humane and scientific approaches; that religious educators might want to be careful to avoid relying too heavily on words and abstractions; and that (at least certain parts of) our religious traditions are too rich to be conveyed via boiled-down, univocal expressions. Now I suggest that tradition of classical American Pragmatism may offer the tools to address each of these sticking points more adequately. I cannot do adequate justice to a full-fledged Pragmatist systematic theology. But I do hope this suggestive and general outline

²⁸ This may in part be due to Groome's pragmatist leanings. He also relies on the work of Bernard Lonergan, whose philosophy, despite its strong transcendentalist leanings, is deeply engaged with empirical processes and data. See Groome, 79-80, 116-121.

²⁹ Groome, 249-265.

³⁰ Groome, 85-131.

³¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

³² Mary Boys, *Biblical Interpretation in Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1980).

entices further reflection and deeper investigation into the theological and pedagogical perspectives that this approach can offer to religious education.

The version of pragmatism I will employ has its foundations in the work of the nineteenth century scientist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and of his disciple, Josiah Royce.³³ More recently, the late Jesuit theologian Donald Gelpi (1951-2011) has laid out a full-fledged systematic theology grounded in this classical American Pragmatism. In Gelpi's theology, unchanging essences and univocal traditions are replaced by evolution, by systems of emergent dynamics, and by the give-and-take of critical inquiry as part of the continual construction of experience and culture. Many traditionally minded Christian believers have been wary of such Process-like philosophical theology. The metaphysics of Process Theology have in the past seemed inimical to the thought of the (Greek) Fathers and the language of the classical creeds. In the Catholic tradition, the twenty-five year old assessment of John J. Mueller, SJ still holds true today that "process theology has not made significant inroads into the American Catholic theological community."³⁴ Mueller suggested that a process-oriented theological project might gain a more favorable hearing among American Catholics if it met two criteria. First, it must deal theologically and convincingly "with the foundational, systematic, and practical experiences" of faith-filled Catholic / Christian lives. Second, it should focus philosophically on the broadly empirical tradition of American thinking.³⁵ This two-fold agenda is precisely the project that Gelpi embraces.³⁶

Gelpi strives to root his theology in the Bible and the early Church Fathers. His model is thoroughly Trinitarian and pneumatological; it seeks to avoid the "Christo-monism"³⁷ of excessive reliance on external scriptural or ecclesial authorities. For Gelpi, it is the workings of God's Holy Spirit that keep us true to Jesus' vision of the Kingdom, and to the Father's plan for

³³ Its intellectual roots are multiple and ancient, including Aristotle, Scotism, and Native American thought. See Donald L. Gelpi, SJ, *The Gracing of Human Experience: Rethinking the Relationship Between Nature and Grace* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 137-172; Scott L. Pratt, *Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002).

³⁴ Mueller explains: "I would consider a significant inroad to include, but not be limited to, a Catholic faculty identifiably in the process camp, a Catholic publishing house using process material, an identifiable journal, a major Catholic theologian of national prominence providing leadership in process thought, or a popular groundswell calling for process insights." All this, despite the fact that "On all the evidence, process theology would seem to be a fortunate find in the Catholic community when the search for the inculturation of theology has arisen. It boasts American roots stemming from an identifiable American philosophy, offers Catholic theology in a time of growing pluralism a possible alternative to the historically dominant Thomistic and scholastic frameworks, draws on modern science as a vehicle of common world-wide discourse, supplies a philosophical support to speculative theology, and in general is in tune with a world that must live with constant and unavoidable change." John J. Mueller, "Process Theology and the Catholic Theological Community," *Theological Studies* 47 (1986): 414. One of the challenges for Catholics in embracing a process perspective comes from the fact that "Process theology depends directly upon process philosophy as expounded by Whitehead. ... From its conception ... process theology is the intellectual child of [Whiteheadian] process philosophy." Mueller, 420. As Mueller points out, in "what seems to be an emotional conviction rather than an intellectual position—when process theology is mentioned among the Catholic faithful, it is regularly greeted with strong negative feelings and even hostility." Mueller, 414.

³⁵ Mueller, 424-7, quote from 427.

³⁶ For the synopsis of Gelpi's thinking that follows, see especially Donald L. Gelpi, SJ, *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* (NY and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1994); Gelpi, *Gracing*.

³⁷ On Christomonism, see Congar, Yves, "The Spirit, the Spirit of Christ: Christomonism and the *Filioque*," in *The Word and the Spirit* (London: Geoffrey Chapman and San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986 [French original 1984]), 101-121.

the healing of creation. The Father is source of all creativity, the Son is God's definitive saving action in the world, and the Spirit of the Son and the Father is God's forward-looking vision and force. She is not simply a dimension of intra-divine or universal connection;³⁸ Her effects are real and concrete. She is the interpretive Wisdom of God, nudging us forward into continuing and cumulative forms of conversion. For Gelpi, conversion means becoming responsible; it means holding oneself to account in light of the norms – intellectual, social, spiritual, and so on – that we as a community have uncovered over time.

Gelpi endeavors to undo the gap between S/spirit and matter by using a systematic root metaphor (a metaphysic) of “experience.” This pragmatist metaphysics of experience replaces the more traditional Greek metaphysics of essence, and the modern metaphysics of substance. For Gelpi, whatever exists at all (atoms, people, Scriptures, communities, God) exists as ongoing experience, characterized by its qualities, its impact, and its habitual tendencies. Thus, experience has three integral components: its flavor, its facts, and its patterns. God is the supreme experience, encompassing (experiencing) every creation's experience as well as God's own inner Trinitarian life.³⁹ With Gelpi, the question is not, *a priori*, how God's Spirit can nudge God's creations; the only possible questions are *a posteriori* as part of discernment: was that nudge from the Holy Spirit, or was it from something or somebody else?

What makes Gelpi's approach even more promising in the context religious education is that the practices of discernment, investigation, and interpretation all lie at the heart of his theology. For Gelpi, interpretation is always a three-fold process; that three-foldness can be viewed in a number of ways. For example, interpretation means taking an *old symbol* and generating from it a meaningful *new symbol* for the purpose of conveying *something important*. Similarly, interpretation means that *you* take a certain slice of *experience*, and attempt to convey it to *me*. Interpretation produces community. While “Gadamer assumes the givenness of tradition and community” and selves, Gelpi recognizes how all three are “continuously constituted and renewed through the processes of interpret[ing]” our experiences (including our experience of texts).⁴⁰

This process of interpretation is what Peirce called “semiosis”: the unending creation of “signs.”⁴¹ Whatever exists is a sign; it is an experience which can convey meaning. What is more, because experience is always tinged with emotion (with a feeling, a tropism, a for-or-againstness), interpretation is always evaluative. We evaluate experiences somatically, aesthetically, interpersonally, and abstractly/discursively. Discernment – pursuit of the truth – does not rely solely on discursive abstraction; instead, it relies on a process of constantly and

³⁸ Ormond Rush has characterized Her as the Spirit of “receptivity” in *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

³⁹ Gelpi characterizes himself as an orthodox Christian panentheist. See Gelpi, *Divine Mother*, 95.

⁴⁰ Stickers uses this language to describe the communitarian hermeneutics of Royce. Stickers, 14, 18. Gelpi adopts all these dimensions of Roycean hermeneutics. See Gelpi, *Gracing*, 137-194.

⁴¹ This Peircean model needs to be clearly distinguished from the Continental tradition of semiotics that arises from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure's model is not triadic, but dyadic – it concerns only the “signifier” and the “signified.” Saussure's semiotic model falls easily back into the dichotomies I have already critiqued. See Crystal L. Downing, *Changing Signs of Truth: A Christian Introduction to the Semiotics of Communication* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic / InterVarsity Press, 2012), 99-111.

honestly testing each interpretive gambit against our experience – a process like testing hypotheses against facts.⁴²

Gelpi's approach to interpretation opens up exciting new vistas. At the very least, it address the four points of interpretive trouble that I have described. First, interpretation is not so much about having a conversation with the text, as it is about constructing an inquiring community that is conversant with the text and its facts. The facts of the text are the data from which we generate new symbols and hypothetical gambits; they also serve as parameters against which we check our interpretations.

Second, discernment and testing hypotheses belongs to the rigorous evaluation of every type. While relevant data and norms of validity will vary from one field to another (physics, biology, history, Catholic practice, Buddhist community), the process of testing experience is constant across both the "human" and "natural" sciences.

Third, evaluation involves more than just words. Interpretation produces a symbol that is rooted in cultural tradition; these symbols can be statements or poems, artworks or rituals, choices or plans. Framing these creative productions as part of the dialectic of appropriation (rather than a separate movement of response or decision) helps us dethrone abstraction from its position of dominance; it opens the way to embracing nondiscursive expression, creativity, and craft as truly integral to the interpretive process.⁴³

Finally, a pragmatist hermeneutics of scripture attends to the ways that scripture is actually *used*. "The Bible exists as cultural material which we continually use, most often without identifying the source, along with other materials, to construct and reconstruct social reality."⁴⁴ Interpreting the Bible responsibly means improvising responsibly with all dimensions of the scripture – its genres, its verses, and its images. Interpreting Scripture produces both reasoned scholarly arguments, and popular mashups and riffs.⁴⁵ Whether these interpretations are right – whether they conform to the movements of God's Spirit – can only be discerned *a posteriori*, by testing them against standards of healthy conversion. Do they move us toward Pentecost-like freedom, toward diversity-in-community, toward boldness for justice and healing and love?⁴⁶

⁴² Gelpi describes this process repeatedly as the process of testing "hypotheses," e.g., *Gracing*, 285-6. But his approach is too abstract and discursive; as I will argue in my forthcoming dissertation, Gelpi shows a general tendency to downplay the creative dimensions of that are at the heart of the semiotic process. He acknowledges these dimensions, especially in the thinking of Dewey, but relegates them to the subcategory of "philosophy of art." See Gelpi, *Gracing*, 212-219.

⁴³ Rebecca Chopp speaks eloquently to this project of casting "theory" down from its throne and "setting up the courtroom in reverse" so that our poetical testimonies can interrogate reason / rationalization. Rebecca S. Chopp, "Theology and the Poetics of Testimony," in Delwin Brown, Sheila Greeve Davaney and Kathryn Tanner, eds., *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism* (Oxford, New York: American Academy of Religion / Oxford University Press, 2001), 56-70, esp. 61 – 65.

⁴⁴ SteinhoffSmith, 442.

⁴⁵ Cf. Kathryn Tanner, "Scripture as Popular Text," *Modern Theology* 14 no. 2 (April 1998): 279-298.

⁴⁶ For all these characteristics as marks of the Spirit, see Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. by John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994 [German original 1992]). Gelpi would readily agree with these characteristics.

Conclusion

Pragmatist-oriented catechists will focus on training believers to improvise responsibly with traditions. Responsibility is the ability to respond with discernment and to move towards the norms of conversion. It includes focused attention to the ways in which teachers and students are continually constructing local interpretive communities. This means attention to power dynamics, including the power dynamics between religious “experts” and learners.

The present task of religious educators is not simply to help believers interpret reality, but to help them constitute viable religious communities of resistance that can contribute to a sustainable world. A Pragmatist model of catechesis, aimed at developing Spirit-led, responsible, and creative improvisation, is better suited to tackle this challenge than the models that Gadamer and Browning put forth.

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**Person to Person:
Ethnography, Personalism, and Religious Education in Schools**

Much popular and scholarly literature that advocates for religious education in schools from a civic or secular perspective, while making a valuable contribution to good citizenship, frequently fails to consider the perspective one of RE's most important advocates: the students. Based in an ethnographic research project involving several dozen students and three high schools, the essay appropriates personalist philosophies of R. Spaemann and C. Smith, and explores the intersection of relational pedagogy, emergent personhood, and the exigencies of critical ethnography and personal being.

Part I

A. Religious education in schools and universities: a perplexing crossroad near the "iron cage" and the "great divide"

Warren Nord's strategic proposals for "taking religion seriously" in schools and universities is anchored in his belief that good liberal education must include religious and theological perspectives as a "live option" for interpreting and making sense of the world. One could say that where there is an intersection of liberal and religious education, the meeting occurs, in a sense, at a crossroad. For the path being forged by the educative practices is not only for citizens and the roles citizens play in civil society, but also for the more inward personhood that appropriates a civic role.¹ Any and every student should stand at a crossroad, sometime along their educational journey, and ask: "*What is truly important? How should I live my life?*"² "A liberal education must have existential depth,"³ according to Nord, and it is vital, therefore, to include religious perspectives in order to robustly fill out the educational dialogue that asks young people to identify the values and obligations by which they aim to live in civil society. "The

¹ See Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference Between 'Someone' and 'Something'* (New York:Oxford, 1996).

² Warren Nord, *Does God Make a Difference?* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 133.

³ Ibid.

goal of moral education,” he writes, is to make students informed, empathetic, motivated, and thoughtful. The changes a good moral education brings about are deep, and not easily measured in crude, easily quantifiable ways.”⁴

The conditions that may possibilize the transformation of mind, heart, and will, however, are difficult to ordain. Instrumental rationality is pervasive in educational institutions,⁵ and acts as a chief villain who spoils the plans of those interested in the acquisition of the virtues. Are educators to blame? Barbara Walvoord has reproduced the student voices that hope for personal edification and spiritual growth through enrollment in religion courses, but Stephen Webb has written about how students are not only discouraged to bring their personal concerns to the study of religion, but are even rewarded by bracketing their personal lives.⁶ How can depth be accomplished when the only place to fall into is into the “great divide” that has opened between the goals of students (“development of their own religious and spiritual lives”) and professors (“critical thinking”) in religious and theological education?⁷

And yet, even when students are encouraged to explore personal modes of connection to curricular content, their invitation to ask “big questions” is sometimes refused. Maureen O’Brien has relayed such a refusal of personal connections to course content in an article on the postmodern culture of theological education. She describes the vexing phenomenon of how her students at a Catholic University frequently resist the “complexity” that accompanies using theological concepts for “self-exploration and for making sense of their world.”⁸ But it is only vexing until the instrumental nature of a college education is acknowledged: “The resistance is motivated, in part,” she notes, “by their desire for clear definitions and notes that they can use in studying for exams.”⁹ What, then, do students really want from their religion classes? Why are they afraid to step out of the “iron cage” of instrumental reason?¹⁰

B. The rights and responsibilities relating to “learning from” religion

School-based RE praxis is frequently framed by considerations of rights and responsibilities. “Rights” usually refers to the right of students to be intelligently

⁴ Ibid, 283.

⁵ Ibid, 291-2.

⁶ See Ibid, 134.

⁷ Barbara E. Walvoord, *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 57. Nord is critical of educators’ tendency to strive for objectivity in pedagogy, which he considers a poor model of showing how religion can matter to and transform a life when taken seriously. Nord, *Does God Make a Difference?*, 135.

⁸ Maureen R. O’Brien, “Practical Theology and Postmodern Religious Education,” *Religious Education*, Vol. 94, No. 3, Summer 1999, 320.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Though the “iron cage” is a metaphor used by followers of Max Weber to describe the constrictions of modern social life that affect adult vocations, it can also be a reality of a teenager’s experience of the lack of agency in a school: “School’s a jail for the most part, and we just clang our tin cups against the bars and nobody listens, nobody hears, or cares to hear what we have to say.” Patricia Hersch, *A Tribe Apart* (New York: Ballantine, 1998), 90.

informed about religion in “a world in which religion counts.”¹¹ For Diane Moore, it is the right of a student—a “future citizen”—to be educated for critical engagement with the religious truth claims in the public sphere, especially those that maliciously misrepresent the “other.” Religious civility and adult democratic citizenship require at least this much.¹² Andrew Wright calls access to critical RE “an entitlement.”¹³

Such rights for young people carry responsibilities—for both youth and adults. “Learning about” religion is a civic responsibility, but “learning from” religion is a matter of self-responsibility. Learning from religion is an opportunity for the student to take ownership of his or her “personal freedom... and personal faith-formation.”¹⁴ And while the following recollection by Wright of his own RE experience in schools articulates an example of a student taking these responsibilities seriously, it also allows one to glimpse the obverse responsibility: that of the adult instructor. Wright did not merely “engage with theological questions in a manner that combined intellectual depth and critical openness and... accept responsibility for reflecting on and developing [personal] faith commitments.”¹⁵ Though Wright stresses the self-responsibility and self-accountability for developing a worldview and way of life, he did not beat this path by himself: “I was *taught* to engage” theological questions, says Wright, in a manner that “*embodied* the expectation” that he would become responsible for his own spiritual life.¹⁶ The possibilities of taking ownership of one’s faith, beliefs, and worldview are often hidden in the relational nature of the educative practices.

“Every child and youngster in every school,” write Miedema and ter Avest, “should be able to develop her or his personal identity or personhood. Religious edification (‘Bildung’) is interpreted then as an integral part of an embracing concept of personal identity development... Religiously speaking the aim is here the students’ self-responsible religious self-determination.”¹⁷ Such adult language, however, conceals two things: the relational and temporal nature of personal religious identity formation. Concerning the relational, the paradox of the situation is that the self-responsibility of the student is contingent upon the other-responsibility of the teacher. Key is the teacher’s capacity to relate in a manner that awakens the student’s self-responsibility. Concerning the temporal and “long-suffering” nature of spiritual formation, Miedema, et al, acknowledge that “we have to be realistic in our beliefs about what can be actually achieved in schools. Schools cannot be expected to let children develop a coherent and clear personal worldview. This is a lifelong process.”¹⁸ It is an important caveat, for schools cannot accomplish that goal on their own. The reality of the social situation, however, demands that all stakeholders acknowledge that the process of spiritual

¹¹ Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn’t* (New York: Harper, 2007), 19.

¹² See Diane Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

¹³ Andrew Wright, “Critical Religious Education and the National Framework for Religious Education in England and Wales,” *Religious Education* Vol. 103, No. 5 (November 2005), 517.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 518.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, my emphasis.

¹⁷ Siebren Miedema and Ina ter Avest, “In the Flow to Maximal Interreligious Citizenship Education,” *Religious Education* Vol. 106, No. 4 (July 2011), 414.

¹⁸ Jacomijn C. van der Kooij, Doret J. de Ruyter, and Siebren Miedema, “‘Worldview’: the Meaning of the Concept and the Impact on Religious Education,” *Religious Education* Vol. 108, No. 2 (March 2013), 226.

formation is increasingly happening outside of traditional religious communities and without the presence of adults and mentors.¹⁹ This does, in my view, intensify the responsibilities of schools.

The language of rights and responsibilities is often permeated by an anxiety in the professional educators over the possibility of imposing their own will and/or personal beliefs on the student. “Is it possible not to let a personal worldview influence teachers’ actions and, if not, what is the best way of dealing with this?”²⁰ But if religious educators are in search of “a transformative pedagogy stressing the actorship and authorship of the students,”²¹ what might their own voices, perspectives, and personhoods contribute to a pedagogical vision? What stress or tension will be introduced, and how might it be channeled toward spiritual growth?²² To be clear, I am not advocating reckless involvement in the personal RE of students. I share with the authors cited hereto their praiseworthy worries about “proselytizing,” and how to responsibly provide courses that will “offer important resources for self-exploration and for making sense of their world, thus encouraging their transformed and self-aware engagement in life.”²³ The ethnography of *Person to Person* approached this problem from a student’s perspective, and sought to learn more about what, in their view, makes a teacher a good RE resource. For many of the participating students, embracing and exercising self-responsibility, taking ownership for one’s beliefs, and even becoming a resource for the teacher, required the resource of persons and the teacher’s ability to practice RE in a relational way.²⁴

¹⁹ Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford, 2005).

²⁰ Jacomijn C. van der Kooij, Doret J. de Ruyter, and Siebren Miedema, “Worldview,” 226.

²¹ Miedema and ter Avest, “In the Flow to Maximal Interreligious Citizenship Education,” 414.

²² John Wall reminds his readers to not be afraid of the tension of relationality, for it helps generate human growth: “*Tensio* literally means stretching.” John Wall, *Ethics in Light of Childhood* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown, 2010), 53.

²³ O’Brien, “Practical Theology and Postmodern Religious Education,” 320.

²⁴ Relationality refers, broadly speaking, to the positive forms of relationship between individuals. Relationality looks to the unique modes of intersubjective relating and the quality of a relationship through forms such as “care, love, friendship, and mutuality.” John Wall, Thomas Needham, Don S. Browning, and Susan James, “The Ethics of Relationality: The Moral Views of Therapists Engaged in Marital and Family Therapy,” *Family Relations*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (April, 1999), 139.

Part II

*A. An ethnographic project influenced by contemplative youth ministry*²⁵

Good citizenship, a primary goal of RE, is not an abstraction but rather a matter of flesh and blood, and as such will “require a concrete specification in relation to a particular society.”²⁶ The participating faculty privileged the urgency of the spiritual and moral formation of youth in Episcopal high schools, particularly in light of the realities of secularization and academic pressures which scholars identify as partial causes for the lack of adult presence and mentoring for contemporary youth. Acknowledgement of the problem of adults as a “good influence”²⁷ for young people oriented the trajectory of the project,²⁸ a trajectory first envisioned by current strains of youth ministry that stress the importance of adult accompaniment in a contemplative mode.²⁹ The task of helping young people to “notice, name, and nurture” the rich inner lives that have already begun to take shape within them was identified by faculty participants as of the utmost importance. Thus, the project took shape with two primary concerns: to create learning opportunities in religion and ethics courses that would allow students to freely explore course content and try to understand religious and ethical traditions from an insider’s perspective. This entailed exercises of critical, self-appropriating, and personalizing natures.³⁰ Faculty assumed that student explorations of course content and the necessary

²⁵ Due to space constraints I cannot give a full account of the ethnography. Please note the basic facts. The project was part of a participatory action research doctoral thesis at Virginia Theological Seminary, and the ethnography was conducted in regular consultation with the thesis advisor Rev. Dr. David Gortner. Three Episcopal Church affiliated high schools participated: “Girls Urban Episcopal Secondary School” (GUESS), “Many Anglican Saints School” (MASS), and “Christian Anglo School Education” (CASE). Five teaching faculty: Mr. Lisbon, Ms. Aer, Rev. English at GUESS; Matthew W. Geiger at MASS; Rev. Baptiza at CASE. Small group and one on one interview conversations were recorded with roughly a dozen students at each school. All names of institutions, faculty members, and students are fictional, and all students read and signed human subjects research forms granting permission for interviews. All students who at the time of interviews were not yet 18 years old were allowed to participate only with signed parental consent.

²⁶ Miedema and ter Avest, “In the Flow to Maximal Interreligious Citizenship Education,” 411, citing T. McLaughlin.

²⁷ See Daniel R. Heischman, *Good Influence: Teaching the Wisdom of Adulthood* (New York: Morehouse, 2009).

²⁸ In Mary McClintock Fulkerson’s vocabulary, the theological reflection was oriented by “the primacy of the situation,” which in this case was the urgency of good adult influence. See Ted A. Smith, “Theories of Practice,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by B. J. Miller-McLemore (New York: Blackwell, 2012), 252.

²⁹ See Dori Grinenko Baker and Joyce Ann Mercer, *Lives to Offer: Accompanying Youth on Their Vocational Quests* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2007) and Mark Yaconelli, *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

³⁰ Examples of the reflective assignments, at GUESS, for instance, follow.

GUESS Experiential Journal assignments

To deepen the understanding of the religions we will be studying, we will be engaging in experiential activities. These are designed to give you a glimpse into the essence of each tradition as well as insights into your own values and beliefs. The Experiential Journal is the place where

forms of self-expression and communication that accompanied the explorations would yield plenty of valuable “hard data” for the second aspect of the project that was prioritized: relational feedback.

The relational component was emphasized as equivalent in importance to the project. Participating teachers acknowledged the importance of relational feedback as a teen and young adult in their own lives—or the importance to them of recognizing its absence—and how modes of accompaniment by trusted adults were crucial nodes in their circuitous vocational paths. The teachers at GUESS spoke about how they had frequently wanted to be more spiritual, religious, or just plain relational in their feedback to students, and they were excited to have an opportunity to freely do so by participating in

you will record and reflect on these experiences. It is also a place for us to continue our “contemplative dialogue.

Here is a tentative list of this semester’s experiential journal assignments:

Marxist Critique: Commodity Value Form vs. Personal Value Form Reflection

In what ways do you feel the “pull” of the commodity form?

Judaism Experiential Reflection: Covenant

Answer One:

1. “What events in your life might lead you to think there is a covenant between you and God?”
2. “What evidence from the scriptural and/or historical of the Hebrew people could support the idea that there is a covenant between God and them?”

Judaism Experiential Reflection: Demythologization - A Story About You and Me

One way of looking at a myth or story is to think of it as a pattern of symbols. In order to discover one or more the truths that are symbolized in a myth, we must translate its symbols. This is called “demythologization.” Write a 1-2 pages in which you choose a myth and demythologize it into a personally relevant truth.

1. Summarize the story.
2. Identify all of the key people, places, things, and actions that might be symbolic.
3. Tell what each of these elements might symbolize (including which one stands for YOU), and explain why you think so.
4. Extract a truth from the story.
5. Translate this truth into a personally relevant truth.

Christianity/Thomas Merton Experiential Reflection: Skyscape-Mindscape

1. *Skyscape*: Spend twenty minutes outside, looking at the night sky. Write a one-page description of the sky, including sights, smells, and sounds.
2. *Mindscape*: Think about what was going on in your mind while you observed the sky. Write a one page-description of your thoughts. What were your sensations, emotions, and reactions? You might also include the thoughts you had immediately following your twenty minutes outside. Include reflection on the possible purpose of the project.
3. *Finished product*: create a piece of art inspired by the sky and/or your mind as you observed it. This might take the form of a poem, a song, a painting, a drawing, or some sort of a revision of your prose description(s).
4. Hand in your finished product, along with both of your one-page descriptions.

the project. They talked about wanting to serve as a godly mirror to their students, to help the students see and seize upon the good graces of their inner lives. Likewise, at CASE, Rev. Baptiza envisioned participating in a project that emphasized reflection and relation as an ideal opportunity for him to be “more of a pastoral presence” to the students.

B. Emerging persons and emerging responsibilities for the spiritual life

The results of the project were striking. While at all three schools the students had had many opportunities to encounter the wisdom and practices from familiar and unfamiliar religious traditions, as well as forms of the moral and spiritual life, only two schools—GUESS and MASS—evinced strong signs of educational and personal growth in students. The most salient and verbalized forms of growth were: increased self-awareness and self-knowledge; authentic, non-duplicitous engagement and self-investment in RE; increased appreciation for seeing from someone else’s perspective and the intersubjective formation of concepts. In short, “making connections” with course content in deep and meaningful ways, engaging in “conversation” with other worldviews, and being transformed and “taken out of one’s own self,” really happened for the RE students at GUESS and MASS.³¹ Little to none of these forms of growth were evinced at CASE. What seems to have made the difference between the three quite comparable settings? Relationality.

At all three schools, students engaged in reflective spiritual exercises (see footnote 30) in order to “try on” the spirituality and worldview under study, in the hope that personal connections and personal edification would ensue. Only two of eleven students at CASE mentioned benefitting from such exercises, while roughly equivalent exercises engaged by GUESS and MASS students were affirmed by all students as bearers of new learning about self, world, other, or God. This is likely due to the fact that at GUESS and MASS, faculty showed clear interest in and evidence of engagement with student personal reflections and appropriations. All students spoke of the importance of the feedback that was given by GUESS and MASS teachers, and many spoke to how the feedback was the most important component of the reflective exercises for them.³² When

³¹ On these desired outcomes of RE see Robert Jackson, “The Warwick RE Project: An Interpretive Approach to Religious Education,” *Religious Education* Vol. 94, No. 2 (Spring 1999), 213.

³² An example may be helpful for the reader to imagine the kind of soul searching that was underway at these two schools. At GUESS, Maddie wrote a reflection on the topic of covenant. The reflection prompt was, “Whether or not you believe in God, what events in your life might support the idea that God has a covenant with you?” It led to the following written exchange between her and Mr. Lisbon. The reader should note that though the form looks like a conversation, all of Mr. Lisbon’s comments are in the margins of Maddie’s reflection—and thus resemble, stylistically, normal teacher comments.

Maddie: *When I was younger, there was absolutely no question I believed in God. When I even thought the word Hell, I instantly started to apologize. In the past year and a half, though, I have struggled to hold on to my past and beliefs that there is any sort of God at all. When my Dad was diagnosed, I questioned the existence, yet still prayed my Dad would survive. (With stage four melanoma, you have a 10% chance of survival.) I look back now thinking I was simply ignorant....*

students spoke about how they engaged a reflection and took the risk involved in opening up their inner lives to the teacher, they quickly described how amazed, surprised, and deeply grateful they were for the care, attention, and generous responsiveness that the teachers gave them in written feedback. Students frequently spoke of the personal nature of the feedback and how the comments were “genuine,” rather than “generic,” and how this showed that “the teacher *actually* had to have read” what a student wrote.³³ It would be difficult to overstate how important this aspect of the feedback was to the students. It clearly was a factor in their level of personal investment in the RE. At MASS, Gabrielle spoke of writing reflections in her notebook as “going all in,” and Candace said that it made her go deeper into her reflections and with more self-transparency and honesty because it meant that she would have a conversation that she “wouldn’t otherwise be able to have.” Many students at GUESS and MASS described the practice of reflection and feedback as a “conversation.”

Mr. Lisbon: *Without this ‘ignorance’ (sometimes called ‘Hope’) there would not even exist that 10% you mention...*

Maddie: *When my father died, I shunned God altogether. Some have stories of coming closer to this God, but I only put distance between the already small connection I had....*

Mr. Lisbon: *I can only imagine.*

Maddie: *Now, upon reflecting, I realize I still sort of acknowledge this God.*

Mr. Lisbon: *Isn’t it strange that not believing is still sort of a relationship?*

Maddie: *I am angry. Angry at this one entity. I question the existence, but no matter how much I question, I am still frustrated. This might be my covenant. This, of course, is nothing light-hearted or joyous, but this God might let me blame him, even if he doesn’t exist. I have been shown that life isn’t fair. A man who saves hundreds and affects thousands has his life taken away at 56. My Dad is a warrior for the way he fought and held himself up. My covenant with this God is one that comes with a hard life lesson which will stick with me for the rest of my life. The God I may never forgive taught me something that I will remember: memories live forever and life is unpredictable!*

Mr. Lisbon: *Maddie: You are a warrior, the same as your Dad. Your engagement with the struggle, your optimism, your energy, shine through the anger. Justified anger.*

You are in the garden of Gethsamane... I’ve been there a couple of times, so I’m sorry to see you there—much more deep in the garden than I was—

Your reflection reminded me of the Holocaust survivors who held God on trial, found him guilty, and then did their evening prayers as usual.

Sometimes nothing makes sense about this relationship. As you said, at least it might give us someone to be angry with.

³³ For instance, Maddie said the following during the interview about her experience of the exchange between her and Mr. Lisbon reproduced in footnote 32:

Maddie: He... wrote basically a page back, and it’s very personal. He talks about his own religion, and how he follows God. That he had his own falling out with religion too, so I think it’s nice to hear that feedback and how “I can identify” or “I agree with you in some ways,” and in other ways he says, “I feel this way, you might feel this way,” but its nice to know that you have that, sort of... he’s not like, “oh, good job!”

None of these results occurred at CASE, however. Out of respect for my colleague that generously gave his time and effort to this project, I do not want to dwell on the lack of success at CASE. Rev. Baptiza's situation was significantly more complex than other teachers who participated in the project, and clear reasons for why reflection and feedback not taking flight at CASE are beyond the scope of both the project and this essay. What is clear, though, is that the students had a very difficult time recognizing Rev. Baptiza's care for and interest in their inner lives. This was chiefly due to the fact that he gave very little feedback, and the little that was communicated was either critical or not memorable.³⁴ Though Rev. Baptiza told me in our final interview that he felt "privileged" to have been privy to their inner lives through their personalizing exercises, the students did not believe that the expressions of their inner lives had been taken very seriously by him. By their being personal, but not having that vulnerability shared or reciprocated, the experience was more of an offense than a gift. "I just didn't like," said Nate, "the way that he asked us to be personal about it, and then he wasn't personal in return, so I felt like I wasted my hard thinking and effort." Though Nate and two other students said that the reflective exercises they wrote were honest and authentic, other students spoke about how the lack of relational feedback influenced them in adopting a false voice, a duplicitous persona. As fall semester seniors who were beginning the college application process, writing what they thought Rev. Baptiza wanted to hear them say in their reflections took precedence over speaking in their true voices. "We were faking it," said Angie.

Though RE authors frequently couch their visions of good practice in language that prioritizes civics and politics, their concerns are usually directed toward less public, more inward spaces. Good RE will not merely observe and/or critique the civic, but will engage the civic that make possible its moral transformation—including the persons that masquerade as citizens. RE is effective if it does not remain formal or aesthetic but instead breaks through to the ethical³⁵—that is, if it "influences thinking and actions, if it makes a difference for the way one lives his life; otherwise the view is merely a 'speculative construction.'"³⁶ At CASE, the imaginative work of the students—while appearing on paper to be serious self-appropriating—remained largely aesthetic and detached from their core being. The opposite seemed to have happened at GUESS and MASS, and many students spoke of forms of self-discovery, self-transformation, and the various ripple effects that the RE had on their lives.

What accounts for this difference? Without intending to oversimplify the complexity of the issue, a major factor may have been the degree and nature of the risks

³⁴ Space does not permit further exploration of this issue, but the reader should know that at CASE almost no students could recall specific statements by Rev. Baptiza in his feedback. In contrast, at MASS, many students recalled specific comments and exchanges between the teacher and student in the student's notebook. In one case, in fact, Faith recalled—verbatim—something that I had written as a response to her reflection nearly two years previously.

³⁵ I am adopting here the language of Søren Kierkegaard, for whom the "aesthetic" realm of existence entailed observing, objectifying, perceiving—but not committing. The "ethical" mode of life actualizes, for Kierkegaard, the personality because it requires the commitment of the will to actualize the imagined ideal possibilities of reflection. See Mark C. Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

³⁶ Jacomijn C. van der Kooij, Doret J. de Ruyter, and Siebren Miedema, "'Worldview': the Meaning of the Concept and the Impact on Religious Education," *Religious Education* Vol. 108, No. 2 (March 2013), 221.

that accompanied student reflection. Why did GUESS and MASS students invest themselves in the learning, take seriously the exploration of alternative moral and religious worldviews and perspectives, imagine new and unexpected meaningful futures, and ruminate on course content months or even years later? The risks that students and faculty experienced at GUESS and MASS were risks that are essential to the synergistic emergence of personhood. Persons emerge only in relation to other persons, not in relation to things. Personhood emerges through the symbolic action of communication and is intrinsically dependent upon other persons for sustenance and growth.³⁷

What many of the students at GUESS and MASS experienced was the stakes of personhood. As a mere voyeur, trying on different worldviews has no existential stakes. The stakes involved in posting a comment at the bottom of an online blog is nothing compared to the stakes when my voice, my views, my expression, and my communications are offered to another as an incarnation of my person—simultaneously a prayer and gift. The students at GUESS and MASS seemed to be saying, “Here I am, please hear me, and please accept this person I am offering.” Where these offerings were met with attention, care, and affirmed as both supplication and offering, persons and their caring, responsible emergence were in play and in good form.

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R4d/Colloquy – Elizabeth Caldwell

Reading the Bible with Youth: Getting It Right the First Time

How do we help children read, engage and interpret biblical stories that are foundational for their religious formation? How do we make biblical tools available to them and at what age? How do we introduce them to biblical narrative so texts grow with them and don't have to be unlearned later? If we retold biblical texts in new forms for children and youth, what would they look like? What is the role of the church and the home in supporting their growth in biblical literacy so that they are able to participate as informed persons of faith within a multi-faith and multi-cultural public sphere. In what way do religious communities foster the identity formation of its children and young people with an eye on their participation in social and public spaces?

Main Concept

I have been teaching a course on reading the Bible with children and youth with a colleague in the field of Hebrew Bible for three years. In this class seminary students preparing for ministry in a variety of contexts both in the United States and other countries, are asked to consider their roles as biblical interpreters and pastoral educators with parents and their children, supporting their growth in the life of the Christian faith, living in a world with cultural and religious diversity. Over the course of a semester they select a text from either Genesis or the Gospel of Matthew or Luke, engage in their own exegetical work preparing a Teacher's Resource and story for children or youth that addresses these questions. At each step of development they work in peer editing groups.

1. Why this story and what are the values it is teaching? Why did you select this value or teaching to address in your children's story and why is it important for children and youth today?
2. What the original audience heard
 - The story's own cultural world – cultural and historical characteristics
What do scholars think the story meant to teach this audience?
How does the story reflect and/or challenge the cultural norms of its first audience
 - The story as a story - In what ways does the form of the form and structure of the story (including setting, characterization, and plot) further the teaching of the story?
3. How have other children's authors told/illustrated this story?
4. Why does this story matter now?
 - To what audience—age, cultural and religious context, etc.—are you writing your story?
 - What are the developmental issues, interests, and questions of this audience concerning the story and its teaching?
 - How are you building on and adapting the teaching of the original biblical story to speak to your own audience today?
 - What are the questions that your story answers?
5. Describe the creative process used in both writing and illustrating your story
 - Where are you in the story? What did you learn?

Methodology

Over three years of teaching this class, my colleague and I have become amazed at the tenacity of adult learners across the life span in taking on both well known texts like creation, birth of Jesus, parts of the Joseph saga as well as more difficult and challenging texts: binding of Isaac, raping of women in Sodom, healing stories and parables. We have also been amazed at the forms their stories have taken: zines, game boards, powerpoint, graphic comics, spoken word, dramatic re-enactment, picture books, poetry/music. They have illustrated their stories with clay, water color, word processing programs individually and with the help of friends and children. They have located their stories in barrios in Puerto Rico, urban contexts, in Korean/American congregations and written them for children and teenagers in suburban neighborhoods.

Through analysis and review of stories created for this class, review of relevant literature, and critique and analysis of Bibles and Bible story books for children and youth, I would like to focus our conversation in this Colloquium on how we engage children and youth with biblical content in ways that will enable them to represent their faith in the public sphere so they are able to engage in respectful discourse across faith traditions.

Sources

Sources for my research included: the content and process of teaching the class; my own biblical scholarship in writing stories for children and youth; learnings from teaching this topic in congregational settings; review and analysis of journal articles and relevant literature such as: Caroline Vander Stichele, Hugh S. Pyper, eds, *Text, Image, and Otherness in Children's Bibles*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012; Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, "R-rated, How to read the Bible with children" in *The Christian Century*, (February 25, 2013) ; Melanie Dennis Unrau, "Where are all the girls in children's Bibles? in *geez, ,holy mischief in an age of fast faith* (29, Spring, 2013); and analysis and critique of Bibles and Bible story books for children and youth.

Status of Research

I have an outline and a publishing contract for a book on the topic of reading the Bible with children and youth. I am most interested in how church leaders and parents become more intentional in the ways that they read and teach the Bible so that as one of my students wisely said, "they (children) get it right the first time." For the purposes of this colloquium, (which has been changed from a Research Interest group) here is an outline of concepts/research questions which I will use. We will also review actual stories written by adults we have taught in this class. The stories will be representative of the forms and contexts cited above. I would be helped by a dialogue with my colleagues in the field as you respond to both my research questions and the examples from my class.

1. "Getting it right the first time"
 - How do we teach our children so that the Bible grows with them?
2. "Taming the Text" (engaging text with head and heart and critical thinking tools)
 - How and when do we make good scholarship (translation, interpretation, biblical tools) accessible to children and youth?
3. Transparency – struggling with difficult issues
 - What biblical stories do we make accessible to children at what age?

A quote to ponder:

In his chapter, "Children's Bibles Hot and Cold" in *Text, Image, Otherness in Children's Bibles, What is the Picture?*, Caroline Vader Stichele and Hugh S. Pyper, eds, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012, Timothy Beal writes that "One major effect of the Bible as generated in and by children's Bibles is its contribution to the cultural production of Christian faith as black and white certainty and religiosity as right-and-wrong morality. The Bible, as cultural icon of this supposedly childlike faith, is the book of books, the authoritative, authorial, univocal, comprehensive, final, graspable, and readable word of God. God publishes it to answer questions about the meaning and purpose of life, putting them to rest in the name of its divine author. It is the manual and guidebook for finding happiness with God in this world and salvation in the next." (Beal 2013, 314)

And some questions to consider: How can the ways that we read and teach the Bible with children and youth both support their faith formation and enable their participation in a multi-faith world? What kind of new children's Bibles and Bible story books do we need to be writing? If you agree that one is needed, what contribution does it need to make to the "cultural production of Christian faith"? How would such resources help faith communities to "foster the identity formation of their children and young people with an eye on their participation in social and public spaces?"

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How God becomes god in the U.S. Public Schools: A Short History of Legal Interpretation

Abstract

As the public school system in the United States grew to what it is today, “God” as the unique reality who spoke to the students through the Christian bible gradually became a god among other gods portrayed in the world’s religions. A key ingredient in this change were the decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court. They gradually demanded that the freedom’s found in the Constitution’s First Amendment be applicable to all the students and that the state be prevented from establishing any religion.

Introduction

As we age we encounter “religion” in many ways. The foundational encounter is with the religion, or non-religion, of our parent(s) or parenting community.¹ Gradually we become acquainted with the religions of others that are or are not similar to that of our parent(s). Thus, through socialization, we come to know what “my” religion, “our” religion and “their” religion is.

Religious socialization, as with all socialization, is both an affective and ideational process. The process of recognizing “my” religion, “our” religion, and “their” religion is also both affective and ideational. Our religion and their religion usually take institutional form. In the not too distant past and in many parts of the globe today “their” religion brought feelings of fear, distain, and hate along with affirmations that these were false ideologies and ways of life.

“Don’t talk about politics or religion if you want a peaceful gathering” is not an idle warning. When we request that people come out religiously in our educational systems we should heed this warning as we begin to talk. Religious wars in the past and the present have destroyed civilizations. Advocating the entry of all religions into the public square may be as destructive of that square as well as an enhancement to the individual lives and institutions of those who enter it.

Law and politics² play the role of ordering the lives and temper the speech of those who enter this common, public, square. But law not only orders the present lives of those who enter into

¹ There are 10.3 million single mothers in the United States. The socialization process of their

² Politics here is understood in its more ancient sense as how people go about living together to achieve a common good. See David Miller, *Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2003), 4.

our public schools but also gives form to the language, ideas, and feelings of those so ordered for the future.³ What we examine in what follows is the development of laws dealing with religion in U.S. public schools – especially the teaching of religion. In doing so, however, we cannot neglect the self-evident fact that those participating in the schooling process are influenced not only by teachers but also administrators, bus drivers, maintenance personnel, and everything and everyone that provides the environment of the teaching-learning experience found in these schools.

It is politics that provides the well spring of communal life as individuals in the community bring their hopes, ideas, and experiences into the public school to provide an environment to further their children's maturation process. For law to bring about a secure, creative, healthy, and ordered community politics is essential. In this paper we will look at how the laws develop. We leave it to others to discuss the politics.⁴

We begin with a statement of the laws that have been implemented to deal with religion and the schools. We then look at several contexts which lead to the interpretation of these laws. A conclusion brings our discussion to an end by offering a necessary reminder of the consequences of the legal development we have reviewed.

The Laws

The laws regulating religion in U.S. public schools are local. For national laws, such as the Constitution, there has to be specific reasons for their application to the local level. Usually the reason is that the local law is contrary to constitutional law. The school board's manual is where one finds those policies implementing the laws for the local school. These policies should reflect the coherence between local and federal law. We deal here with the development of federal law dealing with religion in the schools. Those policies that apply these laws are in the local school board manuals.⁵

The most significant laws are the following. Bold has been added to highlight words of central concern.

³ For how paradigms are used in the social sciences and how they shift within an educational context see Larry Laudan, *Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977).

⁴ See Nathan R. Kollar, *Defending Religious Diversity in Public Schools: A Practical Guide for Building our Democracy and Deepening Our Education* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2009) for the practical and theoretical necessities to bring a healthy politics into our public schools.

⁵ This is reflected in such matters as days off for religious holidays by teachers as well as students. What is happening in the East Ramapo School district is a good example of this. See http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/28/nyregion/parents-in-east-ramapo-school-district-ask-state-to-oust-orthodox-jews-on-board.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 . If the pluralism present in the nation is not found within a certain area of the United States it is very difficult to change their views of others religions. Many just do not pay attention to the laws they disagree with and are enabled in such action by the law enforcement and judiciary that agree with the lawbreakers.

Article Six, third paragraph, of the United States Constitution (1789) reads:

*The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and Judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but **no religious Test** shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or Public Trust under the United States.*

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1791)

*Congress shall make no law respecting an **establishment** of religion, or prohibiting **the free exercise** thereof; or abridging the **freedom of speech**, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*

Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1864)

*Section 1. . . . No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; **nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.***

The Equal Access Act (1984)

*It shall be unlawful for any public secondary school which receives Federal financial assistance and which has a limited open forum **to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting within that limited open forum on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings.***

Shifting Contexts and Interpretations of the Laws

Time brings changes in ideas and social environment. Immigration brings new religious communities. Both time and immigration challenge the ways the laws order the community. The result is a new understanding of the laws' applicability to U.S. citizens. What follows is the current state of understanding about the above quoted laws as they apply to religion in U.S. public schools. We begin with the affirmation that God and religion are linked together and the rejection of belief in God as necessary to hold public office.

You do not have to believe in God to hold public office anywhere in the United States.

This would apply to school board members. This interpretation of article six in the Constitution depends upon the interpretation of the fourteenth amendment as meaning that equal protection must be provided to every citizen in the United States. No state is privileged to formulate laws that are contrary to those of the Constitution.

The Maryland state constitution read as follows: *[No] religious test ought to be required as a qualification for any office of profit or trust in this State, other than a declaration of belief in the existence of God.* Maryland had ratified the U.S. Constitution in 1788 yet retained this as a law in its constitution.

This law was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961) because it contradicted Article Six of the Constitution.

All school personnel and students enjoy freedom of speech, freedom to exercise their religion, and freedom from having a religion forced on them by the state (established religion).

The changing historical contexts are significant in understanding how the First Amendment came to be understood in relationship to religion because new contexts resulted in changes in school policy. Understanding of First Amendment rights is a result of the changing historical contexts and the paradigms of interpretation evolving from these understandings.

An example of how historical context and legal argument result in differing policy changes in the school is the response to the question: “What should be done when children refuse to salute the flag for religious reasons?” In 1940, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it was illegal for children to refuse to salute the flag. In 1942, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it was legal and the school had no right to punish the children. Contexts made all the difference.

The first refusal was to what happened in Minersville, Pennsylvania. Two children, 10 and 12, were expelled for refusing to salute the flag and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. These were new practices that had been mandated after World War I. The Gobitis children were Jehovah’s Witnesses who considered salutes and pledges blasphemy. Their attorneys used the Fourteenth Amendment’s due process clause to argue their case. They lost. *Minersville School District V. Gobitis* (1940)

The same thing happened in West Virginia in 1942. Parents were prosecuted for not allowing their children to salute the flag or recite the pledge. The children were disciplined by the school. The federal district court placed an injunction restraining the state from enforcing the school board’s resolution. It went directly to the U.S. Supreme Court as *Barnette v. West Virginia State Board of Education* (1942). This time the same act of refusal was argued as an exercise of free speech and freedom of religion. The parents won. The school board lost. Same action in both cases was illegal in one context; legal in another.

Once the First Amendment was seen as equally applicable to everyone in the United States, *Gitlow v. New York* (1925), everyday issues of people’s religion entering into the public square could be considered by the Supreme Court: Should my tax dollars be used to support the religious education of those not of my religion? Should the religion of the majority be taught to everyone in the school? Must my children pray the prayers of the majority? Should religion, an important dimension of a person’s personality, be honored and discussed in the classroom? In club meetings? Over the public address system? The answers to these and other questions are most easily seen in the following paradigms that have been used to answer them. They are in historical sequence with the paradigm in bold print and the court case that best exemplifies the paradigm in italics. The court cases that illustrate the paradigm were foundational to subsequent cases dealing with religion in the schools.

1. Schools should be **nondenominational**: not encouraging a denominational or sectarian position in the schools. As states began to abandon the tradition of the clergy teaching poor children for the centralized common or public school system of Massachusetts (1837) they also mandated children’s attendance at these schools. An essential part of

these new centralized schools with their legally bound students was the teaching of religion. But what religion? As time passed since the country's founding the local populations became more pluralistic. Initially the pluralism was different protestant denominations, then Jews and Christians, and, today every religion in the world is found in the United States.

The political solution to the initial diversity was to adopt a common curriculum and school day reflecting what was common to the denominations in their locale. The public schools in these states taught religion in a nondenominational manner. They accepted the fact that "my religion" was impossible to mandate in public schools but "our religion" was acceptable. As in so many such situations "our religion" was simply referred to as religion. Central to that religion was the faith reality of God as a supreme, all powerful, all knowing, creator-God who revealed his will through the bible. The bible was the King James's translation, the prayers were from that translation, and the moral teachings were based on the Ten Commandments as found in that translation. The history of that religion had strong opinions of those who did not adhere to its way of life such as Roman Catholics and Jews.⁶ Nondenominational religious education was the default mode of teaching in the U.S. public schools.

2. Schools should sustain a **Wall of Separation** between religion and the school. Although this paradigm was first used in the *Reynolds v. United States* (1878) case, it gained notoriety in the *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947). Everson felt that using his tax monies to provide busing for Catholic school children was a way of establishing a religion. The court said no it wasn't establishing a religion but central to the court's decision was the use of Thomas Jefferson's "wall of separation" paradigm. In other words, when applied to religion in the public schools, the state cannot do anything to advocate for one religion over any other. The Catholic schools in particular were the center of a great deal of litigation as Catholics entered into American society (19th-20th centuries). They shared with the protestant majority a belief in God but not the culturally accepted means of what and how God revealed God's self to Christians. The Wall paradigm was used to prevent Catholic schools from using tax monies while the nondenominational paradigm was still used in teaching in the schools.
3. Schools should be **neutral** toward religion. *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) concluded that any prayer to God in public schools was an establishment of religion. The prayers were for the most part neutral said the court but they were still prayers and still advocated one family of religions that believed in an "almighty God" who was promoted in these prayers. Drop the prayers to God. But schools should still teach about religion (i.e. neutrally). The *Abington v Schempp* (1963) decision clearly states, "Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment," Justice Clark wrote for the majority. Schools now may not affirm the

⁶ For a more extensive discussion concerning the nature of denominations as well as the origins of religion in the public schools see Kollar. op. cit, pp. 30-33.

existence of God but they could teach about God as portrayed among the gods of all religions.

4. Schools should sustain a **minimum entanglement** between religions and public schools. *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971). This was a challenge to a Pennsylvania law allowing tax funds to be used to pay those teaching secular subjects in Catholic schools. The court said these funds could not be used because any government action must fulfill the following requirements:
 - The government's action must have a secular legislative purpose;
 - The government's action must not have the primary effect of either advancing or inhibiting religion;
 - The government's action must not result in an "excessive government entanglement" with religion.

This came to be known as the Lemon Test and, with the Equal Access law, is still used today among the majority of the Justices. The conservative justices do not, however, place confidence in this test's ability to meet current legal demands.

5. Schools must allow **Free Speech and Equal Access**. *Board of Education of Westside Community School District v. Mergens* (1990). This was a challenge to a schools refusal to allow a group of students to form a Christian bible study club that would meet on school grounds. The Supreme Court, using the Lemon Test to interpret the *Equal Access Law* (1984) and said that the school could be used for the club's meetings while no state funds could be used to pay anyone. Notice that the arguments are beginning, once again, to employ freedom of speech to argue for their client's desires rather than freedom of religion.⁷

The move of plaintiffs to argue their religious clients manner of entrance into the public square under freedom of speech provides us with an opportunity to mention a few other significant cases of how religion enters into the square outside of public schools: conscientious objection and suing religious organizations for misrepresentation.

In *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965) the Supreme Court ruled that the exemption from the military draft for conscientious objectors could not be reserved only for those professing conformity with the moral directives of a supreme being, but also for those whose views on war derived from a "sincere and meaningful belief which occupies in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by the God of those "... who had routinely gotten the exemption."⁸

In dealing with the beliefs of the "I Am Movement," *United States v. Ballard* (1944) Justice Douglas writing for the majority wrote

The religious views espoused by respondents might seem incredible, if not preposterous, to most people. But if those doctrines are subject to trial before a jury charged with finding their truth or falsity, then the same can be done with the religious beliefs of any

⁷ See also *Rosenberger v U of Virginia* (1995) and *Widmar v Vincent* (1984).

⁸ See also *Welsh v. United States* (1970).

sect. When the triers of fact undertake that task, they enter a forbidden domain. The First Amendment does not select any one group or any one type of religion for preferred treatment. It puts them all in that position.

Conclusion

To come out religiously one should be aware of the multiplicity of religions that are also coming out. To educate in a pluralistic society such as the United States without attending to ALL the religions in the public square is a disservice to all those who claim to be religious and rings false to students who are aware that my religion and our religion are not the only religions as evidenced by the Supreme Court decisions and their socialization process in the Public Schools.⁹

⁹ Although this conclusion is a true reflection of the past, the future is uncertain for three reasons: with the concerted effort to defund them they may not be able to sustain a rounded curriculum or even their institutional existence; the current Supreme Court's turn to the right will make the previous minority decisions into majority ones; the presupposition that Charter schools are better than Public Schools will lead to schools, for the most part, reflecting the "my religion" of its constituents rather than the pluralism of the global community.

Resources

- **Federal Law:** The Library of Congress THOMAS site is the source for federal legislative information. THOMAS provides several options for finding bills and resolutions: thomas.loc.gov.
- **State Law:** For state laws it is best to go to the state's legislative homepage and most will have a link to research options where a person can search for state laws and rules.

A helpful book for the social context of all laws and their interpretation is:

- Lawrence M. Friedman, *The Republic of Choice: Law, Authority, and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Books dealing with law and teaching about religion in the schools:

- Joan DelFattore, *The Fourth R: Conflicts Over Religion in America's Public Schools*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
- Kent Greenawalt *Does God Belong in Public Schools?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) provides an explanation of why some things may and may not be done.

Religion and the interpretative history of laws:

- See www.religiousfreedom.com/articles/caino.htm for Bruce J. Casino, Defining Religion in American Law (May 15, 1999).
- <http://www.aclu.org/religion/schools/16146leg19950412.html>.
- http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode20/usc_sec_20_00004071----000-.html

Laws and materials dealing with First Amendment issues, religion in particular are:

- The Southern Poverty Law Center at: <http://www.tolerance.org/teach/?source=redirect&url=teachingtolerance>
- Freedom Forum, a nonpartisan foundation at: <http://www.freedomforum.org/>.
- First Amendment Center's Web site, features comprehensive research coverage of First Amendment issues and topics, at: <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/>.
- Both Jewish and Muslim sites are helpful in looking at the legal interpretations. See Jewish perspective at: http://www.adl.org/main_Religious_Freedom/default.htm.
- The Muslim perspective at: www.soundvision.com/Info/education/pubschool/pub.free.asp.

Schools, religion, employees

- Freedom of religion in the workplace from the U.S. government at: www.dol.gov/dol/topic/discrimination/ethnicdis.html.
- <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/religion.cfm>.
- Civil Rights Division of the U.S. government is helpful for its many references at: www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/November/20071128173019xlrennef0.1781427.html
- Employment law information network at: <http://www.elinfonet.com/fedarticles/18/6>.

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The Contribution of the Anglican Church to the State Maintained System of Education in England and Wales – A reflection on the work of the National Society

Abstract

National debates about the role of religion in the public sphere of education tend to focus on the attitude and role of the state and to assume that the state is able to make any change necessary or appropriate to its understanding of the needs of the present. In reflecting on the work undertaken by or with the support of the National Society in England and Wales since its foundation in 1811 this paper will seek to explore how a nation's history in the field impacts on the way decisions can be made in the present and for the future and will seek to explore how such an understanding could influence the focus of the debates in the future.

Introduction

The National Society (Church of England) for Promoting Religious Education was founded by the Church of England to develop a system of elementary schooling based on each parish having a school or schools to provide education for the children of the 'poor and manufacturing classes' (Burgess & Welsby, 1961). It received a Royal Charter in 1811 and as the first national society for any purpose to do so also received the privilege of being known as 'The National Society' (Burgess, 1958). It worked on behalf of the Anglican Church in parallel with and sometimes in competition with the British and Foreign Schools Society, a body set up by the 'Free' churches in England and Wales. The initial target set by the founders of the Society was that every Anglican parish should have its own school. As these schools would be associated with the Society which was working within the Church of England, Religious Education and worship within the school were both understood to be key parts of the educational experience being provided for the pupils. From 1837 both societies were receiving government grants to assist them in the establishment of new schools. By 1850 the Roman Catholic Church was also benefiting from government grants to create schools. The state only became involved in the provision of schools following an act of parliament in 1870. This Act created local School Boards to provide elementary schools in those places where the churches were unable or unwilling to do so. At this time the National Society had managed to found or support 6,724 schools and the other denominations 2,074. (Burgess and Welsby, 1961). The stimulus of the 1870 act, created a new energy within the Society and over a 1,000 new schools were created in the next few years, leaving the School Boards with fewer gaps to fill although in the expanding suburbs of the growing industrial towns there were many places where the new 'Board Schools' were needed. In 1902 Local Education Authorities replaced the School Boards and were given power to manage the provision of schooling in their locality including the responsibility closing schools that were no longer needed and for ensuring that new schools were established to meet developing needs. In 1920 the Anglican Church ceased to be the 'established' or state church in Wales and as a result the nature of the relationship between the Church in Wales and those responsible for the governance of Wales began to change. For the Church in Wales engagement with education changed very little as all legislation on education was still enacted through the UK Parliament in Westminster and The National Society continued to represent interests of the Church in Wales alongside those of the Church of England in negotiations with government on the law and its administration.

The Education Act 1944 established the 'Dual system' of church and 'county' schools within the 'maintained system' as well as establishing secondary education as a distinct stage for all pupils throughout England and Wales. It was this act of parliament that confirmed common practice by requiring that each pupil in any state maintained school should participate in an act of worship every day, unless their parents withdrew them on conscience grounds and also required that all children attending school have Religious Education as part of their school curriculum. Provision was made for the syllabus for Religious Education to be determined within each Local Education Authority and to achieve this each Local Education Authority had to create a Conference of interested parties. In England the Church of England forms one of the four key groups on this conference (the other three being the Local Education Authority, the teachers and the other Christian denominations and faith groups) in Wales there was no separate provision for the Church in Wales and the church became one of the members of the group covering all Christian denominations and other faith groups.

Subsequent education law continues to enshrine the principle of partnership implicit in the 'dual system' created within the Education Act 1944.

In 1988 the Education Reform Act introduced the concept of a 'National Curriculum' into the education system of England and Wales. Representation by the churches about the position of Religious Education alongside the National Curriculum led to the concept of the 'Basic Curriculum' which is defined as being 'Religious Education and those subjects that form the National Curriculum'. It is the basic curriculum which is the entitlement of every child being educated in a school in England and Wales.

In 1992 the Education (Schools) Act introduced a new regime for the regular inspection of all schools within the state maintained system in England and Wales. This act included provision for the inspection of those aspects of schools owned by churches or other religious bodies which relate specifically to the schools foundation to be inspected on behalf of the governors and the founding churches. These areas include the provision for Religious Education and school worship. This legislation was amended in 1993 to clarify some details and again in 2005 to reflect changes in schools that had taken place in the meantime.

In 1998 a new government introduced a new structure for schools and in the course of this legislation's passage through parliament the concept of 'schools having a religious character' was developed in order to clarify the precise status of the schools that were part of the state maintained system but which were owned by religious groups and operated by them. This was needed because successive governments were creating changes in the types of school within the maintained system and school governing bodies were being given the freedom to choose the type of status that was most appropriate to their school's situation.

Subsequent education acts (for example in 2002 and 2005) have continued this process of which the most recent is the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2012. It is worth noting that this piece of legislation was entirely a matter for the Welsh government not the UK parliament.

The Role of the National Society

In 2011 the National Society celebrated in bicentenary with a Service of Thanksgiving in Westminster Abbey, a major academic conference and the publication of a selection of the papers given at this conference under the title *Anglican Church School Education – Moving beyond the first two hundred years* (Worsley, 2013). Throughout this two hundred year period the National Society has been active in the sphere of education founding, promoting and resourcing Church of England and Church in Wales schools and colleges and promoting good quality Religious Education in all schools. At that time there were 4,973 Anglican schools (21.9% of all schools) in England and Wales providing education for approximately 1,000,000 children within the state maintained system of education.

(Lankshear, 2002). Around 34% of all schools in England had a 'Religious Character'¹ that is they were identified formally with one of the Christian churches or with another faith group of which the majority were Church of England and the next largest group were Roman Catholic. In Wales 15% of all schools have a 'Religious Character' with the two providers being the Roman Catholic Church and the Church in Wales (Data collated from Worsley,

2013). While retaining its key role of resourcing Anglican schools and Religious Education in all schools, since the 1960s the National Society has worked in Partnership with the Church of England Board of Education on policy matters in England and with the Church in Wales on policy matters in Wales. In effect this collaboration between the Society and the two separate parts of the Anglican Communion was reasonably straight forward until 1997 when powers began to be devolved from the Westminster parliament to the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff.

In founding and maintaining Church of England and Church in Wales schools the National Society has raised funds from charitable donors and (since the 1830s, and has administered government grants to schools in order to assist with the costs involved in providing and maintaining church school buildings. In more recent times these grants have been made direct to schools but the National Society has continued to train and support the diocesan staff who support the school governors.

The National Society founded a number of colleges whose purpose was originally to educate teachers to work in church schools. The colleges that have survived re-organisations and changes in government policies have all become Universities or constituent parts of universities which provide for a wide range of students. The assets of those Colleges that failed to survive have been used to create charitable trusts which have used their grant making powers to fund a significant amount of research and development work in the field of Religious Education and School Worship.

Until quite recently the National Society published a range of material to support the work of Anglican schools and also to resource the Anglican Church's contribution to Religious Education in all schools. While its publications on Religious Education were largely intended for serving teachers they also had the effect of resourcing and informing those people who represented the Anglican church on the Local Education Authority conferences that created or adopted the local Syllabuses for Religious Education. At national level the National Society was active in the initiatives to provide resource material and frameworks for these conferences. It still maintains this thread of its work through resources that are made available on its web site.

For many years the National Society conducted regular inspections of Anglican schools, but the practice was discontinued during the 1960s due in part to lack of resources and partly to questions being raised about the effectiveness of the patterns of inspection being used. Following the passage of the Education (Schools) Act in 1992, the National Society revived its role in school inspection and laid the foundation for the re-establishment of the inspection by trained inspectors of the religious aspects of Anglican schools on a regular basis. The patterns adopted at this time by the National Society have provided a model for other providers of schools with a 'religious character'.

From 1811 until the end of the Second World War the National Society spoke on behalf of the Anglican Church in England and Wales on matters of government policy, legislation and administration. At that point there was a move to clarify the decision-making process so that the links between what was being done in the name of the Church in education was clearly and openly related to the wider policy of the Church's national structures. This led to a concordat by which it was agreed that the work on these policy issues would be conducted by the Church of England Board of Education and the Church in Wales Division of Education (until the 1990s). The National Society continued to resource those undertaking this work and

this was achieved, in part, through the appointment of a number of ‘joint posts’ mostly at a senior level between the National Society and the Church of England Board of Education. Those holding these joint appointments frequently found themselves working in the name of the Board of Education in England and the National Society in Wales.

In 2001 the Church of England published the results of a review of its engagement with the education system (Dearing, 2001). Amongst its key recommendations were the expansion of the number Church of England secondary schools, the development of support for the Christian Vocation to teach and the development of the quality of education in Church of England schools

In the following years the Church in Wales became increasingly aware that the Church of England’s review did not fit precisely the needs of the Church in Wales. Two major reasons for this were clear. First the Church of England’s focus on the expansion of its secondary provision was not seen as appropriate in Wales where the opportunities for such an expansion were limited and secondly the Church in Wales was wrestling with the ways it should be responding to the policy, legislative and administrative issues that arose from the devolution of powers from the government in Westminster to the Assembly in Cardiff. Therefore the Church in Wales decided that it needed to conduct its own review process. From the first this review was resourced by research undertaken on its behalf. Among the results of this research published through the Church in Wales website was an account of the proportion of the working week that Anglican clergy allocate to work in schools of all types, not just those schools identified as Church in Wales schools.

The results of this review were published by Lankshear (2009). In the same year the Governing Body of the Church in Wales adopted the reviews recommendations. These focussed on the same issues as the English report with the exception of the expansion of secondary schooling, but also put in place a means whereby the Church in Wales could equip itself with a robust structure for creating policy on education and responding to policy initiatives from the Welsh Assembly Government. These structures were justified during the passage of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill in 2011-2012 when the Church in Wales had to negotiate with the Welsh government on the implications of the proposals in the bill for Church in Wales schools and the Church in Wales commitment to education more generally. The report also paved the way for a redefinition of the relationship between the Church in Wales and the National Society.

In recent years the national governments of England and Wales have both publically affirmed their commitment to the dual system by producing publications jointly with the partner churches and faith groups reflecting the commitment of all parties to work together for the benefit of schools and the education of the children and young people within them (DCFS, 2007; DES,2011).

Reflection

This paper has taken one example of a country’s education system and briefly presented an overview of the historical involvement of the Anglican Church in that system. The history of education in England and Wales has the effect of locking some of the churches and faith groups into relationship with national and local government through the ownership of schools in the system. However much the appropriateness of such an arrangement might be debated in some quarters, in practice it is very unlikely to change, because of two inescapable facts.

1. The churches began the system
2. The churches and faith groups own the buildings of the schools that they operate and if they were to withdraw or to be excluded the consequences would be that around a third of all school buildings would have to be replaced or purchased by the government.

While this arrangement commits the government to working with the churches it also commits the churches to working with the government. In focussing on the work undertaken by the National Society over the last two hundred years it will be apparent that for a church to undertake a major role in the provision of education requires it to commit time, energy and resource to the work and to be able to undertake it with a level of professional expertise. In addition the church must be able to change and adapt as governments and the needs of society change.

It can be argued that England and Wales have benefitted greatly from the contribution of the Anglican Church to the education system. This contribution has come at a cost to the church in terms of the time and resources that it has committed to the work.

A church that is not prepared to commit such time and resource to the work should not seek to engage with its national education system. Those governments that seek to exclude the contribution that faith groups can make to the education system presumably do so in the full knowledge of the additional resource that could be available to the system if they sought to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

Notes

1. For a definition of this phrase see School Standards and Framework Act 1998

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Education Reform Act 1988

Education (Schools) Act 1992

School Standards and Framework Act, 1998

Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2012

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**Becoming Young Women of Faith and Purpose:
Catholic Schools for Girls and Educating for Civic Engagement**

Catholic schools for girls are not anachronistic models of schooling; rather they have the potential to educate new generations of engaged and committed women. All-girls' Catholic schools take what is advantageous about Catholic schooling and single-sex schooling and educate girls for leadership in democratic society. Because of spiritual practices that engage young women in the world, a faculty committed to their success as leaders, and a culture of support in a church that excludes them, Catholic schools for girls educate for civic engagement better than other kinds of schools can.

Public schools in the United States provide students with an education that establishes basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills; in addition, they prepare young people for careers or college education and socialize young people as American citizens. They do this in co-educational schools that are touted as models of democracy and equality. Catholic schools¹ have these same goals and also work to educate for Christian faith; in addition, Catholic schools have a long tradition of educating in both co-educational and single-sex environments. Both public and Catholic schools accomplish their goals not only in the classroom but also in the structures and culture that are nurtured at the school. And it is the organizational structures and school culture that teach students as much or more about what it means to be a part of the American experience as anything in the classroom.

This paper argues that all-girls' Catholic schools are particularly well suited for preparing young women for civic engagement and leadership in society because of an implicit curriculum² that is oriented toward solidarity and service and is committed to teaching leadership. Single-sex Catholic schools for young women take what is shown to be advantageous about Catholic

¹ For further information about the history of Catholic education in the United States, please see: Harold A. Buetow, *The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1988). The National Catholic Educational Association also published a very useful book on the history of parochial schooling in the US: Timothy Walch, *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education From Colonial Times to the Present* (Washington, DC: NCEA, 2003).

² Robert Dreeben uses the term “hidden curriculum” to describe the lessons that a school teaches through its culture and values. Dreeben was the first to note that schools had an explicit curriculum (what it consciously taught through coursework and extra-curricular activities), a hidden curriculum (what it taught through its culture and values), and a null curriculum (what it taught through what it chose not to teach). I have chosen to substitute the term “implicit curriculum” for his concept of the hidden curriculum because it better conveys the sense of both the intentionality and the pervasiveness that the culture of a school has. Hidden tends to imply secret (as if we are trying to manipulate students) or lack of intention (as if school culture is a mysterious accident). The implicit curriculum of the school is intended to teach students important lessons about the values of the school in ways that support and complement what happens in the explicit curriculum of the classrooms. See Robert Dreeben, *On What Is Learned in School* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1968).

schooling³ and single-sex schooling⁴ and provide a context in which girls can grow to be engaged members and leaders in a democratic society. By providing them with spiritual practices that engage them in the wider world, a faculty committed to their success as leaders, and a culture of support in a church that excludes them, Catholic schools for girls educate young women for civic engagement better than other kinds of schools can. Catholic schools for girls must not be dismissed as anachronistic models of schooling; rather their potential for empowering new generations of engaged and committed women must be recognized.

Catholic Schools: Educating for Civic Engagement

In their landmark study, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter Holland argued that Catholic schools do a better job educating high school students across a variety of outcomes.⁵ Of particular interest is what they discovered about the effect of a Catholic school's organization and culture on Catholic school students. Unlike the public high schools they had studied, they found that Catholic schools intentionally tried to cultivate a less bureaucratic and more personal school culture. Naming this culture as a communal organizational culture, Bryk and his colleagues believed that this organizational culture laid the foundation for the successes that Catholic schools evidence.⁶ In order to understand the features of this communal organizational system, the authors investigated how a Catholic school's values and traditions and its adult-student interactions all worked together to create a culture that would foster student growth.⁷ They found that, rather than an inward turn focusing on the school itself with a distrust of the wider society, Catholic schools fostered a community that was both supportive of its members and open to the world.

[The] Catholic school takes seriously the ideal of advancing the common good based on a larger conception of a properly humane social order. The formation of each student as a person-in-community is the central educational aim of these schools. From this perspective, schooling involves more than conveying the acquired knowledge of

³ Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, and Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 11.

⁴ Whitney Ransome and Meg Milne Moulton, "Why Girls' Schools? The Difference in Girl-Centered Education," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 29, no. 2 (December 2001): 591. See also: Nicole Archard, "Developing Future Women Leaders: The Importance of Mentoring and Role Modeling in the Girls' School Context," *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 20, no. 4 (November 2012). Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, and Peter B. Holland, "Single-Sex versus Coeducational Schools," in *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). Cornelius Riordan, *Girls and Boys in School: Together or Separate?* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990).

⁵ Bryk, Lee, and Holland's book was published in 1993 using data from the *High School and Beyond* survey, a national survey of sophomore and senior students at public, private, and Catholic high schools in the mid-1980s. This book combined intensive analysis of the Catholic schools represented in the survey with in-depth fieldwork at Catholic high schools across the country. In the book, they argue that Catholic high schools have a distinctive academic plan and social organization that leads to higher teacher commitment, higher student engagement, and better student achievement. Ultimately, they argue, Catholic schools are successful because they educate the whole student – mind and heart – and that this is education for democracy and the common good. Despite the fact that this data and its analysis is now more than 20 years old, subsequent researchers have found that their conclusions still hold up. See, for example, Peter Meyer, "Can Catholic Schools Be Saved?" *Education Next* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 12-21. David T. Hansen, "The Moral Environment in an Inner-City Boys' High School," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18, no 2 (2002): 183-204. Thomas H. Groome, "American Catholic Schools and the Common Good," *Momentum* 34, no. 2 (April/May 2003): 26-29.

⁶ Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 127.

⁷ Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 127.

civilization to students and developing in them the intellectual skills they need to create new knowledge. Education also entails forming the basic disposition for citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic society.⁸

Further, they found that Catholic schools tend to view themselves as examples of how society *should* be. Thus, one of the key goals of Catholic schools is forming students who are intellectually capable *and* prepared to be leaders and active participants in the world.

Picking up on this research, David Sikkink suggests that the communal structure and orientation of Catholic schools provides for an implicit curriculum that educates students for civic engagement better than public schools. Sikkink defines the implicit curriculum of the school as the “norms, expectations, values, and orientations” that are learned by students as they participate in the schooling process.⁹ He argues that a part of the implicit curriculum for public schools is an education in individualism, orderliness, and competitiveness. In addition, in large bureaucratic public schools, many students experience alienation from, rather than engagement with, their school community. Educating for civic engagement involves teaching certain skills, including social trust, sociability, and concern for the common good over individual interests. When a student’s high school experience does not involve the experience of these civic skills, they are less likely to be prepared to participate in the democratic life of society by putting collective needs ahead of personal desires.¹⁰ In addition, the experience of alienation in school teaches students not to trust in public organizations, not to expect these organizations to be places of solidarity and community, and that there is no relationship between a civic organization and the common good.

Drawing on the factors highlighted by Bryk, Lee and Holland, Sikkink argues that Catholic schools educate for civic engagement, noting that it is the conscious commitment to developing a community based on values, traditions, and personal interactions that makes Catholic schools successful at educating for civic engagement. The communal organizational culture of the Catholic school means that students are more likely to experience school as community, as a place of solidarity, as a place of concern for the needs of others. This focus on community is a better preparation for the kind of concern for the common good that civic engagement in the democratic process will ask of them.¹¹

The research done by Bryk, Lee, and Holland and by Sikkink draws attention to some of the benefits of Catholic schooling. However, one aspect of school culture that they do not consider is the issue of gender bias. Because Catholic schools exist in a dominant secular culture that still maintains structures and attitudes that discriminate against women and in a church that explicitly excludes women from some aspects of ministry and leadership, the ways that a Catholic school’s culture embody this gender bias must be taken seriously. While Bryk and his colleagues do consider the academic advantages of single-sex education, they do not consider the ways in which boys and girls attending the same co-educational Catholic school might experience school culture in different ways. Similarly, Sikkink identifies the alienation that can result from the implicit curriculum of a public school, but he does not consider how both public and Catholic schools can alienate girls because of the unacknowledged gender bias that exists there.

⁸ Bryk, Lee, and Holland, 289.

⁹ David Sikkink, “The Hidden Civic Lessons of Public and Private Schools,” *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 7, no. 3 (March 2004): 343.

¹⁰ Sikkink, 345.

¹¹ Sikkink, 350.

Girls' Schools: Educating for Leadership

In 1991, the American Association of University Women first brought focus to the issue of gender bias in American public schooling; they argued that gender bias in coeducational schools led to decreased self-esteem, lower career aspirations, and decreased interest in math and science in girls.¹² Further research has demonstrated that public, co-educational schools can alienate and silence girls at a time in their lives when they should be finding their voices and connecting to their community. The implicit curriculum experienced by girls teaches them to be silent, to be on the sidelines, to be pretty, thin, and popular, and to hide their intelligence and interest in school.¹³ So, while girls seem to be doing well in schools – they earn higher grades, have fewer disciplinary problems, and are more likely to attend college – there are costs to the hidden lessons of education, including lower self-esteem, a higher tendency to choose traditionally female careers, and lower earnings at every level of education. Further, women are less likely to be heads of major corporations, to lead major universities, or to aspire to and achieve elected office.¹⁴

Single-sex schools for girls provide an interesting glimpse into an alternative way of educating young women for participation and leadership in the world. Valerie Lee and Anthony Bryk, pulling from the same data source that informed their study of Catholic schools, noted that girls who attend all-girls' schools experienced higher academic achievement, higher educational aspirations, and higher self-esteem.¹⁵ Similarly, a survey of alumnae of girls' schools reported that these women credited their girls' school experience with convincing them that women can accomplish anything they want, with helping them develop self-confidence and self-esteem, and with encouraging a focus on academics and the value of intellectual achievement.¹⁶ Girls' schools create a school environment where girls are encouraged to take risks, to see themselves as leaders, to resist pressure to hide or deny their intelligence and interest in school, to learn how to work collaboratively *and* compete fairly. Girls' schools counter the sexualization of girls and women in the media and provide a community where girls learn to be self-confident, supportive of each other, and capable of standing up to a dominant culture that glorifies early sexual experiences, attractiveness over intelligence, and self-centeredness.¹⁷

A significant factor contributing to girls' disinclination to seek leadership roles is the lack of female mentors and role models.¹⁸ Single-sex schools counter this by consciously providing girls with these female mentors and role models. Strong female role models among administration, faculty and the student body, combined with intentional teaching of leadership skills, provide young women with the support they need to access leadership positions both in school and after graduation.¹⁹ The formal and informal mentoring and role modeling that

¹² Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and American Association of University Women, *How Schools Shortchange Girls: A Study of Major Findings on Girls in Education* (Washington, DC: AAUW, 1992).

¹³ David Sadker, Myra Sadker, and Karen R. Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Scribner, 2009). Sadker, Sadker, and Zittleman, 21. These lessons are reinforced by an explicit curriculum that fails to include female role models or examples and extra-curricular programs that cultivates male leaders and heroes.

¹⁴ Sadker, Sadker, and Zittleman, 25.

¹⁵ Valerie Lee and Anthony Bryk, "Effects of Single-Sex Secondary Schools on Student Achievement and Attitudes," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 78, no. 5 (October 1986): 388-389.

¹⁶ Ransome and Moulton, 591-592.

¹⁷ Ransome and Moulton, 598-599.

¹⁸ Archard, 454-455.

¹⁹ Archard, 455-456.

happens in the all-girls environment also creates a culture where girls are encouraged to think of themselves as potential leaders in the school and in the world, to understand the importance of their civic engagement, and to be confident in their ability to take risks. In addition, girls are most likely to become committed to civic engagement when they have experiences of engagement through community service and the sense of solidarity that comes from working with others for a greater good.²⁰ Participants in service programs come to define leadership as collaboration, influencing, caring and giving voice, involving both action and cooperation.²¹ Further, girls who engage in programs that combine community service, civic engagement, and leadership report feeling empowered and finding their own voice. In community service, girls are exposed to diverse forms of leadership and, by engaging others in a variety of social locations, can become more aware of the challenges they face as women. With this awareness can come a deeper and more thoughtful focus on activism in the local community with the intentional purpose of making that community better.²²

All-Girls' Catholic Schools: Educating for Leadership in the Church and the World

All-girls' Catholic schools, drawing on what is unique about Catholic schools and about all-girls' schools, have the opportunity to equip young Catholic women to be active participants in both church and society. Like Catholic schools in general, all-girls' Catholic high schools maintain the structures and culture that support the civic engagement of girls. These schools intentionally embrace a system of values that are founded in the Christian faith. Students at all-girls' Catholic schools are choosing to affirm the Catholic nature of the school and the formation in Christian mission and values that they will receive there. The sense of community and solidarity that are established through shared traditions, religious and moral formation, shared community service and prayer opportunities all work together to create a focus on the common good. Like single-sex schools in general, all-girls' Catholic schools are places where young women can find female mentors and role models and learn the leadership skills that will make them effective participants in civic life. Most all-girls' Catholic schools are led by women; most of the teachers are women and all of the student leadership roles are taken up by girls. Catholic all-girls' schools cultivate supportive interpersonal relationships among students and staff and these relationships can provide girls with the mentoring relationships they need to see themselves as potential leaders. Further, like all single-sex schools for girls, the conscious focus on girls and their learning means that students are less likely to feel alienated in their school community and are, therefore, more likely to feel engaged in that community.

Among the potentially unique factors that Catholic all-girls' schools may contribute to educating young women for civic engagement are the girl-oriented spiritual practices that engage girls in their faith, the cultivation of a faculty particularly focused on creating a school culture where girls' leadership is deliberately fostered, and the experience of living in and challenging a largely patriarchal Catholic culture. First, the spiritual practices that an all-girls' Catholic school can employ are particularly well suited for educating young women for an orientation to the common good. Traditional liturgical celebrations are central to any Catholic school and these experiences are important in shaping the communal identity of the school. In addition, girls in all-girls' schools have the opportunity to engage in spiritual practices that increase their sense of

²⁰ Michael A. Hoyt and Cara L. Kennedy, "Leadership and Adolescent Girls: A Qualitative Study of Leadership Development," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 42, no. 3 (December 2008): 206.

²¹ Hoyt and Kennedy, 210-211.

²² Hoyt and Kennedy, 216.

connectedness to something larger than themselves and their sense of compassion and potential to lead.²³ These spiritual practices can provide them with skills for dealing with the challenges they will face as they seek to engage the world and work for the common good.²⁴ Further, service to the larger community is understood as a foundational aspect of the daily living of the Christian faith. At girls' Catholic schools, participation in service projects takes on the added dimension of leadership that is oriented towards the common good, building up the community, and empowering others.

Second, the faculty at an all-girls' Catholic school plays an important role in cultivating a school culture that nurtures girls for engagement and leadership. The teachers at an all-girls' Catholic school help girls to envision themselves as leaders in the world and the church and to develop the skills they need to accomplish this vision. When hiring, Catholic schools consider a candidate's fit with the school's mission along with professional competence; at the all-girls' Catholic school, this fit with the school's mission will also involve explicit commitment to an ethos of gender equity, a theological anthropology that values women, the leadership potential of women, and cultivating those skills in their students.

Finally, the all-girls' Catholic school provides girls with a context that implicitly challenges the patriarchal structures of society and the church. In the Catholic Church, women are explicitly excluded from some important leadership roles; underlying this exclusion is a theology of complementarity that claims that men and women have different natures and, therefore, different roles. In this understanding of human nature, complementary duality is inherent in the biology of men and women and, therefore, in the divine plan. This approach sees biological sex differences and argues from analogy for differences between men and women in their roles in the world.²⁵ This theological tradition argues that women, because of their gender, are not suited for and, therefore, not called to particular types of leadership in the church. Because they call into question the gender bias and sex discrimination of society – by enabling girls to see and reflect on experiences of gender bias and by encouraging them to take on leadership roles – the all-girls' Catholic school also challenges the gender bias present in the church. In a school where girls are told that they can achieve whatever they want and can be leaders in government, business, medicine, and education, it should be expected that girls would question their exclusion from leadership in the church. By calling a theology of gender complementarity into question, these schools are implicitly constructing a more equitable theological anthropology – one that sees each individual, female and male, as a concrete and unique expression of the image of God. This, in turn, compels the church to enlarge its understandings of leadership, ministry, gender, and, most importantly, God.²⁶ In addition, women serve as role models of leadership because they are, in fact, leaders in the church at an all-girls' Catholic school. Laywomen and women religious are heads of schools, pastoral ministers, and teachers of theology. Catholic all-girls' schools are able to point to actual and historical examples of women who challenge the patriarchal structures of society and the church and who understand changing these structures as beginning with engagement with society and the church.

²³ Dori Baker and Ned Edwards, "What Would Catherine of Siena Do? Spiritual Formation and the Brains of Adolescent Girls," *Religious Education* 107, no. 4 (July-September 2012): 373.

²⁴ Baker and Edwards, 386.

²⁵ Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 125.

²⁶ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2009), 71.

In sum, Catholic schools for young women are uniquely situated to bring the communitarian organization and culture that is characteristic of Catholic schools into conversation with the focus on mentoring for participation and leadership in the world that is characteristic of girls' schools. In this intersection, Catholic girls' schools have the opportunity to create places in the Catholic Church where young women are especially valued and supported as they learn the skills necessary for active involvement in the pursuit of the common good in a democratic society. In fact, all-girls' schools may be at the vanguard for a new way of understanding the roles of women in the Catholic Church and in the wider society.

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Catholic schools and Catholic Social Teaching: a contribution to social life in the Netherlands

Abstract

At first glance the relation between catholic schools and the catholic church seems only superficial. Their decreasing engagement seems to provide evidence for the theory of the decline of religion in social life. On second thoughts however, catholic schools are connected with the catholic religious tradition in a very special way. This article draws from intergenerational practical-theological research into family life and describes the catholic religiosity as an embodied religiosity with a focus on contributing to social life. As a consequence, catholic religiosity mainly comes to expression in activities and practices which are connected with the catholic religion in an implicit and unrecognizable way. Nevertheless, these practices are religion-founded; this embodied religiosity even bares traces of ecclesiastical documents. The results of this family research provide a new perspective on the assumption that the relation between catholic schools and the catholic religion is only superficial. The article postulates that the main themes of Catholic Social Teaching play a significant role in catholic school life, and that this Teaching constitutes a challenge to the future of catholic schools.

1. School and church: a decreasing engagement

During pillarization, the catholic school was exclusively aimed at roman catholic children and intertwined not only with family life but also with church life. School, parents and parish together gave shape to a catholic educational triangle. Catholic schools taught pupils about the catholic faith and church and led them towards a recognizable catholic way of life. The religious education consisted of catechesis lessons, taught by the parish priest or religious ? in the area. After pillarization and according to the Directorium for Catechesis,¹ religious education has been seen as a school subject that has to be distinguished from catechesis lessons. Therefore the Catholic faith no longer performs an exclusive role in Religious Education. A multi-religious or interreligious perspective has replaced the earlier mono-religious perspective. Furthermore, catholic schools have to deal with the situation that the religious diversity in society, which used to be part of the school's environment, has become part of the school community itself: pupils, teachers, parents and school boards no longer originate from just the catholic population. Moreover, the at the formal and administrative level growing distance between church life and school life is unmistakable. As a result, the recognizability of the catholic identity has declined, which leads to the question in what way these schools can still be identified as catholic schools. The significance of being a catholic school has become a topic of discussion, in society and within catholic school life as well.

2. Features of catholic religiosity

This situation points to the remaining significance of the catholic religion for Catholics who are not affiliated (anymore) with the roman catholic faith and church. To that topic, an intergenerational practical-theological research into the development of religiosity within the domestic life of roman catholic families is relevant.ⁱⁱ In fact, catholic families also exhibit a decline of affiliation with the catholic church. Catholic families correspond to catholic schools as well in their deliberation of still being catholic or not. These correlations between school life and family life indicate that the results of the family research can elucidate the problem of the identity of catholic schools. The family research characteristic to investigate the shape and meaning of the family religiosity ‘from within’, contributes to a better understanding of the so called ‘lived religion’. This approach can also clarify aspects of the lived religion within the context of catholic schools.

The most notable result of the family investigation concerns the discovery that catholic religiosity is characterized by embodiment and by its focus on the social life and ethical practices. Practicing (churchgoing) and non-practicing Catholics stress that religiosity is not only expressed in a recognizably religious praxis, for example in church commitment, ritual actions or diaconal work. More important are the activities and practices which at first sight do not even seem to be connected to religious matters. Caring for children, enduring engagement with suffering neighbors, preparing food or maintaining contact with refugees are examples of activities which are not immediately recognizable as religious ones.ⁱⁱⁱ Nevertheless, they can be religion-founded or inspired.^{iv} Practicing and non-practicing Catholics emphasize the main importance of this ‘lived’ religiosity and as a consequence, embodiment with a focus on ethics and social life can be regarded as main characteristics of catholic religiosity. Catholic ‘lived’ religiosity can be expressed explicitly but often gets shape and meaning in practices which are connected to religion in an implicit or unconscious way. Support for the hypothesis that these results provide insight into catholic school life comes from an investigation of the identity of Christian schools in the Netherlands by Anneke de Wolff^v. Firstly, she distinguishes four domains of religious identity (the religious domain, the pedagogical domain, the educational/curricular domain and the organizational domain)^{vi}. She describes relevant literature of authors who, irrespective of their conception of identity, underline the fact that the identity of a Christian school (or the Christian World view) provides the school with a framework of commitments and values that are relevant to the pedagogical, the educational/curricular and the organizational aspects of the school. Actually, De Wolff clarifies that the implicit religiosity which was observed in catholic family life, plays a noticeable role in protestant school life as well. Secondly, her observation of a fifth domain is significant, especially because this concerns the social domain which is developed in the school’s vision of the relevance of education for society. Remarkably, De Wolff seems to perceive this dimension only in catholic education: it is the Dutch Catholic School Board that distinguishes this dimension.^{vii} This suggests that attention to this dimension is a characteristic of catholic education.^{viii} The emphasis on the social dimension may be ‘Typically Catholic’. Insights from catholic schools reinforce the impression that the focus towards society is more or less sacred within catholic education, not only in their mission statements (formal identity) but also in what parents, teachers and school managers consider highly important (lived identity). Catholic schools are strongly focused on an education contributing to society and to the *bonum commune*. In fact this fifth domain can be regarded as a comprehensive framework and a background against which the other four domains become meaningful. The conclusion must be drawn that catholic schools, in their emphasis on ethics and social life, demonstrate a religiosity that is similar to the religiosity perceived in catholic family life.

The second result of the family research mentioned above, applies to the correlation between domestic life and theological views expressed in ecclesiastical documents. The religiosity in family life bares traces of the church view. The reflections of grandparents for instance on marriage and sexuality, exhibit a shift in meaning, connected to the changed insights concerning marriage and sexuality promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.^{ix} And the attitude of parents for example on upbringing and social commitment are closely related to the church view on that subject, for example expressed in *Familiaris Consortio* in the 1980s. This correlation in family life leads to the question whether ecclesiastical insights have an influence on catholic school life as well.

3. The Catholic Social Teaching

Further reflections on everyday school life clarify that the religious identity permeates the pedagogical, the educational and the organizational domains.^x Within the pedagogical dimension, religious identity takes shape in the view on education, in the pedagogical climate and in the mutual behavior between teachers and pupils. This dimension refers to the community which is the school itself. Catholic schools regard this dimension as very important. Education should serve the pupils and foster them as complete persons. It is relatively undisputed that pupils should learn maths, languages, and geography, but also how to interact with each other in a respectful way, which values are worth striving for and that religiosity is of value. Catholic schools consider themselves as pedagogical communities that embody certain values, such as solidarity, responsibility, forgiveness, justice and care. In this, catholic schools refer to a vision of mankind which focuses on human dignity and the uniqueness of each child, including weaker students. They also refer to the dialogical or relational character of humanity. The roots of these values, however, are closely connected to the catholic religion. Within the educational dimension, religiosity is expressed in the educational learning goals and choices. These are goals such as: learning to think independently, making choices responsibly, creating a critical involvement in society and church and stimulating the development of pupils in morals, religions and an affinity with the unknown, the ungraspable secret of life. This dimension also includes didactical principles and teaching methods. Choices for didactical approaches aimed at working together, gaining (religious) experiences or pupils developing a personal point of view, can express a religion-connected orientation. The organizational dimension refers to the organization of the school, for example in the contact with parents or religious organizations, in the style of leadership and in the manner in which decisions are made and communicated. In this case, one can think of a respectful approach, clarity and a democratic procedure. However, this dimension is also relevant in the recruitment policy of new pupils, teachers and management. Catholic schools are no longer exclusively for Catholics; this dimension gives insight into a recruitment policy of open acceptance. Being Catholic is not a criterion, an open and respectful attitude towards Catholicism usually is. This requires the development of a vision concerning the meaning of the catholic roots. This dimension is as such a finding place of new religious and philosophical communication. Concerning the social domain, we already mentioned that the focus within catholic schools on contributing to society, expresses a significant feature of catholic religiosity. In line with the practical-theological research mentioned above, this article regards the practices, attitudes and opinions which are considered sacred within catholic education, as examples of an embodied and implicit religiosity. In fact, in the importance given to the social domain (the society surrounding the school) and the pedagogical domain (the society of the school itself) the main issues of the Catholic Social Teaching appear. Catholic schools are connected with the catholic church, not by teaching

into the catholic religion or by being an instrument and an extension of the parish life, but by being a location where the main themes of the Social Teaching of the Church are put into practice: in the personalized, relational view on mankind and the vision that education serves the child, in the attention for the bonum commune and the influence of values as justice, solidarity and subsidiarity. Catholicity is embodied in a religious founded value structure. ^{xi}

4. Two contributions to social life

a. Catholic school as a location where interreligious dialogue is put into practice

In catholic educational practice the subject 'Religious Education' is usually connected to the religious pluralism within and outside the school. Because catholic schools are no longer schools exclusively for Catholics, they pay attention to several religious traditions on a regular basis, especially in the subject Religious Education, which is seen as separate from catechesis. ^{xii} In Religious Education, the Catholic faith no longer performs an assumed leading role. A multi-religious or interreligious perspective has replaced the earlier mono-religious perspective and the earlier more cognitive catechesis approach has made way for more experience-based methods. The religious pluralism within the school presents a challenge for the subject Religious Education and for the formation of the pupils in multicultural and multi-religious dialogue. The preference of the catholic faith does not exclude religious education that teaches *about* and *from* religion, but requires attention for these concepts especially regarding the context of religious pluralism and growing intolerance towards foreigners. Such religious education is related to Catholic Social Teaching because it stimulates and fosters the ability of youngsters to understand religiosity, religious similarities and religious differences. That this is not a contradiction goes back to the confidence of the catholic tradition in the reasonableness of faith and in the importance of searching for truth in freedom. For that, the preference of the catholic faith does not imply that the school does not accept and promote the freedom of religion and world view. Research shows that a combination of an open view on social questions and religious diversity together with a positive attitude towards the contemporary meaning of the catholic tradition, can become the breeding ground for interreligious dialogue. ^{xiii} In this way, the religious education is challenged to contribute not only to the education of pupils but also to society itself, because catholic schools are challenged to become a location where the religious dialogue that lacks in society is put into practice.

b. Catholic school as a location for inspired and inspiring communal life

Several studies indicate that the catholic school is becoming important, also for non-believers. A research from Nijmegen ^{xiv} observed that teachers, students and parents in catholic education would like having more school celebrations than the ones being held currently. This yearning for liturgy does not only exist in church goers or religiously brought up people, but also in non-church going teachers, students in secondary education and primary school parents. The second example are secondary school students who wish to have a prayer room in the school. In this case as well, the wish is not connected to any measure of church involvement.

An investigation from Louvain^{xv} concludes something similar. 70% of the parents in Flemish catholic education state that they are adherents of catholic education, varying from mildly positive to a strongly adherent. Because only 9% of those parents are church goers we see here as well that not going to church does not implicate the irrelevance of catholic education.

To the contrary. It is secularization itself that leads parents to declare that the religious identity should be more apparent. How can we explain this strange paradox?

An insight into this paradox is given by the practical-theological family research mentioned above. It clarifies the connection to the pillarization of the past when the catholic school had a clear task within the religious upbringing and was complementary to the task of parents and Church. This has led to expectations which are still seen today: that the catholic school should do that which the parents do not feel capable of doing. Remarkably enough, especially secular parents expect this because they realize they are not able to teach their children on religious matters. The inherited catholic expectations from the past of the complementarity of school and family contributes in the current secular setting to parents wishing that the catholic school identity is made more apparent. In addition, catholic focus on community plays a role. For many generations catholic life was formed from cradle to grave according to a fixed pattern. The self-evident belonging to a church has now made way for large-scale secularism. Massive secularization however, has not meant a decrease in the longing for community. To the contrary. In an individualized culture, a personal longing to be connected to an inspired and sheltering community has increased. Catholicism still provides an answer, also for secular people. Occasionally in a cultural catholic sharing of common values and communal orientation. And sometimes in the religious ritual framework that helps people in their longing for transcendence and dealing with the highs and lows in life. The catholic variants continue in the expectations of catholic education; in the longing for the school to be just such an inspired community. Precisely because these kinds of communities do not exist outside the school anymore. Looking at it in this way, it is especially due to secularization that parents and teachers wish for children but also for themselves to get in touch with a community that is inspired, where catholic spirituality is made visible and where not the institutional and dogmatic aspects of the Church play a central role but rather celebrating, ethics, and community life. What parents, school principals and teachers wish to impart on pupils is the realization and experience of being part of an inspired and inspiring community in which you are protected and know that you are connected to the other: the other with a small letter 'o' and the Other with a capital 'O'. For as an inspired community the catholic school stands close to life, and is an accessible way of being Church. Therefore catholic education is closely connected to the Church vision of the catholic school as a breeding ground for faithful life, where community formation, celebrations, learning, and service all take place.^{xvi}

5. Urgent questions

The approach proposed in this article points to several issues requiring further study and reflection. One of the most urgent issues concerns the way in which implicit and explicit religiosity are intertwined within school life. Family research reports that a constant attention to the explicit religiosity supports the development of the implicit religiosity. Therefore, further investigation of catholic school life is demanded. Another issue that has to be encountered is the search for inspiring contacts between school life and the catholic religious tradition. For the family research accounting for the increasing significance of an inspiring community, might be meaningful for catholic schools as well.

ⁱ Algemeen Directorium voor de Catechese, in Kerkelijke documentatie 26 (1998), nr. 61-72

ⁱⁱ A. J. M. Elshof. (2008). *Van huis uit katholiek. een praktisch-theologisch, semiotisch onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van religiositeit in drie generaties van rooms-katholieke families*. Eburon; T. Elshof (2012). *The Development of Religiosity and Religious*

Socialisation over three Generations of Roman Catholic Family Life. In: D. Owetschkin (Hg). *Tradierungsprozesse im Wandel der Moderne. Religion und Familie im Spannungsfeld von Konfessionalität und Pluralisierung*. Klartext Verlag, 165-180

ⁱⁱⁱ T. Elshof (2013). Religious Narrative and the Body. In: R. Ganzevoort (ed). *Religious Stories we live by. Narrative Approaches in Theology and Religious Studies*. Brill. 157-167. In press, to be published in December 2013.

^{iv} This approach is in line with the hermeneutical practical-theology which regards the practice as a network of interpretations. See G. Dingemans (1986). *Manieren van doen. Inleiding tot de studie van de praktische theologie*. Kok

^v A. de Wolff (2000). *Typisch Christelijk. Een onderzoek naar de identiteit van een christelijke school en haar vormgeving*. Kok

^{vi} De Wolff, 69-94

^{vii} De Wolff, 67

^{viii} This statement does not imply that the social domain is not important within protestant education, but concerns the question whether this domain is important as a reference of religious identity.

^{ix} Gaudium en Spes, Lumen Gentium Apostolicam Actuositatem

^x T. Elshof (2013). De katholieke school: tussen kerk en wereld. In: *Communio. Internationaal Katholiek Tijdschrift* (Dutch-Flemish Edition). In press, to be published in November 2013

^{xi} Pauselijke Raad voor Gerechtigheid en Vrede (2004). *Compendium van de Sociale Leer van de Kerk*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana; T. CASPERS (2012). *Proeven van goed samenleven. Inleiding in het katholiek sociaal denken*, Adveniat

^{xii} Also according to the Algemeen Directorium voor de Catechese

^{xiii} D. POLLEFEYT & J. BOUWENS, *Framing the identity of Catholic schools: empirical methodology for quantitative research on the Catholic identity of an education institute*, In: *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 2 (2010) 2, 193 - 211.

^{xiv} A. de Jong & Th. Van der Zee (2008). *Inspireren tot participatie. Onderzoek naar inspirerende activiteiten en leraren op katholieke scholen*. Damon

^{xv} TERTIO DOSSIER: *Ouders kiezen katholiek onderwijs*. 11 januari 2012

^{xvi} NEDERLANDSE BISSCHOPPENCONFERENTIE (2002). *Bezield en Zelfbewust. Beleidsnota met het oog op een nieuwe dynamiek en een gedeelde visie in het katholiek onderwijs*. Utrecht: Secretariaat RKK

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"Coming Out Religiously in Sports"
Draft Paper for Colloquia at REA Conference 2013 in Boston
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Addressing participants in the world aquatic championships in the summer of 2009, Pope Benedict XVI declared that "sports, practised with enthusiasm and an acute ethical sense, especially for youth, become . . . a school of formation in the human and spiritual values, a privileged means for personal growth and contact with society."¹ Papal speeches for athletes and coaches at major sporting events in recent decades highlight the educational dimension of sport and the church's concern regarding the influence of sport in society. The Pontifical Council for the Laity's Section on Church and Sport (inaugurated by Pope John Paul II in 2004) exemplifies the church's increased presence in the field of sport, yet how exactly does church leadership hope to use sport as an avenue for religious education? Evangelical Christians like former Heisman trophy winner Tim Tebow and NBA basketball star Jeremy Lin use sport as a platform for proselytization that borders on self-promotion. Is this the model promoted by church leadership for religious educators?

This draft paper is divided into three parts. First, it states its methodology based on a critical model composed by sociologist James Mathisen. He provides an analytical framework that categorizes different historical accounts of Christians who introduce religious faith to sport (i.e., "muscular Christianity"). The model is composed of three categories: how do these Christian groups (1) employ sport? (2) understand religious belief? and (3) view the "outside" culture? Next, with Mathisen's framework acting as an interpretative lens, the study analyzes the writings and speeches explicitly addressing sport as offered by Popes Pius XII, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. That is, their words will be judged according to Mathisen's four categories. Based on the analysis, the final part of the presentation will name some of the issues that we will discuss in Boston.

It is hoped that the draft paper and our discussion will shed light upon a path by which faith-based schools, Christian athletic associations, sport chaplains, recreational centers, children's sports leagues, and parents may engage sport with their religious beliefs—offering a challenge to secular assumptions in the sporting world.

Categories for Muscular Christianity

The term "muscular Christianity" was first published as part of a negative review of a series of children's novels in 1857. The author criticised Charles Kingsley and Thomas

¹All papal references are drawn from the following resources: Pope Benedict's sport speeches are contained at the Pontifical Council for the Laity—Church and Sport section, "Magisterium," at <http://www.laici.va/content/laici/en/sezioni/chiesa-e-sport/magisterium.html>; Pope Pius XII's sport speeches are contained in Robert Feeney, *A Catholic Perspective: Physical Exercise and Sports* (Marysville, WA: Aquinas Press, 1995), 27-56; Pope John Paul II's speeches are contained in Kevin Lixey, Norbert Müller, and Cornelius Schäfer, eds., *Blessed John Paul II Speaks to Athletes: Homilies, Messages and Speeches on Sport* (London: John Paul II Sports Foundation, 2012); Pope Francis' one sporting speech as pontiff can be found at <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/francis-address-to-soccer-delegations>.

Hughes incorporation of inculcating morals and ethics into athletic participation in United Kingdom public schools (Mathisen, 205, 2006).² The attempt to draw sporting pursuits into discussion with religious beliefs and values was made possible because of increased concern for people's health during the industrial revolution and developments in medicine that emphasized the mind-body connection (Watson 2007, 81). Coupled with the threat of war and the need for manly, well-educated leaders in Europe, different Christian groups grabbed on to the idea of wedding the Christian faith with sport.

Mathisen offers an outline of historical attempts of bridging faith and sport in 19th century United Kingdom. He names four types, along with a fifth stemming from the United States and a second wave of evangelistic forms arriving post WWII. Differentiating between these various forms of muscular Christianity, he distinguishes three basic categories: the value given to sport, the view of religion, and the value placed upon culture.

In terms of the value given to sport, Mathisen describes how various forms of muscular Christianity either believe in sports' intrinsic or extrinsic value. Those who support sports' intrinsic value believe that sport is good in and of itself. The primary objective is to promote the benefits of sport for society. Any secondary uses of sport (like "spreading the gospel") are frowned upon because they demean the importance of sport and can act as an impediment for sports to improve cultures and build strong communities. The modern form of the Olympics originated primarily from the thought of Pierre de Coubertin, who underlined the intrinsic value of sport as exemplified in the Olympic ideal of "Faster, Higher, Stronger." For Mathisen, Christians who emphasize sports' extrinsic value see sport as a useful tool for their primary purpose of evangelizing. Prominent examples here lie with the origins of the YMCA and its use of sport to bring urban youth to Christ and the 19th century baseball-player-turned-preacher Billy Sunday who drew upon sporting experiences in his preaching as a way to attract followers.

The second distinguishing character of muscular Christianity is its approach to religion. Here Mathisen distinguishes between those who place emphasis on a communal religious ethos and those who focus on the individual and his/her salvation. For example, Hughes and Kingsley's work in UK public schools engaged a communal or shared ethic for their religious view. Their approach, then, sought to bring persons together in athletic pursuits in order to promote a shared vision of how people should treat each other. On the other hand, evangelists like C.T. Studd directed athlete-led missionary tours to China as a means to win over individual adherents to Christ. His approach to religion focused on the individual salvation of those interested in sport rather than a common shared ethic through sport.

The final distinctive character of muscular Christianity is each group's view of human culture. Mathisen argues whether each group seriously criticizes the wider culture or the specific sporting culture, or if the example of muscular Christianity offers

² James Mathisen's categories for muscular Christianity and its related history can be found in "Toward an Understanding of 'Muscular Christianity': Religion, Sport and Culture in the Modern World," in Heintzman, Van Andel, and Visker, eds., *Christianity and Leisure: Issues in a Pluralistic Society* (Sioux Center, IA : Dordt College Press, 2006), 203-219.

no such criticism and may even endorse the values of mainstream culture. In light of the cultural setting of the UK in the nineteenth century, Hughes and Kingsley employed sports as a way to uphold higher ideals of the past and offer a critique of society that was not—in their eyes—as physically fit, strong, or ready to lead. In current times, missionary work of groups like Sports Ambassadors or Athletes in Action promote American mainstream values along with their proclamation of the gospel when traveling around the global on mission trips. Values are exported on a global level.

Based on these three categories, one can differentiate between the many manifestations of muscular Christianity in the nineteenth century:

| Title | Brief Description | Sport: Intrinsic Value | Sport: Extrinsic Value | Religion: Shared Ethos | Religion: Individual Salvation | Culture as Negative | Culture as Positive |
|---------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Classical | Hughes and Kingsley's promotion of sport for youth in UK public schools | X | | X | | X | |
| Idealist | Baron de Coubertin's vision of sport for the modern Olympic movement | X | | X | | | X |
| Urban-Secular | YMCA's employment of gymnasiums as a means to evangelism beyond the UK. | | X | X | | | X |
| Evangelical | C.T. Studd and "Cambridge Seven" use sport to promote Christianity in China | | X | | X | | X |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|---|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| Separatist | Billy Sunday leaves professional baseball to become a noted itinerant evangelist. | | X | | X | X | |
|------------|---|--|---|--|---|---|--|

Mathisen notes that by the end of World War I there remained little of an organized sense of muscular Christianity. Groups like the YMCA took on an accommodation stance and lost their evangelism flavor. Others, like Billy Sunday's separatist approach, pushed further away from sport and avoided sporting culture. Despite this, a new wave of muscular Christianity came forth around WWII. US evangelicals, like track star Gil Dodds and the Youth for Christ movement (which included Billy Graham), employed sport as a means of spreading the gospel. They typically followed the evangelical model in the table above. Mathisen notes some discrepancies in approaches among these evangelicals. There are a minority that perform specialized ministry for elite athletes (i.e., sports ministry), others combine their evangelistic flavor with a social cause like prison reform (i.e., social action), and others set out to establish a Christian collegiate culture for college athletes (i.e., NCCAA). These discrepancies are the exceptions rather than the rule since there is a strong tendency toward the evangelism model.

Analysis of Papal Speeches

For educators, the link between sport and Catholicism appears most prominent in Catholic high schools and colleges. Sports seem to be an assumed part of life at these institutions. Noteworthy, however, is that there is no official magisterial teaching on sport and faith. What model within Mathisen's analysis should be followed? What role does religious education have within the sports realm?

Despite no systematic teaching on sport and faith, several popes over the past seventy years have offered speeches to mark the beginning of a major sports event or in hosting a group of athletes, coaches, and administrators. Speaking to a variety of organizations that presumably have little theological training, Popes Pius XII (1939-1958), John Paul II (1978-2005), Benedict XVI (2005-2013), and Francis (2013-) have shown a desire to meet listeners in their particular situation and usually speak in general terms about biblical or patristic writings. The topics are wide ranging (i.e., ethics, athletes as role models, St. Paul's teaching on sport, the goodness of sport, sacrifice, education, etc.) and the depth of sporting knowledge seems to vary among the pontiffs. More "traditional" sports—like soccer, swimming, track and field, and the Olympics—are usually addressed. The numerous speeches overall present the basic shape of a papal approach to muscular Christianity through the repetition of some themes more than others and greater depth presented on some topics. The importance of the subject appears to be heightened with the Second Vatican Council's inclusion of sport in

Gaudium et spes (n. 61) as part of a larger vision to read the signs of the times and engage the modern world.

Based upon Mathisen's three categories, papal teaching on sport seems to best to coincide with a classical approach to muscular Christianity. That is, it supports the intrinsic value of sport; it places emphasis on a common religious ethos that sport can uphold; and it remains critical of mainstream culture in light of the vision of the human person offered in the gospel. Below are extracts taken from papal speeches that reveal a classical approach to sport and faith. When appropriate, distinctions between the style and substance of each pope's writings are noted.

Intrinsic Value of Sport

The clearest sign of more recent popes' embrace of sport is the repeated meetings with athletes and organizers of sport. They do not limit their visit to "Christian" athletes, but rather are open to meeting with those who devote endless time to sporting endeavors.

With Pope John Paul, the teaching body of the church embraces sport. Speaking to Italian and Argentinian soccer teams near the start of his papacy, the pope draws upon the work of early church father Tertullian and his emphasis on the unity of the body and spirit. John Paul II concludes:

I have wished to underline this point because it is the keystone upon which rests the evaluation which the Magisterium gives to the discipline of sport. This is a highly positive evaluation in light of the contribution that these disciplines make towards one's integral human formation. Athletic activity, in fact, when practiced in the right way, tends to develop strength, proficiency, resistance, and harmony, while favoring at the same time interior growth, becoming a school of loyalty, courage, endurance, tenacity, and brotherhood (11).

In drawing upon St. Paul's use of sporting metaphors, the pope claims that St. Paul "recognized the fundamental *validity of sport*, considering it not just as a term of comparison to illustrate a higher ethical and aesthetic ideal, but also in its intrinsic reality as a factor in the formation of man and as a part of his culture and his civilization" (21). Again in speaking to a group of professional soccer players, John Paul II states: "I am convinced that sport, when it is not transformed into a myth, is an important factor of social and moral education, both on the personal and communitarian level."

Throughout his speeches, John Paul II has an ideal of sport—as something that can build up the human person through a complete education of the mind, spirit, and body. For him, it is like there is a true platonic form of sport. This form is the true objective reality of sport.³ Some people, through an obsession to win or profit from sport, spoil the very heart of sport. However, Pope John Paul calls upon Christians and all people of goodwill to tend to the sporting endeavor. At the Jubilee of Sports People in 2000, the pontiff directs this concern to his audience:

³ The irony of JP II's sporting ideal (as highlighted in his use of St. Paul and elsewhere) is that such a thing has never existed. He has taken what he finds best in other sports, holds these up as an ideal and then compels others to embrace it. In reality, he is calling forth something new that is shaped only partially by some sporting ideals of the past.

Because of the global dimensions this activity has assumed, those involved in sports throughout the world have a great responsibility. They are called to make sports an opportunity for meeting and dialogue, over and above every barrier of language, race or culture. Sports, in fact, can make an effective contribution to peaceful understanding between peoples and to establishing the new civilization of love (58).

Here he silently acknowledges the dark side of sports, but nevertheless expresses his belief in a sporting ideal that carries great value.

Although Popes Benedict and Pius do not show the same exuberance for sport as John Paul II, they nonetheless express their support of sport in numerous speeches on the topic. Perhaps it is somewhat surprising that a pre-Vatican II era pope—Pius XII—gave several speeches on sport, some of which offer specific principles for sport from a religious point of view. Pope Pius notes the growing prominence of sports people and the sports media (44-45) and thus demands that the church and those outside of religion do not push Christianity into “exclusively spiritual” affairs (27). In one speech, he offers a lengthy personal reflection on the possible physical and spiritual benefits of mountain climbing in a style that is which reveals the benefits of the endeavor (37-40).

Even though he speaks highly of sport, his primary concern surrounds those who see sport as an end in itself rather than as a means to the virtuous life (31). He repeats the need for proper balance with sport: “The Church, without any doubt whatever, approves of physical culture, if it be in proper proportion.” Athletes, in not taking sport as an end in itself, should avoid sports for mere pleasure or that leads to the worship of the body. (40). A similar line of thinking is at times found in Pope Benedict. To the participants of the World Aquatic Championships in Rome in 2009, the pontiff declares: “The Church follows and encourages sport, practised not as an end in itself, but as a means, as a precious instrument for the perfection and balance of the whole person.” While asserting that sport cannot be the final goal of the athlete, Benedict XVI—like John Paul II—confirms that sports is “an authentic human value . . . for human formation and as an element of human culture and civilization.” This description underlines the significance the pontiff places on sports, despite the potential to skew their beneficial place in education.

One topic of note unites these pontiff’s positive view of sport—the joy of play. Late in his pontificate, John Paul II offers a paragraph length reflection on the value of play and the joy found in sport (23; also see 65). Pope Benedict, as a cardinal in the late 1970’s, offered a brief reflection on “the beautiful game” which includes mention of the joy and emotion of sport. Prior to either pontiff, Pope Pius (surprisingly) acknowledges the joy found in pursuing sport: “it is the joy which comes from this power and action, not unlike that which the artist experiences when he wields and masters his instrument” (45). Apparently the pontiff’s concern about not viewing sport as an end did not exclude the person from feeling the “energies enclosed within the body” (45).

A final word goes to the current Pope, whose reign began this year. Pope Francis delivered a sporting speech of some significance to the national soccer teams of Italy and Argentina. The discourse challenged professional soccer players to consider the core values of amateur sport—gratuitousness, comradeship and beauty—because these build

up the common good of society. In supporting “true sport,” Francis upholds John Paul II’s vision of the intrinsic value of sport—based in part on Francis’ own love of soccer and his beloved San Lorenzo soccer team in Buenos Aires —calls upon athletes to strive for the higher ideals for sport.

While papal speeches warn of the pitfalls of sport, it would be wrong to say they see sport in a negative light (as described by Mathisen’s categorization). Instead, these popes see something religious at the core of sporting activities. “Sport” as an objective activity played universally by all people is viewed as an objective category for the promotion of the human person. Sport is understood as a human universal played throughout the ages. It has spiritual qualities that cannot be overlooked. This is what is emphasized, especially in John Paul II’s teaching. Despite problems with modern sport, the pontiffs believe that engagement in sport is a valued endeavor and can support the education of the human person. Based upon this position, it is valuable to see how they see religion acting within sport—the topic of the next section.

A Shared Religious Ethos

The papal approach to religion in muscular Christianity strongly emphasizes a shared ethos among all participants in sport. That is, the pontiffs generally see sports’ capacity to bring persons together in sporting events—despite people’s differences—and thus reveal shared human values that underline the unity of all human persons. The common support of these values is similar to common beliefs and values between religions as often found in inter-faith dialogue.

Pope John Paul II’s speeches affirm the shared ethos that the Catholic Church supports for the building up of the human person. This perspective is made clear in many settings. To competitors in a major waterskiing event the pontiff states: “when [sport] is practiced at the international level, then it becomes a propitious element to overcome multiple barriers, in such a way as to reveal and strengthen the unity of the human family, beyond all differences of race, culture, politics or religion” (12). To a meeting with presidents of Italian Sports Federations he repeats sports ability to educate all people in human values: “[Sport] is a training ground of virtue, a school of inner balance and outer control, an introduction to more true and lasting conquests” (14). Pope John Paul sees in sport “a real instrument of reconciliation in the world” (33), and subsequently asks a group of tennis players, “Cannot the values enshrined in sport open new horizons of humanism and solidarity to vast sectors of the world’s young people?” The pontiff declares his belief in a common ethos among all who participate in sport, even to the extent of hoping for a type of renaissance through sports.

The pope’s emphasis on the shared ethos amongst all sports people is not the entire story. John Paul II consistently endorses this communal dimension, yet also adds an evangelical declaration for religion to be seen as a means of conversion to Christ. In a homily given at the Olympic Stadium in Rome in 1984, the pontiff endorses the Olympic Charter’s pronouncement that sport can increase understanding among people and thus lead to a more peaceful world (21). He called upon the audience to let their meeting “be a symbolic sign for the whole of society and a prelude to that new age in which nations ‘shall not lift up sword against nation’ (Is 2:4)” (22).” In spite of this endorsement, the

pope asks attendees “to strive beyond the world of sport, for the salvation of modern man, for the coming of those ‘new heavens’ and that ‘new earth’ (2 Pt 3:13) for which all of us are yearning with the ardor of Christian hope” (22). Here is the tension in the pope’s presentation—his approach to religion in sport is one of supporting a common ethos, along with considering the salvation of individuals. The same can be said of a homily given at the Jubilee of Sports People in 2000. He compels every Christian to “become a *strong athlete of Christ*, that is, a faithful and courageous witness to his Gospel” despite earlier in the speech giving his most memorable pronouncement about the capacity of sport to act as a common basis for creating a new world:

Sport that protects the weak and excludes no one, that frees young people from the snares of apathy and indifference, and arouses a healthy sense of competition in them; sport that is a factor of emancipation for poorer countries and helps to eradicate intolerance and build a more fraternal and united world; sport which contributes to the love of life, teaches sacrifice, respect and responsibility, leading to the full development of every human person (3).

Pope Benedict affirms his predecessor’s embrace of a valued common ethos in a speech to participants of the World Aquatics Championships: “sports, practised with enthusiasm and an acute ethical sense, especially for youth become a training ground of healthy competition and physical improvement, a school of formation in the human and spiritual values, a privileged means for personal growth and contact with society.” In a speech given to Catholic educational leaders, he seeks to ensure that the human values of sport are not neglected: “As part of a coordinated, formative effort, Catholic directors, staff and workers must consider themselves expert guides for youth, helping each of them to develop their athletic potential without obscuring those human qualities and Christian virtues that make for a fully mature person.” Pope Francis, in a similar vein, appeals to the core values of sport and then compels his audience to live according to these, becoming role models for their fans.

The sporting speeches of Pius XII’s offer a contrasting approach to how he engages religion in sport. This stems from the fact that his listeners were Catholic, or at least assumed to be so. His pronouncements are directed at practicing Catholics who participate in sport. Themes and discussion points touch on a variety of themes that could reach out to a broader audience, but on the whole his intended audience is his flock whom he tries to shepherd. In his statement of principles governing sporting activity, for instance, he calls upon Catholics to care appropriately for their bodies, use sport as a means to renew their wills, and maintain proper balance among sport, family, and religious duties (42-43). Thus, Pope Pius’ approach to religion for sporting situations is a mix of an emphasis on a communal ethos and a strong concern for individual salvation. Post-Vatican II popes, reflecting the desires of the council, speak to a larger cultural or global concern and thus give priority to a shared religious ethos in sporting endeavors. Their openness to culture, however, does not translate into an embrace of modern sport culture.

Critical of Culture

Papal views regarding the sporting culture and the influential role of the wider culture in general is consistently critical—despite highlighting sports’ intrinsic worth. They offer a similar approach like Hughes and Kingsley did in 19th century England, except that the pontiffs seek to uphold these higher ideals of the past (and the future) for the dignity and holistic formation of all persons.

Pope John Paul⁴—a sports enthusiast himself—did not naively embrace all elements of sport as a means to evangelism. In an address to a conference on sports, faith and ethics, he critiqued the motives of profit in sports’ businesses and warned against raising sport “to the status of a vain and dangerous idol” (38). At another similar conference, he cautioned athletes not to let themselves “be carried away by an obsession with physical perfection, or be enslaved by the rigid laws of production and consumption, or by purely utilitarian and hedonistic considerations” (56). Elsewhere he offers the same critique and uses it as a call to athletes to train their spirits as well as their bodies: “You are true athletes when you . . . constantly engag[e] the spiritual dimensions of your person for a harmonious development of all your human talents” (36). The harmony between body and spirit is an alternative approach consistently endorsed by Pope Benedict. To a group of Italian ski instructors, he states:

Through sports, a person understands better that his body cannot be considered an object; rather, through corporeity, he expresses himself and enters into relationships with others. In this way, the balance between the physical and spiritual dimensions does not bring us to idolize the body, but rather to respect it and not to let it become an instrument to be strengthened at all costs, possibly even by resorting to illegal methods.

Whereas Pope Pius XII places the spirit wholly in charge of the body (50-52), Benedict XVI emphasizes the balance between the two and even goes as far to underline how the body can be a means for entering appropriately into relationships. In an address to the Austrian national ski team, he underlines this harmony for the good of the competitor and sport:

Body, spirit and soul form a single unity and each component must be in harmony with the other. You know how necessary this interior harmony is in order to reach sporting goals at the highest levels. Consequently, even the most demanding sports must be rooted in a holistic view of the human person, recognizing his profound dignity and favouring an overall development and full maturity of the person. Otherwise, if sport is only focused on mere material performance, it will fall short of realizing its necessary social dimension.

It is concern with an emphasis on material goods and wealth that sets the tone in Pope Francis’ speech. He recognizes that “soccer, as some other disciplines, has become big

⁴ The ordering of each of the sections reveals the significance of the teaching of John Paul II. His love of sport and numerous meetings with sporting figures—positively influenced by the length of his reign—translate into a set of core teachings linked to the tradition thought (e.g., Pius XII) yet shows signs of renewal following the teaching of Vatican II.

business!” He accepts this social reality, yet nonetheless calls upon professional athletes promote an attitude of “dilettante” so that sport “won’t lose its sports character.”

The critique of sport that arises in nearly all of the papal speeches highlights the need to correct serious moral problems in sport. The pontiffs are especially concerned with the education (either explicitly or implicitly) being offered to young people through sport. They underscore the need to revise the aims of sport so as to correlate with its intrinsic value and its capacity to serve the needs of human persons (instead of humans serving the needs of sports).

Conclusions and Areas for Discussion in Boston

Overall, the most encouraging feature of the speeches is their desire to challenge a narrow secularism guiding sports. The popes call upon educators in the sports field to upset a purely non-religious or unspiritual approach to sporting pursuits. Like others, the pontiffs present a type of “call to arms” based upon strongly religious, social activist approach to sport. They reflect a response to another recent pope—Paul VI—who saw the split between faith and culture as the most tragic of his day. Questions abound: Can religion re-enter the sporting realm? What role can it have locally or globally? What are the dangers of such attempts—either to sports or religions?

The papal desire for an engagement between sport and the Christian faith would seem to necessarily include (and would seriously benefit from) the work of religious educators. Pope John Paul speaks hopefully of future athletic competition as being “a school of religious education” (37); Pope Benedict calls it “a school of religious education, or rather the education of man in his totality, a privileged means for personal growth and contact with society.” What role could religious educators perform in a variety of settings—schools, parishes, community leagues, recreational centers, etc.?

Other issues for consideration:

- To begin, the biggest problem faced by this type of work for religious educators is its credibility. For instance, studies in sport and religion are in their infancy. Sport, furthermore, is rarely considered in discussions of theology or religious studies. Is it a road worthy of travel for religious educators?
- Given the shared religious ethos that is highlighted by the latter popes, how can interfaith efforts assist religious educators in designing an approach for common religious values in sport?
- In what ways can the writings and thought of other religious educators develop a religious education through sport?
- In terms of Christian ministry, sport chaplaincy is something worthy of consideration. People have spiritual experiences or learn significant life lessons on the court or pitch. Chaplains could engage (young) people in their experiences and offer assistance. Is this viable?
- It is generally accepted that parents are the primary educators of their children. Do we take seriously their educational role in sports as coaches, referees, and spectators?

Beyond the papal speeches, further clarity of thought is required to assist the work of religious educators. Papal teaching walks a fine line between endorsement of the value of play in sport and the capacity of elite competition to spur excellence. Overall, the speeches try to be all things to all people. Specifically making distinctions between elite and amateur sport--along with the difference between sport for adults and youth--would assist educators in creating programs that could endorse the intrinsic value of sport both locally and globally. There is also a tension in the papal speeches regarding their approach to religion. Usually a common religious ethos is highlighted, yet John Paul II in particular often ends speeches with an evangelistic call to athletes. How does this play out in actual sporting settings? When does one shift from human values to specific Christian values? Does this leaning toward explicit evangelization mean that sport should be used as a means to catechesis or conversion--challenging the intrinsic value of sport?

The contribution of schools and religious communities to religious formation of Christian youth

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Abstract

Main question in this paper is what implications tribal forms of religious socialization might have for the contribution of (religious) schools and religious communities to the religious formation of Christian youth. This paper clarifies that religious education of a new generation of Christians needs authorities and communities which are connected in a worldwide pedagogical space in which youngsters of this era are participating. This argument is made against the background of the Dutch case in which young Christians grow up in a de-institutionalized world with increasing influence of multi-religious and secular voices.

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1. Introduction

In our article *Beyond individualism: neo-evangelical lessons for religious socialisation* Johan Roeland, Pieter Vos and I argued that young Christians may be less individualised than some widely shared reflections in literature suggest and that the religious socialisation of these youngsters, instead, often take place in tribal forms of sociality (De Kock, Roeland & Vos, 2011). Main question in this article is what implications this insight might have for the contribution of (religious) schools and religious communities to the religious formation of Christian youth. The argument I will develop is partly against the background of the nowadays political and societal debates on the position of religious schools in The Netherlands. The conclusion of my argument, however, sheds light on the broader issue of the contribution of institutions to religious formation of a new generation of Christian youth which is growing up in a de-institutionalized world with increasing influence of multi-religious and secular voices.

A central issue in this paper is the concept of socialization. In section 2 three ideal types of socialization will be explored: traditional socialization, modern socialization and tribal socialization. It will be argued that forms of tribal socialisation are of particular importance for Christian faith communities in nowadays Dutch context. Next, the paper will concentrate on the implications for the kind of contribution one might expect from (religious) schools on the one hand (section 3) and Christian faith communities on the other (section 4) with regard to the religious formation of Christian youth.

In discussing the implications for (religious) schools, the paper will explore the ideals of being confessional and being secular in relationship to a school's ambition to support students giving meaning to life and the world. In addition, the relative position of the individual teacher versus the relative position of the school as institution will be discussed. In describing the implications for Christian faith communities the liquidity of the community is discussed in relationship with the way churches organize its religious formation activities. In addition, the paper discusses different ways to incorporate the tribal forms of religious socialization. In section 5, the paper will further explore the implications for (religious) schools and Christian faith communities by integrating the insights from section 3 and 4 and taking the discussion one step further sketching a double movement with regard to the religious formation of Christian youth. The paper ends with a conclusion in section 6.

As said, the background of this paper is partly formed by nowadays political and societal debates on the position of religious schools in The Netherlands. For this reason, I end this introductory section with a very brief explanation of what is called the 'dual educational system' in the Netherlands following the outline of it given by Renkema (20XX). Renkema explains the dual system is strongly related to the pillarized society in The Netherlands resulting in a typical Dutch educational system with a large variety of schools with their own distinct values and principles. "The pillarization of the Dutch society got a strong impetus after 1917 when the controversy about school funding was settled by the Pacification Act: the equal financial treatment within the Dutch dual educational system of state schools and denominational (private) schools" (Miedema, 2013, p. 236). The pillarized educational system was at its highest in the fifties and sixties of the last century (Ter Avest, Bakker, Bertram-Troost & Miedema, 2007): "Within each 'pillar' every school has its own culture, related to its 'well-considered convictions' such as implicit or explicit opinions about 'the

good life', the ideal person, the ideal child, the good society and what the transcendental or God is like" (ibid., p. 209).

The educational system in The Netherlands is pillarized on any level: primary schools, secondary schools and higher education. Several denominational groups are present in founding their own schools. So, both public and a variety of private, for a large part ideological based schools, exist in the Dutch context. What makes the Dutch situation special is that both public and private schools equally receive governmental subsidy. The dual system in this way is founded in Dutch law since almost one century now.

2. Individualised young people, a de-institutionalized world and tribal forms of sociality

In The Netherlands, the past decades both multiculturalism, multireligiosity, and secularity is increasing in society. These tendencies can also be observed in public and political debates on the role of religion in public life, in educational settings in particular, and how this relates to the place of religion in peoples' private life and in religious communities. One of the concepts often used to analyse these kind of tendencies is the concept of individualisation. This paper focuses on the Christian faith communities and institutes and young people growing up in nowadays Christian families. De Kock (2012b) explains:

"The religious identity development of Christian youth in The Netherlands at the beginning of the 21st century has been impacted on the one hand by processes of individualisation and on the other hand by the development of alternative religious communities outside of the Church as institution." (p. 179).

De Kock shows a relationship with Bauman's account of the 'liquidation' of modern society: de-institutionalisation is accompanied by individualisation, which is both a consequence of and a cause of the further erosion of established institutionalised patterns (Bauman, 2005). Structurally speaking, individualisation refers to the weakening and/or loss of ties and bonds between individuals; in other words the loss of community. Culturally speaking, individualisation denotes the loss of the authority of shared frameworks of meaning, which is both a consequence of the erosion of these frameworks and the rise of modern individualism that prioritises individuality and authenticity above collectivity and conformity (see Taylor, 1989).

In particular processes of individualisation and de-institutionalisation in the religious domain challenges religious pedagogy and religious education as a discipline. Reflections about religious learning processes and religious upbringing should concentrate more on a context decoupled from institutes or even outside the institutes. Religious learning is less organized or controlled by institutions like the Christian school or the church; instead, religious learning has become a fluid process, in which the individual youngster is at the steer wheel using input from different sources, not only the own family, church and school. Nowadays, in particular the social media is an important platform on which exchange of religious issues take place. All this means that there is a dynamic religious formation context for nowadays Christian youth.

To get some more grip on different ways in which religious socialization is actually practiced in Christian communities in the Dutch context, we will discuss the distinction between traditional, modern and tribal socialization as presented earlier by De Kock, Roeland & Vos

(2011) and De Kock and Sonnenberg (2012). The argument here is that forms of tribal religious socialisation have become of particular importance for the Christian faith communities and religious schools in nowadays Dutch context.

Theories of traditional socialization conceptualize religious socialization as the transition of the Christian faith onto the next generation (see also Vermeer, 2009). The *authority* in these socialization processes is situated *externally* in the religious tradition and representatives of this tradition. This type of socialization is marked by *traditionalism* and the dominant ideological focus of it is *transmission*. Through discipline, youth is initiated into the habits and values of a religious tradition and community, in such a way that one is able to put them in practice.

Central to modern forms of socialization (ibid.) is the raising of children by supporting the personal identity development of youths; the emphasis is on supporting the individual development of a religious identity. The *authority* here is held to be found *internally*, within the youngsters themselves. This type of socialization is characterized by *individualism* and *autonomy* is the core value. Adults such as pastors and youth ministers should restrict themselves to supporting and coaching youngsters in their subjective construction of their (religious) selves. This means that the ideological focus in modern socialization is on *clarification* (cf. Raths, Hermin and Simon, 1966). The emphasis is on self-actualization and the approach of values clarification can be labelled as a kind of expressivism (Van der Ven, 1998).

Theories on tribal socialization point to the relevance of the experiential practice of faith, that which is felt and sensed rather than merely cognitive. The Authority in this type of socialization is *intersubjective*. An individual can portray figures who by expressing their close relationship with God tend to become authoritative. Following Maffesoli (1996), this phenomenon can be typified as *tribalism*, emphasizing the worth of the social group that is loosely organized around shared lifestyles, tastes, interests and affinities or simply around the desire of *being together*. The ideal of *authenticity* is at the heart of forms of tribalistic socialization and the ideological focus is that of *communication*. Individuals bring their values and beliefs into a communicative process. In the tribal model, the affective dimension of the communication process is also stressed. Teachers or youth leaders in church can participate in this communication process where their authority is not primarily based on the positions they have as leaders as such, but is based on their authenticity and their charisma.

In debates on the religious formation of young people in a (post-)modern context we often observe a dichotomy with on the one hand views reflecting traditional socialization as an ideal and on the other hand views reflecting forms of modern socialization as an ideal. The latter views, in its pleas, often refer to a de-institutionalized society with a high degree of individualisation among young people as the ultimate argument. These opposing views foremost reflect an ideological debate on extreme positions. However, for the well-being of young people both individual autonomy and the structure and culture (including a tradition) of a community surrounding them are important. Precisely this is the basis for forms of tribal (religious) socialization. And this is why forms of tribal socialisation are of particular importance for Christian faith communities and religious schools in nowadays Dutch context. De Kock, Roeland and Vos (2011) observe tribal socialization for example in nowadays neo-evangelical movements in Dutch Christianity among young people.

As said, the ideological focus in tribal socialisation is communication, which means that individuals bring their values and beliefs into a communicative process. The importance of this communicative process is underlined, among others, by Bert Roebben. The following quotation from one of his recent contributions to the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* illustrates this point:

“In the confrontation of their [adolescents’, AdK] own background with the religious life-worlds of others, they are invited to re-evaluate their own position (...) I will call this: ‘learning in the presence of the religious other’. This pedagogical option is underpinned by a pluralist concept of theology: various cultures in time and space are dealing with transcendence from their own particular viewpoint. This hermeneutical position can be discerned in every contemporary theological attempt to understand religious tradition in its relationship to religious learning” (Roebben, 2012, pp.1177-1178).

3. The position of (religious) schools

What implications might forms of tribal religious socialisation have for (religious) schools? The background of this question is formed by an often too unenhanced picture of possible roles for faith and religion in schools: there is either the option that religious education is a form of indoctrination linked up with a particular faith community, or there is the option of religious education as merely passing through factual information on religions and ideologies (Wardekker & Miedema, 2001b, p. 25). In contrast with this poor picture, Wardekker and Miedema (2001b) plea for taking the development of the whole person into account, which means to take care for both the cognitive, creative, moral *and* religious development of pupils, seeing the pupils as active and participating subjects. “Subjects, who themselves on the basis of presented and represented subject-matter, the ‘stuff’ provided, take an active part in the construction of new interpretations and new meanings. In the same way they take part too in the construction of religious meaning in their own personal fashion” (ibid., p. 32).

Really interesting in the plea of Wardekker and Miedema is talking not merely on the *active* role of pupils but also on their *participating* role. As a reaction to more traditional views on pupils and their (religious) socialization, indeed sometimes labeled as ‘indoctrination’, a modern view on pupils’ socialization is proposed (see section 2) in which the pupil himself is an active, autonomous constructor of his own (religious) identity. Adding pupils’ *participating* role to the debate means shifting the focus on (shared) practices in which pupils are living and learning and influence in a reciprocal manner the (religious) development of youngsters.

An important actor in shared practices in the school is the teacher. According to De Wolff (2010) religious education is most educating when the teacher shows in daily practice his own religious or ideological views, in an authentic manner, in exemplary acting and possibly in shared practices. This does not inevitably lead to what we call indoctrination, at least if pupils also get their own active role, their own responsibility in their religious identity construction, which is in line with a transformation conception of (religious) education: “... learning is defined as the growing capacity or the growing competency of students to participate in

culturally structured activities. This learning process proceeds along the line of participation (learning-to-join-in-activities).” (Wardekker & Miedema, 2001a p. 40).

The implication of forms of tribal religious socialisation, in the first place, is that these are challenging both schools with an accent on forms of traditional socialization and schools leaning on a strict modern conception of religious socialization. As said in the introduction section, Christian youth in The Netherlands is growing up in a de-institutionalized world resulting in their participation in new forms of communal religious life, such as religious events, festivals, concerts, media and online communities (De Kock, Roeland & Vos, 2011). At the same time, both multiculturalism, multireligiosity, and secularity is increasing in Dutch society. One of the observed ‘strategies’ (see De Kock, 2012b) of more orthodox faith based schools is to (re)strengthen the relationships between the school with the pupils’ families and their churches (as represented in the school board) with the aim to work together on religious identity formation in a coherent way in order to pass the tradition on to the next generation.

This strategy is leaning on a traditional socialization concept, giving tradition authority and transmission as a focus. In doing so, the school is a kind of counterweight against developments both towards multireligiosity and secularity *and* towards de-institutionalization. In a certain way, this strategy is fighting tribal forms of religious socialization, for example by taking tradition instead of the life of youngsters (individually or as a group) as a starting point for religious education. Or for example by focusing on more cognitive oriented processes of religious learning instead of more participatory processes in which learning by doing and experiencing are central features.

Furthermore, forms of tribal religious socialization are also challenging schools leaning on a strict modern conception of religious socialization. Another ‘strategy’ which can be observed in both denominational (private) and state schools is to leave the religious identity development for the private life outside the school. Where orthodox faith based schools are willing to be confessional in all aspects of school life, this category of schools, instead, have some kind of secular ideals in school life. Religious education can too easily lead to indoctrination, therefore the role of the school is at the highest to inform on a factual level on religions and ideologies. The autonomy of pupils with regard to their religious development is the starting point and this is served at the best with a clarification role of the school, which is in line with a more modern conception of religious socialization.

This strategy is, in a way, also excluding tribal forms of religious socialization. It is doing so, for example by seeing the pupil as a religious or a-religious individual rather than a partaker in a (religious) community partly overlapping with communities in the school. Or for example by seeing the teacher only as a kind of coach for the individual religious learning process instead of an authentic source of inspiration for the pupils’ religious development. The school’s role is at a maximum to help pupils to comprehend the core of a variety of ideological and religious traditions and to help pupils develop sensibility for the religious dimension of reality (Van der Zee, 2010; Alii, 2009).

Tribal forms of religious socialization are challenging more traditional or modern oriented (faith based) schools. What are the consequences when Christian schools are incorporating principles of tribal religious socialization? This question can lead to three kind of answers. The first one is focusing on a teacher’s level. The second one is focusing on the school’s level. The third one is focusing on a “trans school” level.

Tribal religious socialization can be applied in schools by taking the individual teacher as a starting point. Tribal religious socialization then means that the teacher is investing in relationships with pupils, being present in their networks, showing in daily school life his religious outlooks, affects and actions, being an authentic charismatic source of inspiration with whom pupils can identify with. In this scenario, the accent is laid on tribal socialization in the relationship of the individual teacher with one or more pupils in classroom who are willing to connect with each other. The responsibility for religious socialization is defined on the level of the individual teacher and is not necessary equally and in the same manner applied among the teacher staff. The individual teacher is much more important than the school as an institution. Defining tribal religious socialization at the individual teacher level means that Christian formation is not only possible at a Christian school; also multi-religious, inter-religious, inter-worldview or cooperation schools can be adequate environments for forms of Christian formation, where at the same time pupils from different backgrounds learn to live, to work, to learn and to play together (Miedema, 2013, p. 238).

Castelli (2012) introduces in this respect a pedagogy of 'faith dialogue':

"Faith dialogue as a pedagogy of religious education entails seriousness, humility, hesitation, articulation and imagination" (p. 213).

"The proposal is to enact these elements in the classroom through narrative, place and person.... Faith dialogue with faith narratives, religious and secular, aims to develop pupils' faith literacy and oracy. Engagement with places that express faith for self and/or the other extends each pupil's perceptions of her place and space in the world. Encountering the other in the first person reveals a relational space which offers the possibility of dialogue with its attendant challenges and opportunities. Thus, faith dialogue proposes a dynamic and dialectical religious education apposite for a twenty-first century, post-secular classroom" (ibid., p. 215)

When tribal religious socialization is applied at the school level, taking the perspective of the school as an organization, other kind of consequences can be observed. We not only see individual teachers as authentic sources of inspiration, we also observe in (Christian) schools a sense of solidarity and common lived religious ground in school life, both among teachers and students. Furthermore, there are religious practices in which the teachers and students participate as part of the religious socialization task of the school; not bound to a specific Christian subgenre or church tradition but more fluid, flexible and even anti-institutional. The school as a whole is a kind of tribe. Not only the individual teacher but definitely also the school as a Christian institute is at stake.

In essence, a traditional pillarized school is a 'tribe' in itself too. However, there are two important differences in comparison with the tribal school as proposed here. Firstly, the 'tribal life' of a traditional pillarized school is tightly connected to a particular church tradition and often has a confessional basis with consequences for teacher and student affiliation. This is in contrast to the tribal life of schools as proposed here: these are much more loosely coupled with church traditions and are much more open to faith diversity at teacher and student level. Secondly, traditional pillarized schools are characterized by (sub)cultural homogeneity when it comes to the family and church life of both students and teachers, whereas the schools as proposed here are characterized by much more (sub)cultural plurality; not in the last place because these schools are actively striving for meeting the (religious and cultural) other both in the school and classroom and outside the school.

Focusing on a “trans school” level is widening the concept of a ‘tribe’, being a maximally fluid and trans local, sometimes virtual community of individual believers in which Christian schools possibly can play a role. When taking a “trans school” view both traditional/orthodox faith based schools, schools applying tribal socialization principles on school level and individual Christian teachers on all possible kind of state and private schools all together are religious pedagogues acting simultaneously “in the cloud”: the de-institutionalized Christian community in which young Christians are growing up and in which also other pedagogues like church leaders, parents, peers etc. are involved. The implication of forms of tribal socialization in this respect is being aware of a Christian community or tribe which is beyond institutional, organizational and visible borders.

Whether it is on a teacher, school or trans school level, forms of tribal socialization are challenging both traditional and modern oriented religious education. Castelli (2012) puts it in this way: “Whatever the position taken on the contested notion of a post-secular society, the religious education classroom cannot ignore tensions within and between religions and between religion and a secularist view of the world if one of the tasks of education is helping young people understand themselves and the world they inhabit” (p. 209). Tribal socialization is not directing towards indoctrination but it is directing towards authenticity, communication, active personal involvement and participation: there should be dialogue not only in a verbal manner but also in a multisensory sense. “An encounter through dialogue will entail change if only a growth in an understanding of the other. Self and the other may not be seeking assimilation or domination but neither are they totally detached or unchanged by the encounter” (Castelli, 2012, p. 210).

4. The position of Christian faith communities

What implications might forms of tribal religious socialisation have for Christian faith communities? The background of this question is formed by the actual debate on the church as a learning community. The learning of the Christian church community can be seen as one of its basic functions (De Kock en Verboom, 2011, p. 272). The learning can be more or less organized, for example in catechesis practices or bible study groups. But there is also a lot of informal learning in the day-by-day practice in the church community. Therefore, the Christian church community is often seen in its ideal form as a *learning community*. The church as a learning community refers to intergenerational learning, learning in encounter, learning in everyday life, and emancipatory learning which means that individuals take responsibility for each other and the community (Elhorst, De Kock, & Barnard, 20XX).

The central learning principle of the learning church community is learning being an intergenerational process (see Elhorst, De Kock, & Barnard, 20XX). Shared religious practices in church and family life are the cornerstones for this type of learning process (see also Alii, 2009, pp. 18-19). The challenge for the majority of church communities in The Netherlands, is the loss of community in church life as a result of general tendencies in society as individualisation and de-institutionalisation. As said, This not only challenges practical church life but also religious pedagogy and religious education as a discipline.

An increasing amount of religious learning of church members can be observed outside or loosely coupled with local church institutional and communal life, for example in spontaneous activities of youngsters, diaconal trips, festivals and different kind of networks, both physical and digital. In all these examples often forms of tribal religious learning are grounding the

religious learning processes. Just as it is for the position of schools, the implication of forms of tribal religious socialisation, in the first place, is that these are *challenging* Christian faith communities; in particular these are challenging church institutions with strict traditional or strict modern views on religious learning practices in faith communities. De Kock (2012b, 2014) makes a distinction between three models of religious socialization in church communities which can serve my argument here: a behavioural, a developmental and an apprenticeship model.

In a *behavioural model*, pastors, youth leaders, catechists or parents instruct the youngsters what and how things should be learned and then the young apply these instructions. Catechists, for example, directs the content of lessons: one or other catechism generally; aiming in the words of Westerhoff (1987) “to acquire knowledge and skills considered necessary and useful to Christian life” (p. 584). In this model the passing on of the religious tradition onto the next generation is accentuated, which should be in conjunction with what families and schools are aiming at in raising their youth. In section 3 I described the tendency of more orthodox faith based schools to (re)strengthen the relationships between the school with the pupils’ families and their churches (as represented in the school board) with the aim to work together on religious identity formation in a coherent way in order to pass the tradition on to the next generation. In relationship to this ‘strategy’ churches are structuring their learning activities along the lines of a behavioural model, as a reaction to tendencies of de-institutionalization and secularization.

In a certain way, this model is opposing tribal forms of religious socialization, for example by placing religious authority at the level of the institute as such and not at the level of the living community and its members. Or for example by building a community with clear boundaries which are the institutional boundaries instead of building more flexible and (external) network linked communities of believers.

In a *developmental model*, youth leaders, catechists or parents are engaged in questioning, contradicting, or even challenging youngsters’ personal (religious) theories. The young members of the church are coached by the elder ones, in the words of Westerhoff (1987) “to reflect on experience in the light of Christian faith and life” (p. 583). Not the church/fait tradition but the questions of young people themselves are directing learning processes in the church. The faith community is not directed towards communal learning in the first place but towards individual learning based on personal interests of individual church members.

This developmental model is, in a way, also excluding tribal forms of religious socialization. It is doing so, for example by the church defining itself as a provider of spiritual goods on the religious market of individuals looking for sense and meaning in life instead of defining itself as an accessible (be it a flexible) community that binds together individuals in a communal life with shared interests and ideals and responsibilities. Or for example by taking the individual truth claims as starting point for learning processes instead of a more shared communal defined claim of (religious) truth.

Tribal forms of religious socialization are challenging Christian faith communities heavily leaning on either behavioural or developmental models of religious learning. What are the consequences when churches are incorporating principles of tribal religious socialization? For sketching these consequences I will first introduce the third model of religious socialization as proposed by De Kock (2012b, 2014): the apprenticeship model. Next, I briefly explore three types of answers: the first one is focusing on church plants and micro communities as neo-

tribes next to church institutes. The second one is focusing on revitalizing the church by applying tribal principles. The third one focusing on the “trans church” level.

The *apprenticeship model* sees church life as one shared world, the faith community. The community consists of both experts and novices: The expert, for example the catechist, has considerable expertise and tries to model his expertise; the catechumen learns by participating in this world and imitating the activities of the catechist. The apprenticeship model is in the words of Westerhoff (1987) about experiencing the Christian faith and life. The roles of expert and novice are not stable but can change over time and over situations. In this model, little children can be perceived as experts when it comes to a basic trust in God for example. An example that shows the importance of shared faith practices is the concept of liturgical catechesis of which Anderson (1997) states: “... the singing of hymns offers a starting point for thinking about the formative power of liturgical practice, what I call liturgical catechesis. By this I intend the claim that liturgical practice is intrinsically formational and transformational. It is a means by which we come to know ourselves as people of faith and to know the God whom we worship” (pp. 350-351).

Davis (1986), as another example, underlines the importance of specifically inspiring faithful persons: the catechist is “... one who takes youth and their struggles seriously, one who is open to entertain all of their most basic questions about life and faith, and one who provides in his/her own life a model of spiritual groundedness for them to see from which the director him/herself draws a personal nurture and sustenance” (p. 273). Pedagogically, this is an important learning principle, also underlined in two recent articles of Peter Jarvis (2008a, b) in which he pleads for taking day-to-day experiences and meetings as the basis for learning processes.

The apprenticeship model of religious socialization in faith communities is most supportive for the church’s ideal to be both a faith community and a learning community (De Kock, 2012a). The apprenticeship model reflects many of the principles of tribal religious socialization. What are the consequences when churches are incorporating principles of tribal and apprenticeship religious socialization?

A first consequence can be clearly observed in the past decade in The Netherlands. Partly rooted in dissatisfaction with traditional and institutional organized church communities, people start with very local initiatives building up small communities, for instance in a particular street or house as an alternative way of being church. These communities are like little ‘tribes’ in which people from the same living area and with same (religious) interests come and live together. Part of these communities are realized as a missionary initiative, where one of the goals is to share the Christian life and Gospel with non- or other believing people. These communities can be seen as an alternative for or a form of church next to the traditional institute. Another example of these alternative communities can be found on the internet where internet churches or digital/virtual faith communities start up as an alternative way to experience church with each other.

A second consequence is that more traditional or institutional organized churches are revitalizing themselves according to tribal principles. Most important indicator of this development towards revitalized practices is the increasing attention for small groups in church. Church communities are investing more and more in the forming of small groups of youngsters involved in diaconal initiatives. Another example is churches organizing the pastoral care as “small group care” in which church members are responsible for pastoral care

for a couple of families. Another example is the explicit attention for role models in the church community who are given an educating role in church life.

A third consequence can be found at the “trans church” level. Just as it is the case on the “trans school” level (section 3), on a “trans church” level the concept of a ‘tribe’ is widened, being a maximally fluid and translocal, sometimes virtual community of individual believers, in which both representatives of traditional churches, revitalized churches and members of new local or virtual communities are networked with each other. Young Christian people can be in connection with this “trans church” community, for example via social network sites or via other connections in their network, via peers or youth leaders in their local church communities. While being connected with this “trans church” community Christian youngsters get inspired by debates, positions and examples of peers and modelling (charismatic) figures from around the world. In this way a new de-institutionalized world wide pedagogical space is formed by which a new generation of Christian youngsters is raised. As said earlier, the implication of forms of tribal socialization in this respect is the important awareness among local pastors and youth workers that there is a Christian (and church) community or tribe which is beyond institutional, organizational and visible borders.

5. Religious formation of Christian youth: a double movement

What can be observed when the insights from the previous sections on respectively the position of (religious) schools and the position of Christian faith communities are integrated? In this section we take our analysis one step further.

At the core we observe a double movement with regard to religious formation of Christian youth: on the one hand a movement from the institute (be it a church or a Christian school) to the individual believer in the particular local context; on the other hand a movement from the institute to the “trans institutional” fluid, global sometimes virtual context. As a result of processes of individualisation (see section 2) the religious life is increasingly a personal, individual matter instead of a communal, institutional matter; at the same time there is a need for “being together” or connectedness which is searched for either on a particular private local level loosely coupled with or detached from the institutional life or on a trans institutional level in the form of global (communities of) Christianity, foremost supported by new (social) media techniques.

At a trans institutional level the concept of a ‘tribe’ is widened, being a maximally fluid and trans local, sometimes virtual community of individual believers in which Christian schools and institutional churches, individual Christian teachers, pastors, youth workers and parents possibly can play a role in the “cloud of pedagogues”. The implication of forms of tribal socialization is thus being aware of a Christian community or tribe which is beyond institutional, organizational and visible borders with which individual believers and particular local de-institutionalized communities are (loosely) connected.

This double movement challenges the role of Christian schools and churches as organizations/institutes. What role might they play in the religious upbringing of a new generation of Christian youngsters? Our analyses thus far reveal two possibilities. One possibility is that the role of institutes (be it Christian schools or churches) is just decreasing and in the end fading away. Another possibility, which is much more interesting and realistic, is that institutes can have a powerful renewed role in the religious formation at local and trans

institutional levels. Their function is a supporting role which is twofold: (1) providing for authorities in the world wide pedagogical space, and (2) providing for or supporting of (new) religious communities.

The need for authorities among youngsters grows as a result of modern tendencies with regard to socialization in general and religious socialization in particular. What is true, what is worthwhile and what is right is subject to continuous debate: not only the youngster himself is constructing his own (religious) position in life, also youngsters and elder people surrounding him are continuously developing and changing their positions. As a result, there is a growing need for more or less stable authorities who can be anchor points for the identity development process of young Christian youth. At the same time, tribal tendencies with regard to socialization in general and religious socialization in particular not seldom result in communities of peers instead of multi/intergenerational communities. This leads to a need for authorities of an elder generation in particular.

In this respect, with regard to denominational schools, Vermeer (2009) states: "... denominational schools have two important contributions to make. Their religious affiliation not only enables them to introduce their students to a specific body of religio- cultural elements, but as living representatives of a particular religious tradition they also present these elements as meaningful" (Vermeer, 2009, p. 207). In these schools, teachers thus are not just facilitators of an individual religious quest of the youngster but a religious authority in the sense of being a living representatives of a particular religious tradition participating in the lives of young people. The same is true for parents, pastors and youth workers, as argued by Roebben (1997; who uses the word 'authority' here in the sense of authoritative...): "... in order to strengthen the agency pole of the young person, a confrontation is needed with other convincing agencies such as educators and parents. Their strength does not lie in their authority but in their wisdom, their authenticity, their affirmation of the contingency of every life project (included their own), their capacity to criticize and relativize the impact of media, and their openness to the stories of young people who are looking for a good life" (p. 334).

Young people are thus helped with an elder generation who invests in relationships with pupils, being present in their networks, showing in daily life their religious outlooks, affects and actions, being an authentic charismatic source of inspiration with whom pupils can identify with. In a de-institutionalized world, a new generation of Christian youth is still helped by authorities from an elder generation. It is the Christian school and the (institutional) church which can be the place in which these authorities can grow, be fed, and be inspired for the 'confrontation', the meeting with young people anywhere inside or outside the institute, in local street life or on the world wide web.

Institutes might not only have a powerful renewed role in providing for authorities but also in providing for or supporting of (new) religious communities. Although the role of institutes decreases when it comes to its structures, organizing principles and homogeneity, the institutes still bring forth a lot of social capital of which the pedagogical 'authorities' are an important part. To a certain level, schools and churches alike own the social forces to renew themselves in the direction of tribal communities that meet the challenges and needs of a new generation of Christian youth. At the same time these social forces or social capital can serve the existence/continuation of new religious communities outside the institutes: in this scenario the institutes are still there but they make their sources of inspiration, their tradition and their members more fruitful to communities outside its own borders: whether it be alternative

religious gatherings at a schoolsite, a missionary living community next door or a faith community on the internet.

6. Conclusion

Main question in this article was what implications tribal forms of religious socialization might have for the contribution of (religious) schools and Christian faith communities to the religious formation of Christian youth. This paper clarified that religious education of a new generation of Christians needs *authorities* and *communities* which are connected in a worldwide pedagogical space in which youngsters of this era are participating. This conclusion sheds light on the broader issue of the contribution of institutions to religious formation of a new generation of Christian youth which is growing up in a de-institutionalized world with increasing influence of multireligious and secular voices. The worldwide web or the social media context is not only a technical and communication context but also a pedagogical context where young people learn from other participants and communities. The same is true at street level: still the very local place one is living can be an important religious pedagogical context in which a small religious community can serve young people.

Both authorities and communities can be found in institutional settings but they should be connected to both local street level and the worldwide space. However, increasingly the authorities and communities will be found outside the institutes. This means that churches, schools, teachers, pastors, parents and other pedagogues should connect or reconnect with these new communities and authorities in order to be able to serve the young.

This paper shows the increasing importance of individual believers (authorities) and flexible and fluid religious communities in the religious upbringing of a new generation of Christian youth. This perspective of forms of tribal religious socialization adds to more organizational or institutional reflections on religious education, such as there is with regard to schools, e.g. the differences and preferences of segregated schools, program schools, (Christian) encounter schools and interreligious schools (Wardekker and Miedema (2001a,b)). The perspective of tribal religious socialization also adds to more organizational or institutional reflections with regard to the church as an institute. In The Netherlands, a clear development towards ecumenism and church unity is observed, also translated into structural fusions and unity. This paper is challenging this development by putting into perspective the role of structures on the meso level and lightening the role of individuals, the local context and the world wide pedagogical space on a trans institutional level.

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What Might Meaningful Interfaith Education Look Like? Exploring Politics, Principles and Pedagogy

Abstract: Though interfaith education presents political challenges, it is a main vehicle for communities to address violence and discrimination based in bigotry and misunderstanding. This colloquy, coordinated by a Jewish and a Christian educator, explores possibilities and procedures. The coordinators pose a series of questions: Who should invest resources in interfaith education? To what ends? In public schools, religious schools, congregations? How do we engage with theologies? The leaders hope to spark discussion within REA and generate new practices.

Description: This conversation on interfaith education is being hosted by a Jewish educator and a Christian educator, both of whom have participated in and written about extending the conversation about interfaith education and have experienced the gifts and challenges which arise. In addition to sharing our own experiences, we hope to draw from those present about hopes, concerns, experiences and pedagogical approaches. We welcome personal stories from participants about their interfaith education experiences, hoping to derive pedagogic suggestions that might offer effective practices. We hope to spark discussion within REA and generate new practices. Furthermore, we celebrate the interfaith education commitments at the heart of REA, embodied in the journal. We therefore want to give witness to and provide encouragement for more specific and ongoing strategies of interfaith educational work at the annual meetings of REA and in consultations it could sponsor.

Though interfaith education presents a minefield of political challenges, we believe it is the main vehicle for individuals and communities to address violence and discrimination based in religious bigotry, ignorance, and misunderstanding of other faiths. Without simply getting enmeshed in politics (with Friere, we acknowledge that all education is political) we will examine some of the issues that can act as stumbling blocks to interfaith education and understanding. Some stumbling blocks may be political; some may result from an uncritical ethnocentricity that encourages the continuation of cultural and theological bias (Byrne, 2011); and some may be rooted in particular expressions of faith traditions.

Interfaith education and intercultural education are often intertwined (Halsall & Roebben, 2006). In our work, we can learn much from the rather well-developed field of intercultural and multicultural education. For example, moving far beyond the “foods and festivals” approach, Banks (2009) points to the results of comprehensive multicultural education as content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure.

We hope all of these could result from religious or public processes of interfaith education.

Research in the UK about religious education in schools has suggested two goals for interfaith education: “to learn about” religion and religions, and “to learn from” religion so people can critically reflect on their own experiences and their interactions with others. In a world where religions sometimes conflict, these goals are seen as ways of building a common respect for the other in order to live together (*Religious Education: Non-Statutory National Framework*, 36 ff). But, even more, we also want to consider, even in cultures that practice the separation of church and state, how to add the spiritual dimension of this work and learning about and from others’ views of God and our understandings of religious vocation – to what is God calling us?

Interfaith education in schools and religious institutions faces significant challenges resulting from both public commitments and religious theologies. Some of the questions which must be asked include the following: Can the public schools invest resources in interfaith education? To what hoped-for ends? What would be permitted and what forbidden in a public school context? (Our various cultures have such different ways of dealing with religion in public life – from mandated to voluntary to almost excluded.) Would the main goals be acquiring knowledge of other religions and inculcating habits of openness, asking and listening, in order to create a just society? Should interfaith education have spiritual goals as well? If so, is it better to leave interfaith education to religious schools, where issues of spirituality and faith can be openly discussed? Or does it belong outside the schools altogether, in community settings? If so, who would undertake it? For what ages is this an appropriate field of study? How can we include children in order to plant the seeds of empathy and curiosity, to teach the habits of reaching out for dialogue, and building community?

Aims and goals, frameworks, curriculum, pedagogy, and responsibility are all issues we can discuss. From an initial exploration of the commitments colloquium participants come prepared to discuss, we plan to consider deeply the hoped-for reasons and goals of interfaith education and alternative places and procedures for its encouragement, and to envision pedagogical practices. Finally, we hope to develop some concrete suggestions to REA, beyond the work of the journal, about ways to engage and sponsor further conversations.

We hope in this colloquy to engage in a conversation that is both critical and spiritual. Critical, in order to reflect on the blinders imposed by ethnocentricity, and spiritual, because if such a conversation does not lead us closer to God, then what is it for? From our own experience as well as a review of the literature, we offer a beginning typology of reasons for interfaith education and different kinds of learning that interfaith education can engender. The typology with which we are presently working includes the following:

- Learning for purposes of contrast -- Learning about another religious tradition for apologetic purposes or for ability to fairly contrast

- Learning about -- Learning about another religious tradition for purposes of understanding and interacting. Simply realizing that we live in a shared world together. Respect begins here, but is often very shallow.
- Learning in spite of -- Making a concerted effort to learn about, understand and communicate with those of other faiths with whom we are in particular disagreement or conflict.
- Learning from -- Learning from another tradition about the ways all of us as religious people share procedures, understandings, and even histories. This mode of learning enhances my own learning of my religious tradition, e.g. that both Judaism and monophysite Christianity were present in the area where Muhammed received his revelation -- the connections shared. This is where respect really begins to grow.
- Learning with -- Learning about another's tradition and commitments so we can work in partnership on common projects for the common good, e.g. the commitment to "the least of these" in our three Abrahamic faiths -- widow, pilgrim, stranger. Such a conviction meant Jews and Christians worked together for racial justice in the U.S. and that Hindus, traditional religionists, Jews, and Christians worked to challenge apartheid in South Africa. The very process of working together towards a common goal becomes "learning with".
- Learning to deepen my own faith or learning from the "stranger," from otherness - learning from another tradition with the purpose of deepening my own connection to God, to religious identity, to faithfulness. This approach deepens my own faith perspective and also opens it to the depth of God's interaction with the world. Sara Lee tells a wonderful story in her book with Mary Boys. Hearing Mary talk about veneration of Jesus caused her to realize that it was "similar" to veneration of the Torah. For the both each had a source of light and honor.
- Learning for spiritual growth -- moving from personal spiritual growth to seeking and recognizing shared connection and insights about creation, community, and future.

Pre-Colloquy Thinking Activities:

1. What comments do you have about, or what additions, deletions or changes do you think could be made, to the typology?
2. Who should invest resources in interfaith education? To what ends? In public schools, religious schools, congregations? How do we engage with theologies?
3. What in your experience is shared between the complementary fields of intercultural education and interfaith education? What is unique to interfaith education, and why?
4. What meetings, epiphanies, dilemmas, flashes of insight or hard-won knowledge have occurred in your life related to interfaith understanding? Please bring your story.
5. How might personal experience like your own be translated into an educational framework? Or does education facilitate and enable, but not replace personal experience?

6. What practical pedagogical approaches have worked for you in interfaith education?
7. Some Roman Catholic and Muslim scholars are using a typology of inter-religious communication termed "dialogue of life." Do you think this could be useful in educational frameworks, and if so, how?

Dialogue of Life

a) The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.

b) The dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.

c) The dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.

d) The dialogue of religious experience, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute

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**‘INTELLIGENT’ RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?: POSSIBILITIES FOR
INTEGRATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND OTHER
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

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Abstract

This paper will explore the potential for technology-based tools to transform religious education. These technologies, such as the Web and collaborative computer systems, social simulations, and artificial intelligence algorithms, are already making major contributions to public education and may influence how we both view and approach our field. This paper will therefore look at specific examples of the kinds of technologies that are being used in education and in other fields. The potential strengths and noted limits of these technologies will also be outlined. Practical and theological reflections will be provided as will the possibilities for the field of religious education to chart new directions with these technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Maurice is a Euro-American religious educator who is working with a group of second and third generation Chinese-American youth. In addition to

helping these youth to navigate their identity and intercultural development in an urban U.S. context, Maurice would like to help them to grow in their faith as well as in their relationships with one another. Yet, even working with this small group of 20-30 youth seems daunting. Maurice wonders at all of the different dynamics and factors that there are to consider such as the intercultural influences in their lives, their own unique personalities, the cliques that they are forming within the group as well as in other parts of their lives, and many other complexities.

Maurice struggles with what goals to set for the group, how to go about pursuing these, and what kinds of assessment tools to draw from for their program.

Maurice has read some of the criticisms lodged against the effectiveness of discipleship programs (Hull 2006, 41-44; McCallum and Lowery 2006, 34) and wants to be more successful in this work. Overall, Maurice admittedly feels overwhelmed by the immensity of these considerations, wondering how the program will ever come together.

This situation is indicative of the instructional design and program development challenges that religious educators face on a regular basis.

Psychological and sociological dynamics are complex in and of themselves, but so too are the many factors that contribute to the discernment, design, and implementation of even a single program (Kyle In Press). However, there is also a great wealth of resources that are available from our religious traditions as well as contemporary fields such as neuroscience, education, psychology, counseling,

organizational development, and sociology, to name just a few. Nonetheless, how are we to effectively access and utilize such resources when there are so many of them? Given this, we might wonder whether there might be additional tools that can support our program development work.

This paper explores technology-based tools that may not only help religious educators in their program design and implementation, but might also have the potential to transform how we fundamentally engage in our work. Looking primarily to the field of education, the paper will look more specifically at how recently emerging technologies have and will continue to reshape public school classrooms and other educational systems (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 8578-8581). More specifically, we will be exploring how the Web and collaborative computer systems, social simulations, and artificial intelligence algorithms are transforming the face of education. Following this, some of the recognized strengths and limits of these technologies will be highlighted. Throughout these explorations and more fully in the third part of this paper possibilities for how religious educators might integrate these technologies are discussed. Finally, in the closing paragraphs, we consider some of the potential theological implications and invitations for this work and our field.

TANTALIZING TECHNOLOGIES!

As technologies have become more prolific in our world, the number and kinds of technologies has skyrocketed. From virtual worlds and games to hand held wireless devices with voice recognition systems, there seems to be no end in sight to ingeniousness and creativity with which technologies are being created and adapted for our lives. In a short paper such as this, one cannot possibly hope to cover the fuller range of technologies that are currently available. As a result, this section will highlight three kinds of technology that may have the potential to significantly impact our work as religious educators. Given Maurice's case example described above, these are technologies that may be able to aide practitioners in similar situations.

Web-based, WILD, & Collaborative Technologies

“The World Wide Web is the world's largest and most flexible repository of educational material, providing resources varying from simple libraries to fully integrated, intelligent applications,” writes educator Beverly Woolf (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 7522-7524). It is clear now that the Web is radically transforming education with more than 6.7 million students having taken at least one online course in 2012 and the percentage of college students taking online courses doubling from 23% to 45% over the last five years (Blair January 8, 2013; Bolkan June 24, 2013). In addition, as Woolf asserts, the Web is enabling global

access to vast amounts of information that are virtually available around the clock. The Web therefore not only allows anyone with access to a computer to engage these resources, but it is also a vast network that connects billions of documents and people annually (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 7526-7530).

In addition, there are an increasing number of Wireless Interactive Learning Devices (WILDs) that are being developed and utilized. The small size of handheld technologies is enabling learning to happen in more portable ways. WILDs, which allow users to access and interact with material both within and outside of the classroom, are now being used in informal settings such as museums to give tours, on field trips to record experiences and reactions for later discussions, and by school faculty and staff to empower easier data sharing and access on the fly (Pea and Maldonado 2006, Kindle Locations 15962-15968, 15981-15987, 15993-15997, 16018-16023). Within the classroom, students can use small handhelds to access and compare Web information with one another in a small group setting, as opposed to being gathered around a single computer (Pea and Maldonado 2006, Kindle Locations 15828-15835, 15843-15845, 15869-15870). Such changes are also empowering teachers to work more as a facilitator than a direct deliverer of material. These technologies are allowing teachers to monitor and alter student interactions more closely both with the material as well as with each other (Pea and Maldonado 2006, Figure 25.1).

Such collaborative learning is finding increasing importance in education and a number of technologies, known as computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL), are being developed to help support these pedagogies (Stahl, Koschmann, and Suthers 2006, Kindle Locations 15052-15054, 15066-15070). For instance, there are an increasing number of websites that help teachers to support one another as well as ones that offer online mentoring for students.¹ In addition, adaptive software programs are being developed to help improve the quality of how students, teachers, and tutors interact with one another (Walker, Rummel, and Koedinger In Press). The basic hope for CSCL technologies is to help teachers and students to facilitate the learning processes in more socially distributed ways.

For religious education, these Web-based, WILD, and CSCL innovations have the potential to reshape how we engage in our craft. Returning to our case example above, Maurice can access Web-based research and resources that explore and describe some of the intercultural dynamics that the youth may be experiencing as well as those that discuss theories and pedagogies that may be relevant for their unique urban context. Using handhelds, such as smart phones, these youth are likely to already be connected to one another on a regularly basis

¹ For examples, see such sites as: the Knowledge Forum, which provides teachers and students an online space to collaborate (<http://www.knowledgeforum.com>); and Amumba, a social

via such social sites as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and texting. Clearly, there are possibilities here for Maurice to interact with them in a more ongoing fashion outside of their face-to-face time together. In addition, it might also be possible to create CSCL software that helps these youth to have richer and deeper conversations with one another that are more relevant to their own religious, identity, cultural, and others kinds of formation.

Using mobile devices along with the Web, there might also be a place to develop more interactive software. For instance, if Maurice was currently teaching them about the local religious and cultural history of their community, the youth might be asked to visit certain sites around town. Upon their arrival at each location the relevant information that Maurice wants them to know would be automatically delivered to their smart phones or handheld devices. The use of these specific technologies is really only limited by ones imagination and abilities to develop them, and these are but a few and very simple ways that religious education might be broadened both in terms of how we think about and engage in our work.

Social Simulations

mentoring site (<http://amumba.com/>).

Social simulations use quantitative and qualitative models that are intended to represent and approximate specific dynamics in the world (Banks 2010, 1). These simulations are being used in such fields as psychology, sociology, and organizational development (Dietrich et al. 2009; Rouse and Boff 2005; Sun 2008; Takahashi, Sallach, and Rouchier 2007). In education, more specifically, simulations have been developed to predict a student's sense of "belongingness" to a content area such as math, the effects of a student's classroom seating location on achievement, and to evaluate classroom misbehavior issues (Lijun and Chunxiao 2009; Manan June 30, 2011; Marotta March 22, 2012).

These technologies are even beginning to find their way into religion. Researchers such as Laurence Iannaccone and Michael Makowsky at George Mason University and Professor of Anthropology James Dow have created simulations that seek to better understand the existence of religion in evolution and some of the reasons for why people make the religious choices that they do (Dow 2008; Iannaccone and Makowsky 2007). Beyond this, theorists and theologians such as Ted Metzler, Amanda Beyers, and John Goulden at Oklahoma City University suggest using these kinds of simulations to test different theories of God's actions in the world (Metzler, Beyers, and Goulden 2004). Their aim is to create a social simulation where different models of God's actions may be compared to one another as well as to secular scientific models.

Might these technologies also find their way into religious education?

Imagine if Maurice could develop such simulations to model group dynamics among the youth. It might even be possible for Maurice to test how an anticipated activity might go for the group before ever standing in front of them. These simulations might also be used to help Maurice to better understand each individual. This is because, in order to develop them, the author of the simulation must have a precise understanding of the individuals (or “agents”). Creating agent-based models can therefore lead to deeper insights and richer understandings of the individuals that they are intended to model. As with the technologies discussed above, social simulations therefore seem to have the potential to alter how we plan for and implement our programs.

Artificial Intelligence Algorithms

Of all of the technologies currently being developed and utilized in the field of education, artificial intelligence algorithms seem to have the greatest potentials for radically transforming our field. One example of how these technologies are already impacting education is intelligent tutoring systems (ITS). These systems help students to learn the content of a specific course by presenting them with problems and then providing detailed hints and feedback that are tailored to the student’s current capabilities (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 393-

397). Research on human tutors has shown that “students tutored by master teachers performed better than 98% of students who received classroom instruction” (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 4119-4125). Using artificial intelligence algorithms, ITS seek to approach this level of human tutoring effectiveness.

To help us to see how such intelligent algorithms and ITS work, consider the Andes Physics Tutor that was designed to help students to learn introductory physics at the high school and college levels (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 4762-4767).² In essence, Andes tracks a student’s reasoning and progress and generates an internal model of the student (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 1336-1337, 3599-3602). Using a probability-based algorithm, known as Bayesian Belief Networks (BBNs), Andes “reasoned about student physics solution plans, future actions, and overall level of knowledge” and compared student’s actions with internal expert models (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 1336-1337, 1935-1939, 3599-3602, 6297-6303). Based upon this “intelligent” analysis and self-constructed models, this physics tutor would then provide hints and give feedback that are supposed to be tailored to the student’s current level of understanding (Woolf 2008, 5378-5379).

² To learn more about this tutor and to try it out, visit the free and open website for Andes: <http://www.andestutor.org/>.

In evaluation of Andes, groups of students in college physics classes were required to use the tutor for a face-to-face class that they were taking instead of completing traditional pencil and paper homework, which was required of students in a control group. Students using Andes for homework regularly scored a letter grade higher than did the control group (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 4788-4794).

However, as one might imagine, developing ITS is not an easy task. In addition to specialized computer science training, these tutors require a great deal of time to develop and they seem to work best for those content areas where knowledge is well-defined, such as in physics (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 3062-3066, 4157-4162). Nevertheless, because it is fully autonomous, once a tutor is built for a course it can theoretically be used by an almost unlimited amount of users simultaneously (dependent upon the delivery system more than on the ITS). The Andes Physics Tutor, for instance, is currently online and being freely and widely used. In addition, some research suggests that these tutors are beginning to close the achievement gap that is based on racial differences and is often seen in our public educational systems (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 8593-8598). Globally, these intelligent tutors may very well improve the quality of education on a massive scale.

In addition to ITS, artificial intelligence algorithms are being used to aide educators with such tasks as data mining for massive amounts of information,

CSCCL as we have seen above, assessments, and in many other areas where intelligent and adaptive help is needed. So, can these algorithms help religious educators? How might Maurice benefit from their support? Clearly, software programs (intelligent or not) can be and have been developed to aide one in learning about more content specific areas such as what is found in the Bible.³ Beyond this, however, can ITS be developed to help disciples to be more ethical, think and reason more theologically, and become more socially engaged for instance? While there is an “unintelligent” politeness tutor that is available online,⁴ ITS have not shown themselves to be very effective in more ill-defined areas as those just mentioned and particularly in areas where there are multiple solution paths that are possible for a given situation or problem (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 3062-3066, 6449-6451).

Nevertheless, the potentials that these algorithms have for helping practitioners with information overload cannot be understated. Already is technology being used to help educators with research-based assessments, but also with more tailored and “just-in-time” learning (Means 2006, Kindle Locations 19041-19045, 19048-19052; Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 7538-

³ For examples of Bible software, see: <http://www.logos.com/>;
<http://www.olivetree.com/>.

⁴ To learn how to be more polite, visit:
<http://ctat.pact.cs.cmu.edu/index.php?id=politeness>.

7545). Imagine if such intelligent support were available to Maurice, actively providing resources and activities in response to the data that is collected about the youth on a regular basis. What if these algorithms were connected to their social media sites, helping Maurice to stay abreast of the emerging patterns, struggles, and interests of the youth?

Intelligent algorithms might very well be able to aid us in our discernment of which religious education programs to offer and how to deliver them. Coupled with social simulations and the other technologies discussed herein, the programs that Maurice and others might develop would ideally and continually be more timely, relevant, and transformative. Collectively, then, technology-based tools may very well have the potential to radically change not only how we think about religious education, but also how we engage with it via the programs that we develop and implement.

PLUG-INS & POWER FAILURES

From these very brief explorations, we can see that these technologies can be powerful in terms of helping to improve and in some ways simplify the field of education. Indeed, there are many strengths that may be associated with them. However, there are also a number of limitations that technologies, in general, have. In this section, we briefly consider both sides of these tools.

Potential Strengths of These Technologies

The noted strengths of these technologies are numerous, with three in particular that we will highlight here. First, these tools can be highly portable, adaptable, and engaging and can more easily support student-centered and constructivist approaches to education. In CSCL applications, for instance, technology can help to improve not only the efficiency but the quality of social interactions among students and are easily reconfigurable to meet the specific needs of each classroom (Stahl et al. 2006, Kindle Locations 15456-15472). Such ease of adaptability and communication is helping to support the rise of coaching and mentoring pedagogies that are central to constructivist views of education (Fishman and Davis 2006, Kindle Locations 20249-20261). Handhelds and other portable technologies are also allowing students to conduct more engaging and meaningful fieldwork (Pea and Maldonado 2006, Kindle Locations 15811-15817). Games and other virtual environments can also create engaging activities through use of personality-rich pedagogical agents who interact with students and lead them through various phases of learning and these agents can be designed to engage multiple learning styles (Richey, Klein, and Tracey 2011, pp. 99-100; Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 3010-3013). Not only can some of these technologies be used to increase student motivation, they can also be designed to

be continually adaptive to each student's personal needs via artificial intelligence and other algorithms (Blumenfeld, Kempler, and Krajcik 2006, Kindle Locations 17883-17884, 17889-17892, 17902-17904, 17912-17914; Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 1019-1021, 3017-3021).

Secondly, as technology continues to become more widespread, they are becoming increasingly more cost effective. According to some researchers, there may come a time of "ubiquitous computing," wherein technology is so integrated into our life and world that they are used naturally and smoothly (Pea and Maldonado 2006, Kindle Locations 15773-15780). Already in Higher Education is technology changing the way that education is being viewed both in terms of cost-effectiveness and delivery. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), for instance, offers what is known as Open Courseware, which are classes that are available for free to anyone with access to the Web (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 7571-7575).⁵ Such freedom and openness is beginning to challenge the very philosophical foundations of education that has traditionally been viewed in terms of geography (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 7564-7567). In other words, students no longer need to physically be in the same place as where the courses are designed and delivered and schools are saving costs with these online technologies as well as with on-site ones. Virginia Tech University, for example,

⁵ For more information on this, visit MIT's website: <http://ocw.mit.edu/about/>.

has created a “math emporium” center that houses more than five hundred computers that are used to support and deliver numerous math classes.⁶ This center reportedly “serves nearly seven thousand math students each year, at less than half the cost of the lecture courses it replaced, and with higher student math scores and student satisfaction” (Sawyer 2006, Kindle Locations 21453-21459). Hence, as technology increases in availability, functionality, and cost-effectiveness they are changing not only the quality of education but also its financial bottom line.

Finally, as we saw most clearly for artificial intelligence algorithms, a growing number of tools are being developed to augment human capabilities in terms of data processing and decision-making and our theories of education are being impacted as a result. As was mentioned above, computer programs have the ability to process massive amounts of data in very short time periods and can be designed to help highlight emerging patterns and trends (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 7538-7545). BBNs and artificial neural networks are being used to help students and teachers alike to process data and reason about the concepts they are studying (Means 2006, Kindle Locations 19112-19116, 19121-19124, 19133-19137; Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 5794-5797). Other intelligent algorithms,

⁶ For more information, visit the Math Emporium Website:

<http://www.emporium.vt.edu/>.

such as Reinforcement Learning and Hidden Markov Models, are being used to generate teaching policies based upon mass student data and to predict student problem-solving strategies with as much as a 90% accuracy for some applications (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 5981-5984, 6122-6124). These intelligent technologies are not only helping educators to better understand how teaching and learning occur, they are also being used to create and verify various theories of learning (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 4157-4162). Indeed, the current and future contributions of these technologies are not only quite numerous, they are potentially revolutionary for fields such as education as well as our own.

Noted Limitations

Nevertheless, as we have already seen above, there are also a number of limitations that these technologies have and two in particular will be highlighted here. First, in spite of numerous data suggesting that ITS can consistently outperform traditional direct instruction classroom in some fields, they have not been able to approach the quality of more student-centered approaches such as one-on-one human tutoring (Means 2006, Kindle Locations 19141-19147). As we might expect, humans are able to provide guidance that is more insightful, timely, and individually relevant to students. Relatedly, multimedia-rich technologies such as games, virtual worlds, and videos can actually become so overly

stimulating that they distract students from actually learning the content at deeper levels (Richey et al. 2011, pp. 44-45). Overall, the impact that current technologies can have is limited in both the kind of learning that they can provide as well as the quality of it.

A second set of limitations are related to the preparation and implementation of many of these technologies. One of the major critiques of them in education has been in how they are actually being used in the classroom. For instance, studies have discovered that technology was being generally used more as add-ons to direct instruction rather than to foster the kinds of deeper learning that are the focus of our schools (Sawyer 2006, Kindle Locations 776-784; Schofield 2006, Kindle Locations 19581-19583, 19617-19622). Best practices in educational technology stipulate that these technologies should be integrated in ways that centrally further the learning goals of the classroom and this has not been happening in classrooms to the extent that it should be (Quintana et al. 2006, Kindle Locations 5099-5106; Schofield 2006, Kindle Locations 19581-19583, 19617-19622).

As a result, it has become quite apparent that the integrated use of technology requires additional training to effectively utilize them. Teachers must be very intentional about which tools they are going to use and how they are going to use them. They therefore need to know these technologies in-depth and additional training is a necessary prerequisite to their use. In addition, more

teacher effort in the classroom is required because students too need additional help in learning and being able to effectively make use of these tools (Stahl et al. 2006, Kindle Locations 15086-15087, 15091-15095; Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 7668-7670).

While we might walk into our kitchen or garage and use technologies that make our life easier and faster with little knowledge of how they work, the current state of educational technologies does not yet seem to follow this paradigm. On the contrary, as we saw with ITS, the time, background, and experience required to develop and modify the more complex technologies is quite significant. As a result, some of these technologies, such as artificial intelligence algorithms, have been slow to catch on because of the effort and education that is required to adapt them for local applications (Woolf 2008, Kindle Locations 5019-5020). As has been the trend with technology in general, however, such limitations may diminish as their usability and the general public's experiences and education with them increases. Nevertheless, these are just some of the challenges that practitioners will face as they seek to integrate more and more of these tools into their craft.

FINDING GOD IN THE GRID: CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Despite these limitations, as we have seen, there are a number of possibilities for how practitioners such as Maurice might be greatly aided in their program planning and implementation. Putting the technologies together, imagine if there were data mining algorithms that could provide Maurice with more detailed information from web-based research journals and other practitioners that were relevant for the programs that the youth will engage. Imagine if software were available that could help Maurice to build models of each youth based on both this collected information as well as on Maurice's own observations and reflections. What if these models could then be used to run simulations that gave Maurice an idea of which lessons and activities might work better with the youth beforehand. Imagine if this software could help Maurice implement the programs via WILDs and other collaborative technologies. Finally, what if intelligent algorithms could help Maurice to gather in-vivo observations and assessments that could then be used to update the models and provide a more accurate and ever developing picture of the complex dynamics that Maurice faces on a regular basis. Might such applications really be possible in the near future? Can they be used to genuinely improve the quality and effectiveness of our religious education programs? As I have tried to argue throughout this paper, the technologies emerging in the last few decades have the potential to radically alter not only how we engage in our craft but also how we think about our field.

Their impact also goes beyond what was just described. To help illustrate this point more fully, consider the following. In recent years, a number of school districts across the country, such as in Florida, have launched middle and high schools that are offered completely in an online format.⁷ What if religion began to use these technologies to create completely online communities? Think that it can't be done? Then, consider this: there is currently a free, 3-D, online virtual world known as Second Life which offers its users a number of islands that one can visit.⁸ Users create their own personas, known as "avatars," and can explore this world extensively on their own. In Second Life, there is an island, known as Epiphany Island, on which is housed an Anglican Cathedral where visitors can go for worship, scripture studies, small group interactions, and much more.⁹ In essence, Epiphany Island is intended to be its own church for members in the virtual world. Could this be the future of religious education, one where we are called to develop virtual Sunday schools, technology-driven theological education experiences, and "intelligently" supported faith formation groups?

⁷ For a list of schools that offer this, see: <http://www.k12.com/schools-programs>. To see an example of one of these schools, visit the Florida Department of Education's website at: <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/virtual-schools/>.

⁸ To learn more about Second Life, visit: <http://secondlife.com/>.

⁹ To learn more about this online Cathedral, visit: <http://slangcath.wordpress.com/about/>.

Looking within the Christian tradition, our religious communities are places where transformation becomes reality, where we are enculturated into new ways of being, and where we receive the support that we need to grow (Cassian 1997, 263; Hull 2006, 188-89; O'Connell 1998, 85-86). They are also the contexts in which we receive much-needed encouragement and empowerment as well as where we are held accountable to the standards that our traditions uphold (Clark 1994, 240; Felder 2002, 99). Summing up these perspectives, Christian religious educators Anne Streaty Wimberly and Evelyn Parker write, “Our churches are essential faith “villages” that generate this wisdom formation through giving gifts of time, information, insights, encouragement, and praise” (Wimberly and Parker 2002, 17). The major concern here is therefore the extent to which this level of formative communal interactions can be accomplished via these technologies. For Christians, we might ask if Jesus’ ministry would have been as powerful and formative if it were done completely via the Web.

Another major issue to be addressed is the role that religious educators should have in the development of these tools and in the writing of the policies that govern their use. How might our specific traditions, in terms of their beliefs, ideals, values, practices, sacred texts, ways of life, et cetera, shape and guide the direction of not only how these technologies are being used but perhaps even in their very design? We have already seen how social simulations are being used to pursue questions of religion in human evolution and possibly to test different

theologies. Should we, as Metzler and his team, have a louder voice and play a stronger role in how these tools are being used?

It therefore seems that there is a dialectic that can happen between these ever emerging technologies and our long standing religious traditions. There are a number of possibilities, perhaps on a spectrum, for how we might engage with them in relation to our faith traditions including: 1) Isolationsim, where we simply ignore their existence and contributions; 2) Tradition-Centered, where we hold our traditions more centrally and seek to modify and integrate these technologies as seems appropriate; 3) Mutually Dialectic, where we the contributions of our traditions and these technologies are considered with equal weighting; and 4) Technology-Centered, where we seek to radically transform our religious ways of being and doing, with technologies leading these changes.¹⁰ In line with the purposes of spiritual discernment, it may be that we and our communities may need to embrace any one of these positions at different times for different situations.

Overall, then, perhaps some of the greatest questions that religious educators from theistic traditions have to face in relation to these technologies are the following: *Does God act within and through them? Does God use them to*

achieve God's aims? If so, then as faith-filled people and practitioners, we have no other choice but to continually discern where and how God is doing this and where God might be calling us to partner with God in the use of these technologies. If not, then we have no other choice but to proactively work to oppose them for we are called, at least in Western Christianity, to stand against distortions of life as much as we are called to stand with God. Nevertheless, whichever side one stands in relation to these questions, there can be no denying that each of us is called to do the same thing, and that is to engage with technology. Perhaps in doing so we will not only continue in the long history of world transformation that is so much a part of our religious histories, but we might even experience change for ourselves and our communities along the way.

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¹⁰ Of course, there is a fifth possibility, what we might perhaps call “Traditional Abandonment,” and that would be to ignore the contributions of our religious traditions altogether and let the technologies dictate future directions.

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NB - this paper is for a colloquium. The specific aim of the colloquium is contained at the end of this opening abstract.

“Corporate Takeovers in the Ministry of U.S. Catholic Education and the Effect on Catholic Identity: Models from the 19th Century Schools and 21st Century Hospitalsⁱ”

Abstract

A sign of secularization is the move toward “corporatization” evident in the institutions of the Catholic Church concerned with health, education and welfare – Catholic hospitals, Catholic schools and Catholic social service agencies – entities taking up management structures or other features and behaviors employed by corporations. With the incorporation of these ministries the secular profit concerns of financial margin and efficiency begin to take center stage. Many see these practices as threatening Catholic identity and the influence of its mission.

The nineteenth century story of U.S. Catholic education relates the social and economic evolution of that ministry and its adaptation to conditions of U.S. culture. Beginning as private education for the elite, that ministry in the middle of the century took the form of charity education to a significant majority of immigrant Catholics. John Hughes (Archbishop of New York) and his struggle with the state of New York over the dominance of the Protestant Bible provides an initial story of the U.S. institutionalization of Catholic schooling. By the end of the century with the founding of the National Education Association (NEA) and shortly thereafter the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) we experience a new institutionalization – a professional system of education to the middle class with a new class of professional educators, vowed women religious – which becomes the dominant face of the ministry of Catholic education through the twentieth century, both expressing and forming Catholic identity at that time. Hughes’ counterpart at the end of the nineteenth century Bernard McQuaid (Bishop of Rochester, New York) dismissed the Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg from his diocese when they refused to switch their focus from the poor to schools for the middle class – “. . . there is not a charity... which ... can for one moment be compared to our parochial schoolsⁱⁱ.”

In the twenty-first century we are experiencing another shift in the ministry and consequent identity which might be termed – “corporatization.” School boards have become much more decisive in their direction of Catholic education – starting in the mid-60’s in the colleges and universities and extending even to parochial schools today. With the board movement we are developing a model of the ministry along the lines of business boards and corporations. The profit concerns of financial margin and efficiency become paramount: “There is no mission without margin.” “Corporatization” is again a significant ministry shift and brings with it a shift in Catholic identity fraught with many concerns and opportunities. However,

the nineteenth century shift was none the less radical and raised no less conflicting values in identity.

The good news for twenty-first century Catholic education is that the move in this direction is not in uncharted territory. Over the past 25 – 30 years another major ministry of the Catholic Church in the United States – healthcare – has been undergoing a similar “corporatization” of the ministry. The story of Catholic health care’s movement from direct control and administration primarily by religious orders of women to mega Catholic systems tells of a major focus adjusting this Catholic ministry to the demands of the corporate world and re-expressing Catholic identity. A new and major position in these hospitals and systems has arisen, the *executive for mission*. Catholic schools – higher education through secondary – are beginning to promote similar overseers of the identity.

This paper’s presentation of a new endeavor for secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (part one), re-presentation of the nineteenth century shift in the ministry of Catholic education (part two), and comparison of parallel practices of these ministries from today’s world of U.S. Catholic health care (part three) applies a model of analysis developed in a study of the nineteenth century mission and ministry of Catholic education to examine the identity promoted by the Catholic Church’s mission in this present time. The focus of the REA/APPRE colloquium is to examine the adequacy of this model of analysis.

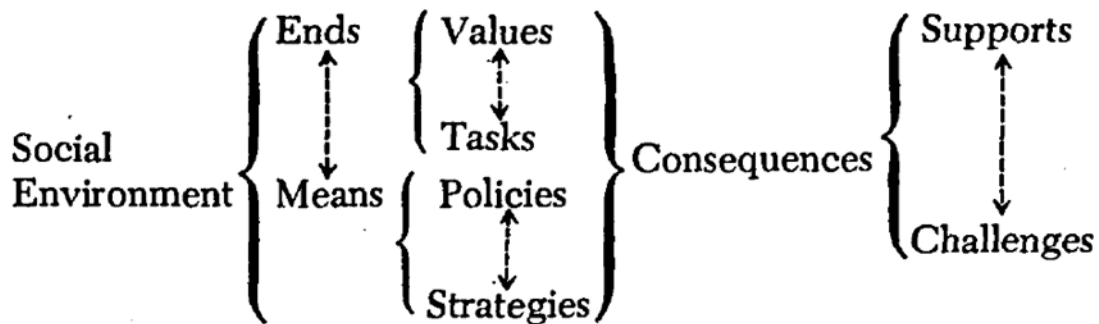
Aim of the Colloquium Presentation

The overriding concern of this paper is to address Catholic identity as the church’s ministries forge their future. Cardinal Bernardin, in the opening quote of this paper, observed that today’s Catholic ministries emerge from their compression between their past sacred heritage and their present existence in a secular world producing a “mixed model of identity.” Thus Catholic tradition is an ongoing task of construction. Ministries in the nineteenth century both developed and effected a specific Catholic identity that became part of the US Catholic heritage.

My study of the nineteenth century came out of a particular model of analysis that reflects this construction of tradition. My desire in this REA colloquium (Boston, November 2013) is to engage with you on the adequacy this model of analysis for discerning contemporary religious identity resulting from the church’s ministries.

Here is a brief explanation of that model to describe the emerging expression of corporate Catholic education in the twenty-first centuryⁱⁱⁱ.

Diagram of Analysis



The model begins by attending to the social environment, that is, the pressing issues of the day that impact Catholics, their institutions and the identity. These pressing issues challenge the purpose or ends of Catholic activity and within those ends one finds the values and tasks that come to the surface and direct the means – the policies and strategies Catholics employ to carry out their ends/goals. These values and their activities have results or consequences which are either supported or further challenged – solidifying the identity of a particular epoch. It is from this interactive matrix that one can begin to identify the emergence of a distinct Catholic identity for the time. This is not a linear procedure. The test of the actual identity comes in the dynamic of the interaction of these elements. Particular means (policy statements and strategies) verify or challenge the espoused statements of goals (ends) and values.

In the nineteenth century, as you can see from that section of my paper (p. 15), the competing values were to accommodate to the U.S. way of life or to erect a fortress island of Catholicism. The results or consequences for that period were a mixture of these two values that emanated in twentieth century U.S. Catholicism – a strong distinct Catholic presence that in fact permeated the U.S. way of life.

I would direct you to the three appendices of the paper (pp. 25-27) for quick one-page overview of the analyses of the nineteenth century Catholic school mission and ministry, the twenty-first century Catholic health ministry and the contemporary Catholic school situation.

In 1991 speaking of “Catholic Institutions and their Identity” Cardinal Bernardin stated:

Catholic colleges and universities, health care institutions and social service agencies already live with one foot firmly planted in the Catholic Church and the other in our pluralistic society....[Thus, they] face a common dilemma. The bishop and diocese at times may consider them too secular, too influenced by government, too involved with business concepts. The public, on the other hand, often considers them too religious, too sectarian. As a result, they find themselves sandwiched between the church and the public, trying to please both groups...A mixed model of identity will prevail in the future, not a strictly denominational or secular one.^{iv}

1. The Case of Philadelphia Catholic Secondary Schools

September 1, 2012 the Archdiocese of Philadelphia turned over management and leadership of 17 Catholic secondary schools and 4 special education schools to an independent corporation, *Faith and the Future Foundation*, creating an independently managed Catholic school system to focus “... upon major fundraising, enrollment management, marketing and cultivating best practices in leadership and education.”^v The Archbishop, Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. stated: “Today's agreement between the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the *Faith in the Future Foundation* is unlike any agreement that a Diocese has achieved with its lay leadership,”^{vi} and added “The willingness of lay leaders with a love for Catholic education to step forward is encouraging. The commitment made by the Foundation—a commitment to professional excellence in management, guided by a strong and faithful Catholic identity—will serve our high schools and schools of special education well... we are confident that this agreement will lead to an even stronger school system for the children of the Philadelphia region.”^{vii} He added this will “change the organizational structure for Catholic education, not its mission.”^{viii} The move affects some 16,000 students in the archdiocese. The archbishop when asked about how he has enjoyed his first 19 months said, “I haven’t liked it at all. . . . I have had to close about 50 schools and will be closing parishes in the next couple of years in a way that will be disappointing to a lot of people. We have financial problems that are unimaginable. This is an extraordinary place but things have changed immensely.”^{ix} He stated that while maintaining our values and enthusiasm we have to look at a change in structures. “We can’t keep open parishes that are empty; we can’t keep schools that have only 80 kids in them, we just can’t.”^x Change, he said, is going to be awkward and difficult, but “if we are going to be the Church that Jesus Christ wants us to be, we have to be different¹.”^{xi}

Under this arrangement the Archdiocesan Office for Catholic Education, which previously oversaw the schools, has become a division of the *Faith in the Future Foundation*, reporting directly to the foundation's CEO. The foundation board consists of 15 members with the

¹ I believe we need to ask why financial support is not there – it seems the money is. I would like to further research here on comparative data on Catholic financial wealth in the 1st decade of 2000 versus over the 20th century. “... church revenue — which flows from parishes via Sunday donations, bequests and so on — grew to \$11.9 billion in 2010, an inflation-adjusted increase of \$2.2 billion from a decade earlier. Yet educational subsidies have fallen; the church now pays at least 12.6 percent of parochial elementary school costs, down from 63 percent in 1965.” The New York Times January 6, 2013 “Catholic Education, in Need of Salvation” PATRICK J. McCLOSKEY and JOSEPH CLAUDE HARRIS

Archbishop appointing only one-third of them. The Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education continues to focus on curriculum and standards; academic and spiritual development of students; co-curricular and extracurricular programming; and professional development of teachers. Under the new agreement, however, it is an agency of the new foundation and reports to it. The Archdiocese retains ownership of the properties. According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, prior to the announcement – by July 1, 2012 the new foundation had already raised \$15 million of its \$100 million goal.

“This isn’t simply a chance to transform the nation’s oldest and largest Catholic school system but rather a chance to reinvigorate Catholic education in the United States,” said Casey Carter, CEO of *Faith in the Future*^{xii}. “... Since the year 2000, nearly 2,000 Catholic schools have closed all across the country and it is time for that trend to stop. I have worked in – and studied the best practices of some of the very best schools in the world – and now it is time, beginning here in the city of Philadelphia, to bring those practices to the service of Catholic schools.... I am confident that this can be the vanguard for what other dioceses can do to grow Catholic schools again and ensure that they remain a critical educational option within our communities.”^{xiii}

The executive management team includes H. Edward Hanway, Chairman of the foundation and Samuel Casey Carter Chief Executive Officer². Both of these men come from significant corporate positions. Hanway was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of CIGNA Corporation, One of the largest health service companies and health care insurance providers in the U.S. Carter ran his own consulting firm providing strategic consulting to school operators and was president of National Heritage Academies, a charter school management company that operates more than 75 schools in nine states.

According to a New York Times Aug 21, 2012 article this movement to a foundation-run school system “... comes after a tumultuous year for the archdiocese, marked by a high profile child sex abuse scandal that cost an estimated \$11 million, as well as a scramble to sell properties to head off a \$6 million budget deficit. Philadelphia's Catholic schools have seen a 72 percent drop in enrollment since 1961.”^{xiv}

a. Commentators on the Decision

Several commentators described the decision as a groundbreaking one that could affect Catholic elementary and secondary education across the nation within the next few years:

- Catholic News Service (CNS) reported: “It is believed to be the first time a diocese has given control of a major part of its schools to an independent and essentially lay board.”^{xv}
- Karen Ristau, president of the National Catholic Educational Association, said the only thing she could think of that comes close to the Philadelphia situation is that of public school districts turning over some of their poor-performing schools to an education management company.^{xvi}

² As yet, I have been unable to get salaries. I would like to find out from the Archbishop how he affords to pay this leadership.

- Charles Zech, founder and head of Philadelphia-based Villanova University's Center for the Study of Church Management, described the archdiocese's move as "an innovative approach to a problem that has the potential to drag every U.S. diocese down financially. . . . The costs of providing Catholic education, especially at the high school level -- teacher's salaries, benefits, maintenance on old buildings, the need to have cutting-edge technology, etc. -- are far outpacing parents' ability to pay tuition and a diocese's ability to subsidize school costs,. . . Similar concerns are on the horizon for parochial grade schools. . . . It's clear that something has to be done,. . . and every diocese in the country should be watching this closely"^{xvii} to see if it succeeds and might serve as a model.
- Francis Butler, a consultant to Catholic philanthropies and recently retired president of FADICA (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities), stated that what is truly new in the Philadelphia archdiocese is that it has ceded managerial control of its Catholic high schools to a lay-led private foundation that is intentionally Catholic, Butler said. "People want a voice," he said. "Once families are able to have a voice, they can thrive."^{xviii}

b. Context for the Decision

20012– 13 Enrollment^{xix}:

- Total Catholic school student enrollment for the 2012-13 academic year was 2,001,740.
 - 1,415,244 in elementary/middle schools; 586,496 in secondary schools
- Student diversity: 19.6% are racial minorities, 14.3% are Hispanic/Latino and 6.4% were reported as unknown in the racial data collection.
- Non-Catholic enrollment is 317,470 which is 15.9% of the total enrollment.

Schools:

- There are 6,685 Catholic schools: 5,472 elementary; 1,213 secondary.
- 28 new schools opened; 148 consolidated or closed.
- 2,166 schools have a waiting list for admission.

The student/teacher ratio is 13:1.

Professional Staff:

Full-time equivalent professional staff numbered 151,405:

- 96.8%: Laity (Lay women: 74.5% Lay men: 22.3%)³
- 3.2%: Religious/Clergy (Sisters: 2.2%; Brothers: 0.5%; Clergy: 0.5%)

The Decline

The number of schools dropped from 8,114 to 6,841 – an average loss of 127 schools a year. Student enrollment in the mid-1960s was more than 5.2 million in nearly 13,000 elementary and

³ I want to do further research on how many of these teachers are Catholic and what their salary range is.

secondary Catholic schools, there are now only half as many schools, and 2.1 million students enrolled. This is a drop of 63% Over the last 10 years enrollment in U.S. Catholic elementary and secondary schools has dropped more than 25 percent to about 2 million..^{xx}

America magazine this past February concludes:

“Each report of mass closings evokes a familiar scene: the public shakes its head and educators scramble for new models to stanch the blood-letting. In some cases, these models—public charter schools, for example, and independent faith-based schools like the Cristo Rey and Nativity Miguel networks—have been quite successful. But new structures are only part of the solution to America’s vanishing Catholic schools. The system that manages Catholic education has become so outdated and sclerotic that only by tackling a range of fundamental issues can Catholic schools hope to thrive again.”^{xxi}

Catholic Money

According to The Economist the 6,800 Catholic schools are 5% of the national total along with 244 Catholic colleges and universities. The 630 hospitals plus a similar number of smaller health facilities are 11% of the US total^{xxii}.

The Economist estimates that annual spending by the church and entities owned by the church at \$170 billion in 2010: 57% is on health-care, 28% on colleges. Parish and diocesan day-to-day operations account for just 6% of that amount and national charitable activities just 2.7%.⁴ Catholic institutions employ over 1 million people. [For purposes of comparison, in 2010 General Electric’s revenue was \$150 billion and Walmart employed roughly 2 million people.]

The church is the largest single charitable organization in the country. Catholic Charities USA, and its subsidiaries employ over 65,000 paid staff and serve over 10 million people. These organizations distributed \$4.7 billion to the poor in 2010, of which 62% came from local, state and federal government agencies.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that America’s Catholics give about \$10 per week on average. Assuming that one-third attend church regularly, that would put the annual offertory income at around \$13 billion. More comes from elite groups of large donors such as the Papal Foundation, based in Pennsylvania, whose 138 members pledge to donate at least \$1 million annually, and Legatus, a group of more than 2,000 Catholic business leaders that was founded by Tom Monaghan of Domino’s Pizza⁵.

There is also income from investments. Archbishop Dolan of New York is Manhattan’s largest landowner, including the parishes and organizations that come under his jurisdiction. Another source of revenue is local and federal government, which support the Medicare and Medicaid of patients in Catholic hospitals, some of the cost of educating pupils in Catholic schools along with loans to students attending Catholic universities.

⁴ I would like to do a little more research on these figures.

⁵ I would like to do an assessment on how much private Catholic money there is (Butler/FADICA)?

There is Catholic money for this ministry, seemingly much more than a century ago.

The Economist points out that with such massive amounts of money there is a requirement for data-driven accountability and transparency.

In an age where information and disclosure are joining forces to rewrite the rules by which companies and organizations operate, the Catholic Church appears to be opaque and secretive. That is unfortunate, since it has an excellent story to tell about its elementary and high schools. Not only do they educate vast numbers of underserved children in inner-city neighborhoods—thereby relieving the public sector of that burden—but they have set and met high standards, proved by the number of minority students who excel academically and then go on to pursue higher education.^{xxiii}

Beyond Institutional Burdens: The loss of parishes and church life

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), the Church in the United States has lost 1,359 parishes during the past 10 years, or 7.1 percent of the national total, and most of those have been in the Northeast and the Upper Midwest^{xxiv}.

New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan stated: “I’m developing a theory that one of our major challenges today is that American Catholic leadership is being strangled by trying to maintain the behemoth of the institutional Catholicism that we inherited from the 1940s and ’50s.”^{xxv}

This upheaval and displacement is profound and goes beyond the dismantling of what the “builder generation” of Catholics produced. The changes go deeper than the bricks and mortar of Catholic identity to the psychology and practice of what it means to be Catholic today. “We have before us a generation of young adults and young Catholics who are negotiating life and faith in a wholly different way,”^{xxvi} Franciscan Fr. David B. Couturier said in a speech last October to the Council of Priests of New York State.

What we know, Couturier said, is that “Catholics are developing a complex relationship between their Catholic identity on the one hand, and the way they understand what it means to practice their identity in the traffic of daily life on the other. . . . They are changing their mind and their behavior when it comes to the moral authority of the hierarchy and their commitment to the institutional church and its policies and regulations.”^{xxvii}

Catholics may really like being Catholic and identifying themselves as such, but research also shows, Couturier said, that those same Catholics “are diverging, sometimes dramatically, on their attitudes toward church practice: how frequently one should attend Mass, on issues of sexual morality, on abortion and homosexuality, on the discipline that only celibate men can become priests and over the church’s involvement in activities directed toward social justice.”^{xxviii} Catholics are renegotiating religious authority and their roles in the faith.

Couturier said the primary question is not how are our beliefs holding up, but how the church is helping Catholics negotiate life. He acknowledges that increasingly today people can find the church “largely tangential to the high task of developing character in today’s turbulent world of family, love and business.” He asks, “How conducive are our Catholic institutions for the transformative work of faith in the postmodern world – whether our work and our institutions are meeting the needs of our people today?.”^{xxix}

2. The Nineteenth Century Story of US Catholic Education

As we look at this case of Philadelphia enacting a new model for Catholic education’s institutional operation I would like to go back and examine the nineteenth century historical precedents for institutional change in Catholic education to examine parallel challenges to Catholic identity as expressed by this mission and offer a model of analysis of mission and identity.

The nineteenth century story of U.S. Catholic education relates the social and economic evolution of that ministry in its adaptation to conditions of U.S. Catholicism. At the opening of the century the schooling that went on was aristocratic education for the wellborn. In the middle of the century this ministry took the form of charity schools to a significant majority of immigrant Catholics. Archbishop of New York, John Hughes and his struggle with the state of New York over the dominance of the Protestant version of the Bible provides an initial story of the U. S. institutionalization of Catholic schooling. By the end of the century with the founding of the National Education Association (NEA) and shortly thereafter the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) we experience a new institutionalization – a professional system of education to the middle class with a new class of professional educators – which became the dominant expression of the ministry of Catholic education through the twentieth century both expressing and forming Catholic identity at that time.

The nineteenth century then offers us a look at three different models by which Catholic education was conducted. Each of these models represents the values called forth by cultural conditions of the times.

In 1785 Pope Pius VI's nuncio met with Benjamin Franklin at palace of Versailles to seek congressional advice regarding the appointment of the first U.S. Bishop, now that the Revolutionary war had freed the colonies of English penal laws and the Constitution was being developed in Philadelphia. The Congress responded to Franklin: "The subject of his (the nuncio's) application to Doctor Franklin, being purely spiritual, it is without the jurisdiction and powers of Congress who have no authority to permit or refuse it."^{xxx}

This historic incident marked the radical adjustment that Roman Catholicism had to make as church in the United States. Relationship with a non-confessional state was a reality out of which the new U.S. Catholic Church would begin to reform its self-identity and its ministries. Four challenges were at the heart of this original self-definition.

The story of the models of Catholic schooling moves from upper class, to lower class, to middle class concerns. During this century the Catholic Church in the United States subsequently followed three plans for the education of its people. The first plan envisioned by John Carroll established colleges (and related schools for the wealthy) and seminaries fashioned after the schools conducted by other churches in this country at the time of the Revolution. This was Catholic aristocratic education. The second plan, that fostered by John Hughes, was modeled after the benevolent schools run by charitable institutions funded by the state. By the close of this period, Bernard McQuaid, Bishop of Rochester, New York had already spearheaded the third plan that would become the paradigm for the twentieth century—parochial schools for all—the middle class schools.

The organizational structures of the schools mediated the content of education. They were organized on a diocesan level. A priest directly appointed by the bishop held the power as superintendent of the schools. Major decisions were made at this level. The parish priest had control and responsibility over the local school plant. The people bore the responsibility for financial support.

Two hundred years ago Catholics were beginning to settle in this country as immigrants and struggling over who they were and how they described their God. Perhaps, the scripture which best expressed this experience was that of the immigrant Jews in Babylonian captivity: "How shall we sing God's song in a strange land?" By 1884, at Baltimore Council III, the church codified images of God and Catholics in relation to this God in a catechism and mandated that each of its Churches should build a school to cultivate and transmit those perceptions. The medium fused with the message and together school and catechism produced the images by which Catholics perceived themselves and their God for most of the subsequent century.

The Catholic Church's struggle with the challenges of religious tolerance, church polity, the relationship between church and state, and the relationship of religion to education produced a *modus operandi* for the twentieth century which established an island community, existing complete in its own world but completely surrounded by and affected by another. U.S. Catholics developed a structure of parochial schooling which reflected and reinforced a "siege" mentality in the nineteenth century immigrant Church.

Response to these four challenges produced the parochial school as the ideal way to form Catholic identity. The primary goal of Catholic education was the preservation of the Catholic faith. Its secondary goal, the interpretation of U.S. culture to the immigrants, took two competing directions: the creation of a pure Catholic culture, and the leavening of the nation's culture. Here key values were formed in nineteenth century Catholic identity: Catholic schools reinforce the relationship of religion and education as well as accommodated the separation of church and state. The school cultivated the laity's moral and intellectual dependence on the clergy and religious. The Catholic schools were the way to "Americanize" Catholics under the control of the Church.

Challenges (1)

The first challenge was that of religious tolerance. How would the Church rework its self-concept as the ONE true Church in a state that was non-confessional? The second was that of church governance. In a democratic form of government, voluntarism would supersede old-world authoritarianism. The third challenge was that of church-state separation and consequent

secularization. In the United States, the "religious" would be separated from the "public" in matters of moral behavior. Fourthly, there was the separation of religion and education. The norm in the U.S. would become universal public schooling to form the United States identity. The Church would not get state support in its efforts to influence human development and formation.

In struggling with these challenges, the Church both forged its identity and participated in the construction of the U.S. *paideia* – the substance and character of U. S. culture.

Social Context (2)

Four nineteenth century contextual elements are significant: immigration, nativism, secularization, and educational reform.

The story of immigration can be told from population statistics. When Roman Catholics began their life as citizens of the United States at the time of the Revolution, their numbers accounted for only 1.1 percent of the population – 35,000 of the 3,172,000 people who were considered citizens in 1790. From 1790 until 1880 the Roman Catholic share of the population grew to 14.4 percent. The number of the foreign born in major cities was staggering. In 1860, for example, 49 percent of New York City's population and 30 percent of Philadelphia's were foreign born. St. Louis had a foreign-born population of 60 percent; Chicago, 50 percent. By 1850, almost 60 percent of all Roman Catholics were foreign born. "Foreign" and "Catholic" became synonymous; to encounter the one was to react to the other.

Nativism is the term historians use to describe the reaction by those born in this country to people who immigrated here. If one thinks of how, in biological life, the host body fights to reject foreign matter that enters it, one can conceptualize the relationship of "native" Protestants to "foreign" Roman Catholics in the nineteenth century. A look at one of the three million copies of the New England Primer from 1700 to 1850 reveals the residual of old-world anti-Catholicism that pervaded the colonies before the number of Catholics was significant. When that number began to increase, so did the literary attacks. In the 1840's this nativism took the form of civil riot. In the 1850's this nativism developed into political and economic discrimination.

With the nineteenth century comes the beginning of a decline of religion in the public life of society – the rise of secularism. The experience of democracy developed in the eighteenth century challenged religion as the sole basis for knowing truth. Laws that disestablished churches in the individual states weakened the union of religion and education significantly by the end of that century.

The reform of education was the fourth element to affect Catholics in the nineteenth-century social environment. The purpose of the reform was to create a new institution in society—the public school—to form a common life for all the citizens. A common culture was to be shaped and transmitted, not only by family and tribe, but by this new development of modern society – the common school. The school proposed to educate and form the very heart and soul of the nation. The common school became compulsory in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. It either embodied Protestantism or attempted to separate religion and education.

Accommodation and Isolation – The Key Values That Emerged (3)

Struggling with these challenges to its identity formation, the Church elaborated two distinct modes of response. One, the accommodationist, urged inclusivity; the other, the isolationist, insisted upon separation. These two modes struggled both with each other and with the larger culture in determining the forms of the Church's ministries, especially that of education.

The first of the two, *accommodation*, arose from a positive experience of the United States. It was based on a perception of the culture as liberating, with freedom to exercise social, economic, political, and religious choice. This is the spirit of Catholics at the time of the revolution and the overthrow of English penal laws restricting the operation of the church in this country – the opening pericope on the appointment of the first Bishop. This position's intellectual reflections can be found in the writings of Father Isaac T. Hecker (1819-1888). Hecker believed that the Church had entered an age in which the basis of its mission (the salvation of souls) should become the liberty and dignity of the individual. Because religion was a "free enterprise" (U.S. voluntarism) for the accommodationists, this meant that the Church must be "sold" to their fellow citizens. Following this mode Church became an agency for the "Americanization" of the immigrants. In order to make the Church attractive and to influence public life, accommodationists believed immigrant Catholics should forsake saloons and poverty, give up their European culture, and attempt entry into the mainstream. Some accommodationists went so far as to urge that Catholic children attend public schools. Those who were not so radical desired to make the Catholic schools at least as "American" as possible, and they championed compulsory education. Hecker exploded the false myths that democracy sprang from Protestantism and that Roman Catholicism was not by nature and in essence, authoritarian, and thus inimical to liberty.

Isolation, the other spirit of Catholicism in the United States, grew out of an experience of persecution, bigotry, and oppression—WASP nativism. From these experiences Catholics saw the same totalitarianism in both European and U.S. liberalism, and they embraced its Vatican condemnation as their creed. The antimodernist reflections of Pius IX served as the theory for their practice. He envisioned his task to be a clear and explicit denunciation of the very foundations of liberalism—the self-enabled enlightenment of the human being.

The isolationists believed it impossible to harmonize Catholicism and "Americanism." The very establishment of Catholic schools meant to the isolationists that the Roman Catholic way of life was different from that of other people in the U.S.A. Isolationists were most concerned about the areas of moral behavior, encompassing such issues as birth and marriage. The state considered many of these moral issues to be under the control of democratic government. The rise of democracy attacked the notion that the church alone had the right to teach. The Church of these isolationists, however, had declared itself the authoritative teacher in these areas. The clash was not only over who was supreme, but also over the manner in which decisions in these matters of morals were reached — whether by authoritative or by democratic rule.

"E Pluribus Unum Catholicum" – THE task of the Church in the nineteenth century (4)

While the views of accommodationists and isolationists on the relation of church and culture were divergent, the task was one. With a multiplicity of ethnic Catholic groups in a Protestant majority environment, the Church had one overriding task in its foundational century: to form one Catholic people out of the many. All of its energies were devoted to this formation.

The state was concerned with a similar task, the formation of a national identity. In the environment of urbanization and the development of a Jacksonian or populist democracy, the state backed the development of the common or public school as its means of formation.

The Policies (5)

During this era various bishops, clergy, vowed religious and laity evolved policy and strategies that produced, at the end of the century, a rival "public" school system which permitted Catholics to challenge the separation of church and state they lived under and to preserve the linking of church and education.

With regard to policy, previous to 1830 U.S. Catholics, like Protestants, viewed formal education beyond the rudiments to be the prerogative of the upper classes.

As the movement for compulsory common schooling developed, Catholic leaders developed educational policy which was directed to the masses.

In 1840, John Hughes, the bishop of New York, challenged the State of New York's providing "school" funds for the city's poor to the philanthropic Protestant-oriented Public School Society. He had three concerns: (1) that these schools were keeping the poor socially deprived; (2) that they were conducted with Protestant Bible readings and prayer; and (3) that they were not under his control. He challenged the state for a portion of these funds. Losing the challenge, he assumed the financial responsibility for the care of his Catholic poor stating, "I think the time has come when it will be necessary to build the school house first, and the church afterwards."^{xxx}

The 1860's produced THE person who established the 20th century policy that the U.S. Catholic Church was to follow in dealing with the issues of church, state and schooling – Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, New York. McQuaid's watchwords were "the battle of God's Church in this country has to be waged in the school room."⁶ The policy contribution of McQuaid was that Catholic Schools would be systematized and controlled at the level of the bishop (the diocese) and not simply a collection of individual priest's or parish efforts. In November, 1884, the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops convened their last national legislative meeting of the century — the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. Unlike the previous councils this one was called at the instigation of the Vatican. Among its legislation to implement the Church's policy on its educational ministry were these two definitive statements:

I. Near each church, where it does not exist, a parochial school is to be erected within two years from the promulgation of this Council, and it is to be maintained *in perpetuum*, unless the Bishop, on account of grave difficulties, judges that a postponement may be allowed.

IV. All Catholic parents are bound to send their children to the parochial schools, unless either at home or in other Catholic schools they may be sufficiently and evidently certain of the Christian education of their children, or unless it be lawful to send them to other schools on account of a sufficient cause, approved by the Bishop, and with opportune cautions and remedies. As to what is a Catholic school it is left to the judgment of the Ordinary to define.^{xxxii}

This third national council had expressed in law what now was, in fact, the mind of the Church: namely, that one of its major activities in the United States would be to establish and conduct a school system of total education. Further challenges to this clearly stated

directive only solidified the position of the U.S. Catholic Church. The Church constructed a rival system of schooling and enforced Catholic schooling through spiritual sanctions.

The decision to establish a Church controlled school system confirmed the isolationist position. However, there were challenges which sought an accommodation between the Catholic Church and U.S. society.

Structures: (6)

During the period of 1875 to 1920, professionalization in Catholic education became the theme as a full and complete system of Catholic schooling was organized: parochial schools, high schools, colleges, normal schools, centralized diocesan administration, professional institutes, and eventually a professional association.

The Teachers

The main work force in these schools was vowed religious women. It was at this time and in the United States that a new identity and definition was forged for Catholic Sisters. The old world tasks of contemplation, teaching aristocratic women, and charity works with the poor gave way to the socializing task of U.S. Catholicism which they performed through the schools. After struggles with the Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg, Maryland, Bishop McQuaid founded his own diocesan-controlled order of sisters and admonished them:

. . . let me remind you that there is not a charity in all this country, hospitals, asylums, refugees of any sort which for far-reaching, widespread, and lasting charity can for one moment be compared with our Parochial Schools.^{xxxiii}

The content taught by these religious was carried as much, if not more, through their presence as through any other part of the curriculum.

The Diocesan System

The organizational structures of the schools also mediated content. They were organized on a diocesan level. A priest directly appointed by the bishop held the power as superintendent of the schools. Major decisions were made at this level. The parish priest had control and responsibility over the local school plant. The people bore the responsibility for financial support.

With the school question finally settled, the system of Catholic education began to take shape. The capstone for this total system of education, the Catholic University of America, emanated from a decree of the Third Plenary Council. This institution was to be the focal point by which all Catholic education in the United States would be organized: parish schools, high schools, academies, colleges, and seminaries.

The move for professional association and unity grew with the formation of a conference of Catholic colleges and seminaries. Soon afterwards, the Catholic parochial school teachers also formed a conference. Finally, in 1904, these groups banded together to form the Catholic Educational Association. Later, in 1927, the name "National" was added to make it the "NCEA."

Summary

The Catholic Church's struggle with the challenges of religious tolerance, church polity, the relationship between church and state, and the relationship of religion to education produced a *modus operandi* for the twentieth century which established an island community, existing complete in its own world but completely surrounded by and affected by another.

Response to these four challenges produced the school as the ideal way to form Catholic identity. The primary goal of Catholic education was the preservation of the Catholic faith. Its secondary goal, the interpretation of U.S. culture to the immigrants, took two competing directions: the creation of a pure Catholic culture, and the leavening of the nation's culture. Here were key values formed in the nineteenth century Catholic identity: Catholic schools reinforce the relationship of religion and education as well as the separation of church and state. The school cultivated the laity's dependence on the clergy and religious. The Catholic schools were the way to "Americanize" Catholics under the control of the Church. U.S. Catholics developed a structure of parochial schooling which reflected and reinforced a "siege" mentality in the nineteenth century immigrant Church.

In effect a compromise emerged from the two dominant nineteenth century modes of *isolation* and *accommodation*. The structure of isolation (the rival school system) was maintained, but Americanization (the ideal of making the Catholic schools as effective producers of U.S. Americans as the public schools) overrode the isolation goal of creating a pure European or "Roman" Catholic culture.

This, then, is the nineteenth century story of the ends and means of the Catholic Church's activity in education. It is a story that provides the U.S. Catholic educator the archetypal images, symbols, rituals, language, and narratives by which to understand who she or he is. The task of the century was met: Catholics, from various nationalities became one; Catholicism became established in the United States, in the face of challenges it had not experienced since Constantine.

The content of Catholic identity cultivated by Catholic education and yielded in this history was a spirit of resistance to state control of the means of cultural formation in favor of submission to the Church's control. Consequently, there was a dependency upon clergy and hierarchy in decision making with regard to the means of education and identity control. Additionally, the seeds of a Patriotism that to be a good Catholic was to be a good "American" were sown.

3. Catholic Healthcare

America magazine suggests that the "highly effective" Catholic hospitals and universities' progressive form of governance, "clarity of mission, accountability, a focus on core functions and the ability to put outcomes over egos" be a model for Catholic parochial and secondary schools. These institutions turnover operational responsibilities to independent boards selected on merit and focused on results with governance as a "collaborative enterprise." These boards go beyond fiduciary responsibility to strategic planning faithful to the primary mission yet adapting to twenty first century students.^{xxxiv}

So with the Philadelphia story and twenty first century Catholic health care we are experiencing another shift in the ministry and consequent identity which might be termed – *corporatization* (non-corporate entities becoming corporations, taking up management structures or other features and behaviors employed by corporations).

a. The Role of Mission in the Corporate Model

The message delivered by several keynote speakers at July, 2013 the inaugural conference on trustee leadership sponsored by the University of San Francisco's Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership and directed by Fr. Stephen Katsouros, S.J. lays out some of the elements of what is involved in corporatization.

"We are putting our institutions in your hands," Vincentian Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, president of DePaul University in Chicago, told the trustees of more than two dozen secondary schools and colleges attending the conference. "Watch over them, love them, and make sure they fulfill the aims for which they were founded."^{xxxv}

To accomplish their emerging role as monitors of the mission, the conference was told that boards need to ask key mission questions that go beyond financial oversight, as important as economic health is to any school. Such questions, Holtschneider suggested, should include:

- Is the school's mission clear?
- Can people throughout the school (administration, faculty, students, support staff) articulate the mission and explain their role in its accomplishment?
- Is the work of the board in sync with that of the founding religious congregation and the local bishop? Are those relationships managed well?
- Does the school "budget for mission" or is there talk about its importance without giving significant resources to its accomplishment?
- Does the mission permeate the academic life of the school in ways that introduce students to life's great questions and the treasure of the church's thinking on such matters?

Robert McElroy, Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco urged trustees to fully embrace their new role and warned them to avoid five attitudes that militate against their effective leadership:

- Deferring the stewardship of mission to the school's administrators because they are full-time employees. Such an attitude, he said, can prevent the infusion of new ideas and constructive critiques.
- Seeing their trustee role as filling a specific niche (finance, marketing, communication) rather than recognizing that the responsibility for mission belongs to everyone on the board.

- Treating the mission as an artifact that ceases to be living and renewable. While acknowledging the inheritance of great traditions, the mission cannot remain rooted in the last century.
- Using the mission as a surrogate for one's own agenda.
- Employing the mission as a kind of weapon against innovative decisions. In other words, saying, "The mission would not permit this," as a way to keep from considering or implementing new initiatives.^{xxxvi}

Barbara Taylor of the Association of Governing Boards called for a climate where an open interchange between the board and the school's administration and where there is "sense-making before decision-making." This requires boards to function in a "generative mode" that finds and frames issues and challenges in light of values and beliefs. Generative thinking provides insight alongside fiscal oversight and strategic planning or foresight, a board's two other chief functions^{xxxvii}.

Patrick Bassett, president of the National Association of Independent Schools, said effective boards "shape and uphold the mission, articulate a compelling vision and ensure the congruence between decisions and core values"^{xxxviii}.

Katsouros saw the conference an initial step toward establishing a national center where board trustees can receive training and support to enhance their effectiveness. The institute will also collect research data about trends in board governance and provide benchmarking analysis for boards wanting to evaluate their competencies.

The present story of US Catholic health care is also a story of the relationship of the social and economic revolution of that ministry and its adaptation to the present-day conditions of U. S. Catholicism. Over the past 25 – 30 years Catholic healthcare has been undergoing "corporatization" of the ministry. The story of Catholic health care's movement from direct control and administration primarily by religious orders of women to mega Catholic systems has brought with it a major focus on adjusting this Catholic ministry to the demands of the corporate world and re-expressing Catholic identity.

History^{xxxix}

In addition to encountering sisters in every department, "a visitor to a Catholic hospital in the early twentieth century saw fonts of holy water and paintings of the bishop, the Virgin Mary and saints."^{xl}

Early in the 1900s, Catholic sisters who were hospital administrators wielded considerably more power than most women in society, now only a few remain in those positions. There have been a variety of changes that have affected Catholic hospitals identity — Vatican II, the civil rights movement, the enactment of Medicare and Medicaid and the growing market forces that have come to dominate health care^{xli}.

In 1985 there was considerable controversy over whether or not Catholic hospitals should advertise. One advertisement in particular evoked heated comments. The newspaper ad showed an old black-and-white photograph of a nun, with the text: "Mother Frances wants to have your baby." The ad promoted maternity services at Mother Frances Hospital in Tyler, Texas. It was a harbinger that Catholic health care was adapting to an increasingly secular world.^{xlii}

Today, Catholic identity is less the physical trappings and more a product of the pastoral care ministers and directors of mission effectiveness who are charged with carrying out the hospitals' original missions. Health care has evolved in the public eye from a public good to a marketable commodity.^{xliii} Catholic hospitals forge Catholic identity as they continue to balance mission and margin.

Catholic health care in the middle of the 20th century began to experience a major shift in its mission and ministry. Catholic hospitals date themselves to the Ursuline sisters in New Orleans opening the first privately owned Catholic hospital in 1728, established amidst epidemics, wars, urban immigrant poverty and frontier chaos in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the early 20th century they adapted to medical modernization and professionalization, to growth spurred by Medicaid/Medicare funding in the 1950s and 1960s, moving toward Catholic systems in the 1980s and 1990s—continually transforming the significant infrastructure.^{xliv}

As the decade progressed, the most significant development in health care was the prospect of health care reform. President Bill Clinton's proposal for reforming the health care system and ensuring that all persons had access to health care was embraced by the Catholic health ministry. In the late 1980s, the community benefit tradition of Catholic hospitals was challenged: a Harvard Business Review article claimed nonprofit hospitals were no more charitable than for-profits^{xlv}.

Another factor was even more worrisome: the advent of Medicare's prospective payment system (PPS), designed to stem the growth of federal health care spending. If hospitals were no longer to be paid the cost of providing services, they would have to find ways to be more efficient. Some fear that, in the name of efficiency, valuable community benefit programs could be in jeopardy as hospitals try to adjust to financial pressures^{xlvi}.

Therese Lysaught writes:

[Initially] ... these changes were simply changes of scale—moving from 12 beds to 200; moving from charitable donations and voluntary payers to significant amounts of government funding; moving from stand-alone Catholic hospitals to collaborative Catholic health systems. Recent developments, however, seem more fundamental. They are not simply a matter of scope and scale. Some systems have decided to forego formal recognition by the local bishop. Other Catholic hospitals or systems have adopted for-profit corporate structures. Others are considering variations on these new models.^{xlvii} Medicine itself is moving away from hospitals to clinic or community care management⁶.

⁶ Get Gladys' input on this section.

Structures

The leadership and governance for this ministry balancing the Catholic heritage in healthcare and corporate business has developed a Byzantine labyrinth structure. In these systems there may be a sponsor Council made up of representatives from religious orders which used to own and operate the hospitals that have become part of the system. Canonically this Council is recognized as a “juridic person,” meaning according to Canon law they are the ones through whom the local Bishop exercises his control. Their task is to hold the mission of the corporation and preserve the Catholic identity. Generally they have approval power for the corporation’s charter and assets. According to amendments in Canon law this Council can have lay Catholic members. Then there is a Board of Directors for the system, whose members are appointed by the sponsor Council. And then there is the Leadership Team consisting of the chief executive officer and all the other chief officers of the system. Generally members of the sponsor Council are not paid nor are the members of the board of directors. The salaries of the leadership team are competitive with the hospital world. It is reported, as an example, that the CEO of Denver-based Catholic Health Initiatives in 2010 had a total compensation of \$2.9 million. In the city of St. Louis alone there are three multimillion dollar CEOs – \$2.2 million for the Mercy health CEO \$2.3 million for the sisters of St. Mary healthcare system and \$4.4 million for the CEO of Ascension Health – the largest not-for-profit health care system in the country with total operating revenue of \$16.6 billion and 113,500 employees.^{xlvi}

Among the executive leadership there is the position of Executive Vice President of Mission Integration or some similar title. Being on the leadership team this position’s salary might range from \$100-\$250,000. The role of mission leader appeared in Catholic health care in the 1980s. First filled by religious from sponsoring congregations, the presence of the mission leader assured that, as operational responsibility was transferred to lay leaders, the executive team of a system or facility included an “expert” in issues related to Catholic identity. In 1993, 95% of mission leaders were religious sisters or priests. In 2006, that percentage had dropped to about 66%. The current trend is moving strongly toward a mission role that is held by lay leaders.

Over time, the business of health care has become more complex as has integrating Catholic mission and values into health care operations. This reality calls for a broader range of competencies for mission leaders that enable them to influence their organizations at every level and in every business decision.

This is a key corporate role to maintain and forge the Catholic character of the health care mission. These leaders are described as “faithful and competent executives” tasked to ensure the health care system’s Catholic purpose, identity and values. They are required to have a working knowledge of Catholic theology in terms of the plurality of faiths served by the health care system. Their specific task is to empower individuals and the organization to express the Catholic faith tradition and to promote ethical decision-making throughout the organization within the context of the Catholic moral tradition. They possess management competencies to be

productive contributors to interrelate shared beliefs, behaviors and assumptions of the organization.

Thus a primary task is formation/education of staff and leadership. Healthcare is different when being done in a Catholic hospital – when someone is taking blood pressure there is a manifestation of the human dignity of the patient. The vision articulated by the hospital is attractive to employees as a place of employment. Effecting the mission the hospital is not concentrated in the hands of the mission director but is carried out by the leadership and staff.

Here is an example of a system's mission statement:

Rooted in the loving ministry of Jesus as healer, we commit ourselves to serving all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable. Our Catholic health ministry is dedicated to spiritually centered, holistic care, which sustains and improves the health of individuals and communities. We are advocates for a compassionate and just society through our actions and our words.

An analysis of the issues of Catholic ministries and corporatization

Who do we say that we are? Who are we called to be? What ought we do in this situation and why? These simple questions raise the identity we want our ministries to cultivate. They are driven by our continual construction of Catholic identity.

And so as we look at the twenty-first century struggles for Catholic identity – as expressed by the church's institutions, what are the *challenges, the social context, the values, the task, the policies of these institutions and the strategies?*

With regard to social context, perhaps Cardinal Bernardin captured our dilemma best when he said our institutions are “sandwiched” between the secular demands in the sacred traditions.

- This is showing up in government's regulation of the operations of our institutions and in the donors concerns for transparency and efficiency. These latter are values of capitalism with a focus on profit.
- Another major factor in the social context – is the decline in numbers. Between 1965 and the present – a time when the growth of Catholics in the US was up 31% Catholic school enrollment dropped 66%. The 2010 Pew survey tells us that only 68% of those raised Catholic have remained Catholic.
- Cardinal Dolan cites the burden of the institutions. Archbishop Chaput states that the financial problems he faces are “unimaginable.”
- Yet, The Economist suggests that there is a great deal of Catholic money – presumably much more per capita than a century ago when these institutions were constructed.
- The cost of education as well as healthcare seems almost to have no restraints.

In responding to these social contexts and their challenges two expressions of the values are apparent this past year:

1. The US bishops' campaign for religious liberty with concerns for right of conscientious objection with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices and delegitimize the Church's participation in public debate about the issues which are determining the future of American society.
2. "The nuns on the bus" – hundreds of congregations of women religious and thousands of individual Sisters, active in critical issues such as peacemaking, comprehensive immigration reform, housing, poverty, federal budget priorities, trade and hunger.

Perhaps the major question in this analysis is that of task for the institutions of Catholic education with regard to Catholic identity. What emerges from this examination is that the principal task is making the faith relevant to Catholics' lives. And given the major shift in relationship of clergy and laity taking place over the twentieth century and emerging in the twenty-first century is that of renegotiating religious authority.

Concerns/conclusions:

So what does all of this tell us about the present struggle for identity in Catholic education today?

We have to be careful when we talk about Catholic identity. Walter Ong raises the possibility that this term is an oxymoron:

Although the term *catholica* or Catholic is a Greek-based term said to mean "universal," the usual rendering of this "mark" of the Church in English, as in Latin, is not "universal" or *universalis* but the Greek-based term *catholica* or "catholic." What is the reason for the retention of the Greek-based term in both Latin and English? Why is the concept not simply rendered by the more common Latin-based "universal"? The obvious reason is that "universal" and "catholic" do not mean exactly the same thing. The imagery on which the concepts for the two terms are respectively founded differs drastically. The concept implied by "universal" works something like this: you imagine a draftsman with a compass describing a circle. The line of the circle marks the border between what the concept includes and what it excludes. Everything inside the circle belongs to the concept; everything outside does not belong to the concept. The concept is not an expansive one but a constricting one.

The concept of "catholic" is built differently. The difference is captured when the Greek term *katholika* is examined. *Holos* means whole. *Kath* means through or down or by or in accordance with. Thus, *katholika* means "through the whole" "in accordance with the whole" "referring to the whole." There is no constricting factor at work here at all. Rather, the concept is expansive. "Universal" (*universalis*) is not^{xlix}.

And so to talk about Catholic identity as something which one group embraces and another does not seems to contradict the very word. Hence, the notion that values we call Catholic as something distinctive and only possessed by a particular group who have been nurtured and

socialized in a particular way is not the way I believe we should address the characteristics of Catholic identity. Ong puts it this way:

To deal with "catholicity" or globalization and its implications, we must be intimately aware so far as possible of the whole cosmos in which our globe is situated. The globe on which we live is part of God's creation. Christian faith must include what we now know of the size and age of God's creation. It is suicidal not to take account of this knowledge, to talk and act as though it were not there¹."

With that caveat I would like to lay offer some positive values of Catholic identity. Baptist turned Buddhist, University of Chicago theologian Langdon Gilkey in his 1974, Catholicism Confronts Modernity provides 5 key anchors of Catholic identity. The thesis of his work is that the Reformation Protestantism failed because the modern world is bankrupt . His work is a word of caution to Christianity and particularly Catholicism that we are on the verge of a postmodern world – a synthesis of the premodern interpretation of the world as “charged with the grandeur of God” (the transcendent) and the modern world’s view of the power of the human (the imminent). And Catholicism, if it can navigate to a postmodern world, can bring essential values to maintain religious life. He points to deep issues of Catholic identity: 1 the unity and substantiality of the people as community, 2 the reality of tradition, 3 the grace of Caritas in her life and mission, 4. sacramental sense of the living presence of God, 5. the rationality of faith and 6. a movement for Justice and liberation. He sees the first five of these as essentially developed in the premodern experience of the Catholic Church.

A look at the 20th century in terms of our Catholic institutions of charity, healthcare and education would indicate that in the nineteenth century we made an accommodation that not only preserved our tradition but developed it to the point where as we can see an enormous amount of good work in all three of these ministries expressive of the gospel and contributing to the church universal. With the hope from that century there is no reason to despair or not to believe that the spirit will not continue. But the challenges are real. The way in which we secure funding for these institutions will be different – but there is no doubt that the funding is there.

Two major concerns face us in terms of money – and they are perhaps two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, there is a much greater wealth in the Catholic community at this point in the twenty-first century than there was a hundred years ago. But secondly, the accumulation of that wealth is inordinately driving the decisions we make about how we live our lives.

The other major issue is that of control of the Catholic voice. It is often said that “the church is not a democracy.” And yet corporations are. Decisions made at board meetings are by majority – any arbitration would happen in the civil courts. The corporate values of efficiency and transparency are well expressed in Frank Butler’s comment, "People want a voice."

What are the values that a corporate or business perspective brings to the Catholic delivery of health, education or welfare? The contemporary science of leadership contrasts the competing values of a hierarchical approach (operative in the Church’s twentieth century ministry of the clerical culture) to a bottom-up approach (operative in Democratic secular culture).

In studying the ethics of organizational leadership today Dennis Erwin suggests seven practices characteristic of leadership in organizations^{li}. Being immersed in organizational leadership – such as a corporate hospital system – we can look at these seven practices both in terms of effective and humane leadership as well as how the Catholic tradition brings an added value to these principles/practices. This helps recast the concern about corporatization as the ability to effect “Catholic leadership,” rather than polluting it.

Erwin describes contemporary business leadership as a **process** (an interaction between leaders and followers) that **influences** (effect followers or groups of people) and **focuses** common goals (mutual interests). The leaders’ role is to establish direction by creating a vision, aligning people by communicating goals and seeking the commitment of followers – motivating, inspiring and empowering followers by satisfying unmet needs and mutual interests.

One can contrast values in this process of leadership between an hierarchical approach and a Democratic approach.

| Leadership values with regard to: | Hierarchical approach (operative in the Church’s 20 th century ministry of the clerical culture) | Horizontal approach (operative in democratic secular culture) |
|--|---|---|
| Use of power | Influence others by use of position, status, and coercion | Influence others by identifying with followers, being competent and knowledgeable |
| Participation | Influence others by being dogmatic, directive, and authoritative | Influence by inviting the ideas and opinions of followers and stakeholders into decision-making |
| Transparency | Closed and secretive process of decision-making and other leadership activities | Full disclosure of process of decision-making including disclosure of alternatives considered as well as justification and rationale for decisions; all leaders are subject to the scrutiny of followers and those served |
| Accountability | Leaders act autonomously, make their own rules | Leaders are accountable for their behaviors, decisions, and performance to followers and those they serve; |
| Empowerment of others | Leaders see organizations as benefiting the institution | Leaders see the organizations as something that promotes the well-being and transformation of followers and those served by their organizations |
| Challenging the process | Leaders protect the <i>status quo</i> | Leaders continually challenge the process in order to encourage innovation, development, and improvement |

Catholic Identity from the twentieth century carries a lot of baggage, e.g. patriarchy, hierarchy, domination, exclusivity vs. inclusivity, silencing and discouraging dialogue vs. encouraging participation and open dialogue, etc. In a similar fashion, business carries the baggage of a prejudice that profitability and efficiency are necessarily bad. According to Erwin, Business that promotes profitability and efficiency when balanced with social responsibility provides sustainability – the ability to continue to serve those in need. Efficiency and elimination of waste are important components of stewardship.

APPENDIX A

From the 19th Century Story of the Catholic Education:

The Challenges

- **Religious Tolerance** – how would the church rework its self-concept as the one true church in a state that was non-confessional, that is, would not support (or oppose) its claim to unique truth;
- **Church Polity** – in a democratic form of government, volunteerism would supersede authoritarianism;
- **The Relationship between Church and State** – in the United States the “religious” would be separated from the “public” in matters of moral behavior. In other words, the government was not going to enforce the church’s laws on marriage, etc.
- **The Relationship of Church to Education** – the norm in United States would become (by the end of the century) universal public education. The Catholic Church would not get state support in its effort to form the young.

The Social Context

- **Immigration** – in the first census of 1790 1.1% of the population was Roman Catholic by 1880 it was 14.4 % – by 1850 almost 60% of all Roman Catholics in the United States were foreign-born.
- **Nativism** – “foreign” and “Catholic” became synonymous – to react to one was to react to the other. Think of how in biology the host body fights to reject foreign matter.
- **Secularization** – democracy challenged religion as the sole basis for knowing truth. Laws disestablished churches in the individual states and significantly weakened the influence of religion by the end of the century.
- **Educational Reform** – the 19th century saw the development of the common (public) school – an attempt to form the young of the nation with a common character. This education embodied Protestantism and did not promote the relationship of faith and education. By the end of century common schooling was compulsory. Here in Oregon a famous case was tried that allowed Catholics to establish a parallel but separate school system to meet the law for compulsory education.

Values

- **Accommodationism** – urging relationship and inclusivity with non-Catholic neighbors and ideas;
- **Separatism** – insisting upon exclusivity.

Task

- **"E Pluribus Unum Catholicum"** – to form one Catholic people out of many – the Catholic version of the national task of the 19th century.

Policies

- John Hughes, New York 1840 “in this country, the school will be built before the church.”
- Bernard McQuaid of Rochester New York cir. 1870 "there is not a charity in all this country . . . can for one moment be compared with our parochial schools."

Structures

- Catholic religious women as the professional teachers
- After the third plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 when it was decreed that every parish had to build a Catholic school and parents had to send their children to a Catholic school under pain of mortal sin
- The capstone for this total system of education, the Catholic University of America, emanated from a decree of the Third Plenary Council was to be the focal point by which all Catholic education in the United States would be organized: parish schools, high schools, academies, colleges, and seminaries.

APPENDIX B

From the 21st Century Story of the Catholic Health Care

The Challenges

- Maintaining Health Care As a Catholic Enterprise
- Questions about recognition by the local Bishop
- The challenge of adopting a for-profit corporate structure

The Social Context

- Modernization and professionalization of medicine
- Growth spurred by Medicaid/Medicare federal funding
- The movement to for-profit healthcare and advertising
- Medicare reform and the Affordable Healthcare Act – designed both to stem the growth of federal health care spending and expand coverage for all
- Reconceptualizing medicine from hospital focused to clinic our community centered population health management
- The evolution of healthcare from a public good to a marketable commodity
- civil rights
- market forces
- the diminishing role of the religious order [In the 1970s, changes in both health care and religious life required new ways of structuring the continuity between Catholic health care institutions and their founding religious congregations.
- the nature of the good of health care, and the differences between health care and other industries⁷

Values

- maintaining community benefit in light of financial pressures
- Vatican II identity/ecclesiology
- the ability to maintain a margin to promote the mission
- present-day search for identity
- Financial -- from charity to self sufficiency
- Human Resources -- from religious to lay
- Governance -- from authoritarian to communal
- business practices
- democratic participation

Task

- a reformulation of what it means carry out the mission of healing.

Policies

- shifting the hospitals to lay control – responsibility for the mission and its continuing construction

Structures

- government funding
- corporate control data-driven accountability and transparency
- open exchange between the board and the school's administration
 - "sense-making before decision-making."
 - "generative mode" that finds and frames issues and challenges in light of values and beliefs.
 - Fiscal oversight
 - strategic planning
 - congruence between decisions and core values
- of Byzantium labyrinth of leadership and accountability structures
- accountability to bondholders
- the role of the mission leader
- The role of Sponsors and public juridic persons, [both developed in the 1980s, are canonical innovations designed to maintain an official connection between religious institutes, their ministries and the Church.]

⁷ While the current not-for-profit structure of most of Catholic health care employs market mechanisms to deliver care, many rightly note that health care does not lend itself to the kind of market dynamics presumed by investor-owned models due a variety of factors, including the role of government funding and regulation as well as the nature of illness itself. Do investor-owned "mechanisms carry the risk of an 'idolatry' of the market, an idolatry which ignores the existence of goods which by their nature are not and cannot be mere commodities"? (*Centesimus Annus*, §40. – As quoted in CARITAS IN COMMUNION: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE: A White Paper for CHA Membership Study. M. Therese Lysaught, Ph.D. May 23, 2013

APPENDIX C

From the Philadelphia Case:

The Challenges

- Enrollment and number of schools down by 2/3 since 1966
- Catholic institutions meeting the needs of the people today [Catholics rethinking the task of religion and what it means to be Catholic: finding the church tangential to the issues of family, love, and business.]
- The sex scandals and financial scandals of the first decades of the twenty-first century
- The moral authority of the hierarchy and commitment to the institutional church

The Social Context

- The weight of maintaining twentieth century institutional Catholicism
- The drastic decline of Catholic education over the past decade [the closing of schools (25% loss of enrollment; an average loss of 127 schools a year) and parishes 1,359 over the past decade 7.1% of the national total]
- Catholic Wealth –
 - annual offertory income at \$13 billion
 - large donors
 - Papal Foundation whose 138 members pledge to donate at least \$1m annually
 - Legatus, a group of more than 2,000 Catholic business leaders
 - There is also income from investments. [Cardinal Dolan is Manhattan's largest landowner]
 - Local and federal government [contributing to the cost of educating pupils in Catholic schools and loans to students attending Catholic universities]
- The professional practice and ethics of corporate leadership in the twenty-first century

Values

- Catholics expressing their mind and their behavior in opposition to the moral authority of the hierarchy and their commitment to the institutional church's policies and regulations: much wider diversions on practices such as mass attendance, sexual morality, abortion and homosexuality, ordination only celibate men and social justice activities.
- Those seeking a restoration of 1950s Catholicism and hierarchical authority
- The laity wanting to have a voice in the managerial control of the educational ministry
- How conducive are Catholic institutions for the transformative work of faith in the postmodern world?

Task

- A reformulation what it means to be Catholic today: reverse the Church's tangential relation to the contemporary issues of family, love, and business – from right beliefs to negotiating life
- renegotiating magisterial authority's role in faith
- help Catholics negotiate life in a post-Ghetto Catholicism.

Policies

- Shifting the schools to lay control – responsibility for the mission and its continuing construction
- The church's appearance of being secretive regarding disclosure of policies and practices

Structures

- The system that manages Catholic education has become outdated and sclerotic - an attempt to maintain
- Corporate funding
- Catholic Wealth – the size of which demands professional management – data-driven accountability and transparency – corporate control
- An incorporation of corporate values
 - Open exchange between the board and the school's administration
 - "generative mode" that finds and frames issues and challenges in light of values and beliefs.
 - Fiscal oversight
 - Strategic planning
 - congruence between decisions and core values

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ An earlier version of this paper ("Upheavals in the Ministry of U.S. Catholic Education and the Effect on Catholic Identity: Models from the 19th Century Catholic Schools and 21st Century Catholic Hospitals") was presented at the University of Portland Garaventa center Conference: The Impact of Catholic Education in America: Past Present and Future June 20 – 22, 2013.
- ⁱⁱ Norlene Mary Keunkle, "Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid and Catholic Education" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1974), pp. 147.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Robert Thomas O'Gorman, "Towards the Development of an Ideal Type Model of Analysis of Catholic Education" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1975).
- ^{iv} Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, "Catholic Institutions and Their Identity," *Origins* 21, no. 2 (May 23, 1991) as quoted in CARITAS IN COMMUNION: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE: A White Paper for CHA Membership Study. M. Therese Lysaught, Ph.D. May 23, 2013]
- ^v August 21, 2012 news release archdiocese of Philadelphia <http://www.catholicschools-phl.org/news-events/the-archdiocese-of-philadelphia-and-the-faith-in-the-future-foundation-reach-historic-agreement-to-create-independent-catholic-school-system> accessed July 22, 2013
- ^{vi} ibid.
- ^{vii} ibid.
- ^{viii} "Philly Catholic high schools to be managed by a private foundation" Kristen A. Graham and David O'Reilly The Inquirer, August 23, 2012
- ^{ix} "What a mess in the Philadelphia archdiocese," Tom Gallagher, National Catholic Reporter, April 19, 2013
- ^x ibid.
- ^{xi} ibid.
- ^{xii} CatholicPhilly.com, the news website of the Philadelphia Archdiocese, October 8, 2012 <http://catholicphilly.com/2012/10/local-news/local-catholic-news/new-ceo-to-lead-foundation-operating-catholic-schools/> accessed July 22, 2013
- ^{xiii} ibid.
- ^{xiv} Reuters, "Philadelphia Catholic Church Passes School Management to Foundation" August 21, 2012
- ^{xv} "Philadelphia Archdiocese, foundation sign pact on school management" Lou Baldwin, Catholic News Service, August 23, 2012
- ^{xvi} ibid.
- ^{xvii} National Catholic Reporter, "Philadelphia breaks new ground on managing Catholic schools," Jerry Filteau September 10, 2012
- ^{xviii} ibid.
- ^{xix} United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2012-2013 The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing, National Catholic Education Association
- ^{xx} "Philadelphia breaks new ground on managing Catholic schools," op. cit.
- ^{xxi} America, "All Hands on Deck: A call for Catholic mobilization to finance our schools." February 4, 2013 Thomas J. Healey, John Eriksen, B. J. Cassin
- ^{xxii} Aug 18th 2012 "The Catholic Church in America: Earthly concerns"
- ^{xxiii} ibid.
- ^{xxiv} "Seismic shifts reshape US Catholicism, Tom Roberts, National Catholic Reporter, January 17, 2012
- ^{xxv} ibid.
- ^{xxvi} ibid.
- ^{xxvii} ibid.
- ^{xxviii} ibid.
- ^{xxix} ibid.
- ^{xxx} James Hennessey, American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States (New York: Oxford University press, 1981), P. 71.
- ^{xxxi} Jerome E. Diffley, "Catholic Reaction to American Public Education, 1792 – 1852" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1959), p. 238.
- ^{xxxii} Bernard J. Miering, "Educational Aspects of the Legislation of the Councils of Baltimore" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1963) p. 231.
- ^{xxxiii} Norlene Mary Keunkle, "Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid and Catholic Education" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1974), pp. 147.
- ^{xxxiv} All Hands on Desks: A call for Catholic mobilization to finance our schools February 4, 2013 Thomas J. Healey, John Eriksen, B. J. Cassin
- ^{xxxv} National Catholic Reporter, "Experts focus on lay boards' emerging role in Catholic education," Monica Clark, August 28, 2012
- ^{xxxvi} ibid.
- ^{xxxvii} ibid.

^{xxxviii} He suggested a board meeting at which each member is given a deck of 52 cards with a separate value written on each. Each member selects their top 12 and joins in a conversation to determine what consensus they can derive around a common set of values.

^{xxxix} For the most comprehensive history of Catholic health care in the United States, see Christopher J. Kauffman, *Ministry and Meaning: A Religious History of Catholic Health Care in the United States*. New York: Crossroads Press, 1995.

^{xl} Suzy Farren and Barbara Mann Wall, *Health Progress* Book Review - American Catholic Hospitals: A Century Of Changing Markets And Missions November-December 2011 (Barbara Mann Wall, *American Catholic Hospitals: a Century of Changing Markets and Mission*, Rutgers University Press, 2011) – accessed July 17, 2013 <http://www.chausa.org/publications/health-progress/article/november-december-2011/book-review---american-catholic-hospitals-a-century-of-changing-markets-and-missions#sthash.1YnL8aEK.dpuf>

^{xli} *ibid.*

^{xlii} *ibid.*

^{xliii} *ibid.*

^{xliv} As I got into research on the contemporary healthcare side of this paper I came across a draft of a “white paper” by Therese Lysaught completed May 2013 for the Catholic Health Association dealing with the issue of membership in this association for Catholic systems that are negotiating a move from not-for-profit to for-profit status. This masterful paper digs deep into the contemporary encounter of Catholic health care with the corporate lifestyle. Professor Lysaught addresses the questions of whether the trends in the larger Catholic systems lead to a Catholic healthcare that “has become too large and too corporate.” She asks if these systems are straying too far from their original purpose. She does this with extensive examination of the theological foundations of Catholic identity in Catholic health care, and then moves into the theological foundations of “moral cooperation” between Catholic and secular organizations and thirdly, the theological foundations of Catholic economic thought as they relate to for-profit corporate status. CARITAS IN COMMUNION: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE: A White Paper for CHA Membership Study. M. Therese Lysaught, Ph.D. May 23, 2013.

^{xlv} Julie Trocchia, "Community Benefit - Meeting Community Needs - A Hallmark of Catholic Health Care," *Health Progress*, May - June 2006

^{xlvi} *ibid.*

^{xlvii} Lysaught. Op. cit., p. 2

^{xlviii} "Healthy Wallets," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 2, 2013 page E4.

^{xlix} Walter J. Ong, S.J., "Where Are We Now?: Some Elemental Cosmological Considerations," *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 50, no.1 (Autumn 2000)

ⁱ *ibid.*

ⁱⁱ personal communication, July 27, 2013.

A Tale of Canada's Two Constitutions:

On the tension between Roman Catholic Education funding privileges enshrined in the Canadian Constitution Act, 1867, and equality rights of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982.

DRAFT

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Abstract

This paper is a review of literature concerning the tension between the egalitarian values of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the privilege of Roman Catholic (RC) schools in Ontario to 100% state financing, which is formally protected by s.93 of the Constitution Act, 1867. The question of legal theory that stands behind this literature is whether the Canadian Constitution itself can be the subject of a constitutional challenge. In the paper I compare RC school funding in Ontario to non-RC religious schools in the province that receive no funding, and compare Ontario policy with other provincial jurisdictions. The review that follows focuses on a series of authors on either side of the debate. All of the authors surveyed here agree that the status quo is unequal and ought to be changed, but they disagree about what to do about it.

Introduction

This paper is a review of literature concerning the tension between the egalitarian values of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter)*, and the entitlement of Roman Catholic (RC) schools in Ontario to 100% public financing, a privilege which is formally protected by s.93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. The question of legal theory that stands behind this literature is whether the Canadian Constitution itself can be the subject of a constitutional challenge. In the paper I compare RC school funding in Ontario to non-RC religious schools in the province that receive no funding, and compare Ontario policy with other provincial jurisdictions. The review that follows focuses on a series of authors on either side of the debate. All of the authors surveyed here agree that the status quo is unequal and ought to be changed, but they disagree about what to do about it.

Anne Bayefsky and Arieh Waldman (2007) were the principal applicants in *Waldman v. Canada*, a case decided in their favour by the United Nations Human Right Committee in 1999, and represent one side of the debate. They argue that the constitutional status of RC school funding privilege, coupled with the unlikelihood of constitutional change, mean that we should fix the problem of religious discrimination in this matter not by removing the RC school privilege, but rather by extending the privilege to all other religious groups (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007). Greg Dickinson and Rod Dolmage present a similar argument on this side of the debate, and highlight how the judicial reasoning in important Supreme Court of Canada cases and other litigation on the matter show that no court ordered legal remedy to the inequality is likely to be forthcoming. Their detailed legal analysis of litigation on the RC constitutional privilege demonstrates that the courts have foreclosed any possibility of a legal, court ordered remedy, leaving it to the elected legislatures to correct any injustice in the status quo (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996).

On the other side of the debate, Jerry Paquette argues that any state support for independent, separate or alternative schools, or any voucher system, is and would be inconsistent with the *Charter* because it would violate students' s.15 *Charter* equality rights (Paquette 2009). The resulting social fragmentation, Paquette argues, would lead to a situation in which some children would get a better or worse education from the state funding provided to them for that purpose, because of things beyond their control like family and economic class (Paquette 2009). Stephen B. Lawton also argues for the elimination of religious school funding, and derives a set of propositions about the school choice debate from a financial perspective (Lawton 1986). Lawton argues that in the Ontario case, school choice has meant exclusion, implied economic direction and transfer of resources, and depended sufficient access to information; choice was –and still is – uneven, increasing for some at the expense of others, awakens religious animosities, and when it comes down to it, it is the courts that decide who has choice (Lawton 1986).

The positions these authors represent illustrate the liveliness of the debate on this question of educational justice in modern Canadian society. Bayefsky and Waldman's argument, however, appears to represent the most popular position, and is the most widely reflected in the press and public debate. In this paper, I will outline the problem and the historical context in which it has developed. I will then outline the debate over how to reconcile the constitutional tension at the heart of the problem, and conclude by highlighting some of the theoretical questions the debate raises and the potential consequences of change for Canadian society.

The Problem

RC schools in Ontario have a constitutional right to their own state-supported separate RC school system. Moreover, they are the only group that has this constitutional protection. This privilege is conferred by s.93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. However, it is in tension (some might say outright contradiction) with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* that is also a part of Canada's Constitution, namely the *Constitution Act 1982*. Section 15 of the *Charter* stipulates equality rights of all Canadian citizens to equal treatment before and under the law. The problem is that the state cannot offer preferential treatment to one group of persons, especially the designated religious group, over and above the treatment of other groups. How is it that RC parents and RC families can have a right to a fully funded separate RC school system while no other religious group has this right given Canada's equality rights stipulated by s.15 of the charter?

The Historic Compromise

In order to understand the debate it will be useful to consider the historical context in which this problem has arisen. It all began in the years leading up to confederation, and the so-called 'historic compromise' between the Roman Catholic majority in Quebec and the Protestant majority in Ontario. When used in the literature, the 'historic compromise' refers to the provision of privileges regarding the education of RCs in Upper Canada (Ontario) and Protestants in Lower Canada (Québec). It was a compromise without which there would be no Dominion of Canada.

At the time of confederation, RCs were a significant, and in some ways visible minority in Ontario. They routinely faced persecution in North America and tended to live together and educate their own children according to RC church doctrine. Religious discrimination in Canada's current education system arises from a framework of minority rights protection that was a product of the sociopolitical conditions of the time. They were, Bayefsky argues, designed for the nineteenth century. At the time of Confederation, the *Constitution Act, 1867* recognized the legal right for the minority RCs in Upper Canada (now Ontario) to receive public funding for separate schools. This recognition was part of the "historic compromise" that gave the same right to minority Protestants in Lower Canada (now Québec). The constitutional scholar Peter Hogg described the historic compromise this way:

At the time of Confederation it was a matter of concern that the new Province of Ontario (formerly Canada West) would be controlled by a Protestant majority that might exercise its power over education to take away the rights of its RC minority. There was a similar concern that the new Province of Québec (formerly Canada East), which would be controlled by a RC majority, might not respect the rights of its Protestant minority... With respect to religious minorities, the solution was to guarantee their rights to denominational education, and to define those rights by reference to the state of the law at the time of confederation. In that way, the existing denominational school rights of the RC minority in Ontario could not be impaired by the legislature; and the Protestant minority in Québec would be similarly protected. This is the reason for the guarantees of denominational school rights in s.93 [of the constitution]. (Hogg 1997)

Ontario at this time was a religiously bi-cultural society (tri-cultural if we include First Nations, which they usually did not) with a sizable Protestant majority, a significant RC minority and various other much smaller religious minorities (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007). In Québec, the reverse held true in respect of Protestants and RCs¹. There was no apparent intention or political will to create schools for other minority groups in either Upper or Lower Canada.

For the first fifty years, as more provinces entered confederation, it became commonplace for public funding of RC separate schools to be included as condition of becoming part of the Dominion of Canada. Such funding arrangements only ever included children of RCs because there was no need to guarantee the education funding rights Protestants outside of Lower Canada, as they were of the overwhelming majority as a rule, and the "public" schools were in practice Protestant (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007).

The Constitution Act, 1867, Section 93

From this we can see that the public funding of RC separate schools has deep roots in Canadian law. Foremost in this respect is s.93 of *The Constitution Act, 1867*. Section 93 establishes the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces with respect to education within the Canadian federal system with respect to the enactment of law. This power, however, is formally limited by the constitutional requirements of historical denominational school rights stipulated in s.93 (1-4).

Section 93 of *The Constitution Act, 1867* is concerned primarily with stipulating that matters of education shall be within the jurisdiction of the provinces. However, it also contains the constitutional privileges afforded to RCs to receive state funding for the maintenance of their own separate education system and schools.

While s.93 only mentions what are now Ontario and Québec, the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan afford the same constitutional privileges in their founding acts, the *Alberta Act, 1905*, and the *Saskatchewan Act, 1905* respectively. The relevant sections of both Acts are identical, and read as follows:

17. Section 93 of *The Constitution Act, 1867* shall apply to the said province, with the substitution for paragraph (1) of the said s.93, of the following paragraph:

"(1) Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to separate schools which any class of persons have at the date of the passing of this Act, under the terms of chapters 29 and 30 of the Ordinances of the North-west Territories, passed in the year 1901, or with respect to religious instruction in any public or separate school as provided for in the said ordinances."

(2) In the appropriation by the Legislature or distribution by the Government of the province of any moneys for the support of schools organized and carried on in accordance with the said chapter 29, or any

¹ This however, was taken by Quebec to be of no force or effect in the province with the amendment passed by the National Assembly of Quebec and the introduction of s.93A, which formally stated the religious rights riders of s.93 did not apply in the province.

Act passed in amendment be no discrimination against schools of any class described in the said chapter 29.

The general idea was that since the RC minority in Ontario at the time of Confederation, and at the time of the creation of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, had an established practice of educating their own children in their own separate schools and according to their own religious doctrine, the practice was ‘grandfathered in’, so-to-speak. These constitutional provisions imply a commitment on the part of the state at the time that they would not swoop in and shut down the existing schools and force RC families to send their children to the public schools against their wishes. Considering the time these commitments were made this was a serious concern for the RC minority, as the practice of forced education against the wishes of the parents was not an uncommon practice in other parts of the world. Moreover, the RC majority in Quebec was concerned for the rights of minority Catholics in Ontario, and Protestants in Ontario were concerned for their minority counterparts in Quebec.

The Constitution Act, 1982, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Giving due consideration to the state of affairs for the RC minority at the time of confederation and the turn of the 20th century is all well and good, but by the time the Constitution Act, 1982 was brought into effect over a century later, needless to say much had changed. RCs were no longer subject to widespread persecution and had largely assimilated completely into mainstream Canadian society. The Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965 ushered in a new era of sweeping modernization to the RC Church. Before this, there was also the end of the Second World War and the beginning of what is now often referred to as the ‘rights era’, exemplified by the United Nations and its *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948*. John Peters Humphrey, a Canadian law professor, wrote the original draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that has been called “the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere” (Ishay 2008, 218). It is, therefore, unsurprising that with the introduction of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in the *Constitution Act, 1982* that Canada formally embraced the egalitarian values that are the hallmark of this new era of human rights.

These s.93 guarantees have been subject to many disputes in the time since confederation. In recent years, challenges to these guarantees have most often been based on Canada’s principal human rights law, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which has full constitutional status as the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Legislation that does not conform to the provisions of the *Charter* may be declared by the courts to be of no force and effect in accordance with s.52 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The charter provides:

“1. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

a) freedom of conscience and religion ...

...

15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

...

27. This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.²

...

52. (1) The Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of Canada, and any law that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution is, to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect.

Some provinces in Canada have replaced the “religious-based schools system” provisions of the constitution with alternatives (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007). Constitutional amendments in the last decade of the 20th century in Québec and Newfoundland that eliminated the denominational school system demonstrate that such change with in regard to denominational schools is possible given sufficient political will. In other provinces, resolutions of the discrimination problem and the RC constitutional privilege have resulted in equal or at least partial funding for both religious and non-religious independent schools. Such resolutions have been usually been framed as maximizing parental school choice and have usually enjoyed considerable public support.

All Canadian provinces except Ontario appear to have arrived at a consensus on the issue of public funding of religious education. Nondiscrimination in school funding is evidently the trend, whether by constitutional amendment or an extension of entitlement to all religious minorities (or otherwise independent) schools. Ontario, critics point out, is currently the only province in Canada that has the distinction of significantly advantages only one religious group, RCs, when it comes to school funding to the exclusion of all others minority groups.³

Dickinson and Dolmage point out, however, that the Supreme Court of Canada has effectively foreclosed the possibility of a legal remedy to the inequality in the system, asserting instead of the matter is fundamentally not within the jurisdiction of the courts but of the legislatures. In his decision in *Adler v. Ontario* (1992), Justice Anderson summed up the nature of the compromise thus:

² Note that the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that part of the multicultural heritage referred to in s.27 includes the religious pluralism of Canadian society, and that therefore the Charter is to be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the religious pluralism of Canadian society.

³ I am here assuming that secularism is not itself a religious group of the same kind as RC, Jewish, Muslim, *etc.* This is a controversial assumption, but nonetheless a common one which I will make for the purposes of this paper. Some authors argue, for example, that the secular character of the public schools does in fact reflect a religious position, namely that of secular humanism. I cannot explore this issue at any length here, but for an extended analysis see Taylor (2007), Bouchard (2012), and Braley (2011).

In my view and conclusion, the funding of RC separate schools in Ontario is a constitutional anomaly, with its roots in a historic political compromise made as an incident of the Confederation of 1867. As such, I am not prepared to give it any weight in the disposition of the issues which I must decide. I reach that conclusion aware of what must be the popular view that the anomaly represents and a want of equity. This was fully recognized and dealt with by the judges in the Supreme Court of Canada. (p. 693)

A Tale of Two Constitutions – a History of Litigation

The new values of egalitarianism and multiculturalism expressed in s.15 and s.27 of the *Charter*, respectively, are, however, in tension with the values expressed in the privileges of the founding peoples principle that informs much of *The Constitution Act, 1867*, especially the education privileges afforded to RCs. With the introduction of the *Charter*, this tension became the subject of many disputes in the first decade of the *Charter* era.

Part of what the *Charter* does is it is an attempt to formalize the unwritten constitution as it has evolved in the first century of Canadian history. There are the linguistic and religious privileges of *The Constitution Act, 1867*, and then there are the more modern values of egalitarianism and multiculturalism of s.15 and s.27 of the *Charter*. When we consider these changing values as expressed in Canada's two constitutions, especially in the context of education, what the courts have been forced to attempt to reconcile are precisely these values and what they have to say about the nature of education, religion, and religious education.

In the various *Charter* challenges that were launched from its introduction in 1982 to *Adler* in 1992. During these early years for the *Charter*, minority groups used the equality rights of the *Charter* to attack state financial policies with respect to the financing of the education system. Dickinson and Dolmage note in his article that there is a “discernible transition from *Zylberberg* to *Adler*” (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). The early cases were launched as a way of removing Christian biases that were evident in things like the opening exercises and instruction of the public schools, but that later they became concerned with more structural issues such as the financing of the system (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996).

Dickinson and Dolmage point to a paradoxical trend: the more the state subscribes to and institutionalize a pluralist model, the more it is “driven necessarily to classify citizens according to race or ethnicity of religious belief and affiliation, which is an activity viewed with great suspicion if not outright dread by civil libertarians” (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). The problem seems to be that the more the Canadian state attempts to embrace equality and multiculturalism through its institutions, the worse things get for groups that want to express their distinctiveness in the education system.

In the cases that deal with state funding of separate RC schools in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, it should be noted that while those are the only three provinces in which this constitutional question formally arises, nevertheless the Supreme Court decisions set precedent because the *Charter* supersedes all provincial legislation.⁴ If prayer in Ontario public schools is ruled unconstitutional on

⁴ (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act, 1982 c.11 (U.K.) n.d.)

Charter rights grounds, then it is unconstitutional in every Canadian jurisdiction. The fact that some provincial legislation may still provide or call for school prayer during opening school exercises is merely evidence that the legislation in question has yet to be formally challenged. (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996)

As stated above, s.93 of *The Constitution Act, 1867* is the constitutional foundation for the Charter challenges to religious practice in the public schools and the judicial question regarding funding of religious schools. This is important because it formally limits the immediate jurisdiction of the decisions. As Justice Anderson notes, the decision of whether to extend funding to non-RC religious schools is first and foremost a political question, not a legal question. It is not the place of the courts to mandate the extension of funding. This question must be decided by the democratically elected legislatures. Therefore any injustice that we may view as continuing to be the case on this question is not the fault of the courts, but of the people and their elected representatives. The reason this is so important is because explicitly mentioned in s.93 are the existence, nature, and public funding of RC separate schools in Ontario.

Zylberberg, Elgin County, and the secularization of the public school system

The first two cases, the *Zylberberg* case (*Zylberberg et al. v. Sudbury Board of Education, 1988*) and the *Elgin County* case (*Canadian Civil Liberties Association v. Ontario 1990*) began the secularization of the public school system. This created a situation in which RC schools were the only schools that were funded by the state that incorporated religion. The trend sets up the conditions of differential financial burden under which the claims of inequality were launched.

The *Zylberberg* case concerned a provision for religious exercise in Ontario public schools, which was at the time required by s.28 (1) of regulation 262 of the Ontario *Education Act, 1980*. This regulation required public schools in the province to begin and end each day with a reading of the reading of the Lord's Prayer, other Scriptural readings, and in some cases singing of Christian hymns. (Zylberberg 1988) The applicants in that case, the Zylberbergs, who represented non-Christian parents argues that the requirement was a violation of their freedom of religion as guaranteed by s.2(a) of the *Charter*, as well as their s.15 equality rights. In the case, the respondent school boards argues that while the regulation was *prima facie* a violation of the kind claimed by the applicants, that it nonetheless constitutes a reasonable and justifiable violation of those rights under s.1 of the *Charter*, which states that rights and freedoms may be sometimes be reasonably limited in a free and democratic society. The purpose, it was claimed, was not religious but was rather to serve as a vehicle for the teaching of important moral values. The respondents argued that the Christian religious elements were being used merely as a vehicle for teaching morality, and that it did not constitute any kind of religious indoctrination. The board argued, moreover, that if a violation of s.2 (a) did obtain, then such a denigration of minority rights was insubstantial at best. The board also argued that since exemptions from participation in the activities in question were routinely granted upon the request of parents, that this eliminated any element of coercion that might have otherwise obtained. (Zylberberg 1988)

The court applied the *Oakes* test, which is the test used to determine whether s.1 of the *Charter* applies. The test determines whether an infringement of rights can be considered reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.⁵ In the *Zylberberg* case, the Ontario Court of

⁵ To pass the test, a violation must meet four criteria: it has to be logically connected to the accomplishment of some significant government objective or purpose, the degree to which the right is infringed must be proportional to the importance of the

Appeal held that the violation of the right to freedom of religion failed the proportionality requirement of the test, and that therefore the denigration of the minority rights was not insubstantial as the respondents had argued, and did not impair as little as possible the rights of the minority students (Zylberberg 1988). They noted also that even though exemptions were routinely granted, that nevertheless the practice put undue peer pressure on the minority students to conform to the religious practices of the majority, and that this was a violation of their s.15 equality rights (Zylberberg 1988). Therefore, the regulation was struck down and held to be of no force or effect henceforth. In response, the Ontario public school system updated the regulation so that the opening and closing ceremonies of the schools would instead involve non-religious inspirational readings.

Elgin County, Dickinson and Dolmage note, was in many ways a logical extension of the *Zylberberg* case (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). The cases resulted in the total secularization of the state funded public school system. The logical extension was that while the earlier case removed the necessity of the reading of the Lord's Prayer from public school activities, it still allowed school official's discretion to use religious elements in school activities if they chose to do so with the approval of a majority of the parents at the school. The result of the *Elgin County* case was that this discretion was removed, leading to the complete secularization of the public school curriculum and the public school system (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). The updated regulations allowed the schools to offer elective courses on religious education and world religions but specifically forbade indoctrination into any one religion. In short, public schools became completely secular.

The result of the litigation in these two cases was a situation in which all state funded schools in Ontario were either secular or RC. All other options received and continue to receive no state funding.

***Adler v. Ontario* and the argument for extending public funding to non-RC religious schools**

In the case of *Adler* (*Adler v. Ontario*, 1996) the applicants claimed violation of their freedom of conscience and religion under s.2 (a) and of their equality rights under s.15. In this case, however, the applicants maintained that the violation was because of the Ontario government's failure to provide public funding for private religious schools that were not RC in religious orientation (Adler 1996). The applicants claimed that because they were not RC that they were subject to unjustified differential treatment at the hands of the government in their wanting to send their child to a school that would be conducive to their religious orientation according to the convictions of their conscience. They noted that as it was a requirement of the state to send their children to a state-approved school, the requirement of their consciences to raise their children according to their own faith created a situation in which they were disadvantaged, vis-à-vis the state, by their religious beliefs (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). The parents were disadvantaged as compared to on the one hand RC parents in the province who could send their children to a school in keeping with their religious convictions with full state financial support, and on the other hand non-religious parents who could send their children to the non-religious secular public schools that similarly received full state financial support (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996) (Paquette 2009).

In this case, however, unlike the previous cases of *Elgin County* and *Zylberberg*, the applicants lost. The court decided that they were free to send their children to a public school in which they would receive a secular education, but that the ministry of education was not thereby required extending funding to non-RC religious schools in order to meet the Adlers' s.15 equality rights. The reasoning was that there was no government action that discriminated against the parents, rather it was because of the parents own

government purpose, the right or freedom must be limited as little as possible, and it must be demonstrated that the same purpose cannot be achieved in some alternative way that would result in less infringement.

convictions that the parents were put at a self-imposed disadvantage. Crucially, the court determined that government inaction could not be held as discrimination and violation of the parents' s.15 equality rights (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). The court explicitly ruled that what the Adlers were complaining about was state inaction, rather than action, and that state inaction cannot be the subject of a charter challenge. This is odd, given that later in the Supreme Court case of *Vriend v. Alberta*, the issue was legislative omission of protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation. In that case, the court held that the omission, arguably a kind of state inaction, did in fact violate the applicant's s.15 equality rights (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). This apparent inconsistency in the reasoning of these two cases has never been taken up, but was noted in the United Nation Human Rights case in *Waldman v. Canada* where the applicants of *Adler* took their case to the UN and won (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007). The reasoning of the court in *Adler* was that it would be a different matter if the provincial government chose to fund some private religious schools and not others on the basis of religion. In the words of Chief Justice Dubin,

It is not necessary in this case to determine whether it would be open to the government, in the absence of specific constitutional authority (such as s.93 of *The Constitution Act, 1867*), to provide public funding for all private, religious-based independent schools. This will be dealt with by the courts in the event that such a situation arises and is challenged.
(Adler 1996, 18)

Therefore, the court decided that this was a political decision and that it was therefore up to the legislatures to decide whether funding ought to be extended to non-RC religious schools. Therefore, according to the ruling, no legal requirement to extend funding to other religious schools obtains given the law as it currently stands.

The Debate in the Literature

Given the current state of affairs regarding the state funding of religious schools in Canada, there appear to be at least two possible ways to correct the constitutional tension between the privileges of *The Constitution Act, 1867* and the egalitarianism of the *Charter*: Removing the privilege, or extending it.

Extension of state funding for separate non-RC schools

On this side of the debate, the most notable advocate, according to Paquette, is Fahmy, who insists that the courts, and in particular the Supreme Court of Canada, "got it wrong" on the question of provincial obligation to fund private religious schools (Paquette 2009). Building on a broad spectrum of case law, Fahmy argues that notwithstanding *Adler*, provinces ultimately do have a positive obligation under the *Charter* to fund private religious schools.

Fahmy invokes three major lines of argument. First, she argues that freedom of religion is impaired, and in a way that cannot rightly be saved under s.1 of the *Charter*, by failure of the state to provide financial support to non-RC religious private schools (Paquette 2009). Second, she contends that s.27 of the *Charter*, the multicultural interpretation clause, should be used more aggressively as an anti-discrimination interpretive principle and that doing so and giving s.27 its proper weight in the balance of judicial decision-making, would have led to a conclusion different from that arrived at in *Adler* on the key question of government obligation to fund religious independent schools (Paquette 2009).

Finally, Fahmy believes that the majority's s.1 analysis in *Adler* was flawed and that the dissenting opinion of Justice L'Heureux-Dube was much closer to the mark (Paquette 2009). She specifically cites the following comments of L'Heureux-Dube in this respect: "The complete denial of funding is the most excessive impairment possible [of freedom of religion], not one of a range of possible alternatives" (Paquette 2009). Moreover, Fahmy notes the following:

Based on the evidence, L'Heureux-Dube J. found that partial funding, as is currently provided outside Ontario, would achieve the objectives of the legislature and infringe equality rights to a lesser degree. In her view, "[p]artial funding would actually further the objective of providing a universally accessible education system and promote the value of religious tolerance in this context where some religious communities cannot be accommodated in the secular system." Justice L'Heureux-Dube's dissenting opinion on this issue is both compelling and equally applicable to an alleged violation of s.2(a). That is, the religious freedom of Ontario's religious minorities [*sic*] communities could be impaired to a lesser degree should the government decide to offer partial funding to independent faith-based schools, and, for this reason, the s.2(a) violation cannot be justified in a free and democratic society." (Paquette 2009)

Bayefsky and Waldman provide a comparative analysis of each jurisdiction in Canada that demonstrates Ontario to be the only province in Canada which extends public funding to only one religious group, to the complete exclusion of all others. RCs receive 100% direct public funding and all other religious denominations receive 0% funding, whereas in most other provinces provide at least a level of funding to other religious schools, even if not to the same level as is given to RC and Protestant schools (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007).

In Ontario, the provincial jurisdictional powers provided under s.93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* is exercised through the *Ontario Education Act, 1980*. The Act governs all legislation and regulations respecting education funding. It requires that such legislation, regulations or other policy "operate in a fair and nondiscriminatory manner" (Ontario Education Act, 1980 n.d.).

Bayefsky and Waldman sum up their essential objection to Ontario's differential treatment of RCs and non-RCs is essentially in the following way:

"The extreme financial burden imposed on raising children in a matter which preserves and promotes their religious heritage and identity in the case of all non-RC religious minorities in Ontario, as compared with the lack of financial burden on RCs having the same goals and interests for their children, violates the fundamental obligation of nondiscrimination." (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007)

Another objection to the status quo in Ontario, noted by Bayefsky and Waldman, is that a religious education in independent religious schools is integral to the conduct of the basic affairs of many minority religions (Dickinson and Dolmage 1996). Emil Fackenheim, expert witness in the *Adler* case expressed the concern in the following way:

“... Jewish day school education is indispensable to the survival of Jewish communities in Canada and throughout the world. In the post-Holocaust era, this has become a matter of absolute urgency, as the Jews are survivor people for whom it is necessary that they and their children understand their religious heritage. It is imperative the Jews know who they are and why they are here.

...[S]ending children to weekend or after schools to learn about their Jewish religion is not an adequate approach to Jewish education. Psychological impact of having Jewish education, afterschool hours rather than during the school day is such that it makes Jewish education a burden for them rather than a natural part of their life. Jewish education is intimately linked with Jewish cultural survival and in order to be effective it must be pursued together with secular portion of the children's education in a full-time, day school setting.”⁶

On the other side of the debate, authors such as Paquette (2009), Macleod (2010), Long and Magsino (2007) argue that extending nondiscriminatory public funding to religious non-RC denominations is antithetical to a tolerant, multicultural, nondiscriminatory society. But then it would appear, however, that the status quo of selectively discriminatory funding of only one religious denomination's schools is also a hindrance to the cultivation of a tolerant, nondiscriminatory society. As Bayefsky and Waldman put it,

“public funding of religious schools predicated on privileged and exclusive religious affiliation encourages the very hierarchical, imbalanced, and divided society along religious lines that it claims to defeat.” (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007, 15)

Singling out one religious denominational social group, namely RCs, does not appear to be conducive to the promotion of social cohesion in the rest of the public school system, to say nothing of the wider society itself. It encourages discord in society and is perceived by the remainder as favoring one religious denomination based on historical conditions that simply do not obtain any longer. In her dissenting opinion in the *Adler* case, Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dube describes what she sees as the denial of equality:

“... At issue here are the efforts of small, insular religious minority communities seeking to survive in a large, secular society. As such, the complete non-recognition of this group strikes at the very heart of the principles underlying s.15. This provision, more than any other in the Charter, is intended to protect socially vulnerable groups from the discriminatory will of the majority as expressed through state action. The

⁶ *Affidavit of Emil Fackenheim*, sworn 21st of December 1991, in support of *Adler v. Ontario*, (General Division), paragraphs 2-3, in Bayefsky and Waldman, *State Support of Religious Education: Canada versus the United Nations*, pp. 771-772, document # 33.

distinction created under the Education Act gives the clear message to these parents that their beliefs and practices are less worthy of consideration value than those of the majoritarian secular society. They are not granted the same degree of concern, dignity and worth of their parents.”⁷ (Adler 1996)

The second way to remedy the inequity would be to change the constitution to remove the privilege and therefore the state funding of the separate RC schools. Any legal approach has been ruled a non-starter by the Supreme Court, and therefore is not a viable possibility given the legislative and constitutional situation as it currently stands.

Elimination of Public Funding for RC schools

Paquette argues on the other side of the debate that the extension of similar treatment to non-RCs would cause social fragmentation due to the insulating effects of the separate school model. He argues that religious ostracism given that children of minority faiths would have little socialization with children of other faiths, and on a more practical level, that it would amount to an inefficient duplication of services already offered in the Ontario school system. (Paquette 2009) However, the vast bulk of the fragmentation of Ontario school system already exists by virtue of the division of the publicly funded school system into RC schools and non-RC schools (currently 31.6% of the total publicly funded school population), or Ontario support of the division of the population in their entitlements into RCs (currently 34.3% of the population) and non-RCs (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007).

Paquette uses the test developed by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Law v Canada (Minister of Employment and Immigration)* which was later refined in *Falkiner v Ontario (Ministry of Community and Social Services)* to argue that public funding of private schools through vouchers and tax-credit programs is a clear violation of s.15 of the *Charter*. He argues that “vouchers and tax credits requiring parents to top-up their value to pay private school tuition fees unconstitutionally excludes poor parents and children from access to private schools” (Supra note 1 at 8). From this, he concludes that in order to increase access to quality education for marginalized groups such as the poor, the public education system has to be improved.

Bayefsky responds that if the goal was only to maximize public funding for the secular public school system a withdrawal of special funding for RCs would be the logical course of action. Waldman also notes that the discriminatory funding in the province is in marked contrast to the demographic realities of modern Ontario. The actual composition of religious minorities in Ontario has changed dramatically since Canada was founded in 1867. 2001 census, which collected information on religious affiliation, indicates that RCs are essentially no longer a minority in the province (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007). RCs now number approximately the same as Protestants, or around 30% of the population which is the same percentage that is Protestant. After RC, “no religion” was the second most frequent religion response to the census question (at 16% of the population) in 2001 (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007). In Canada as a whole, RCs are the largest religious group, accounting for 43% of the Canadian population. Indeed, in the last decade of the 20th century the number of RCs in Canada increased nearly 5% while at

⁷ *Adler v. Ontario*, supra note 8, at para. 86. Madam Justice L’Heureux-Dube was dissenting on the issue of whether the *Constitution Act, 1867* was immune from *Charter* review. The majority of the Court did in fact recognize the incompatibility of the 1867 constitutional provisions and the *Charter*’s equality rights.

the same time the number of Protestants fell by over 8%, continuing the long-term trends of both groups (Bayefsky and Waldman 2007).

The religious affiliation of Ontario residents reveals a multicultural society in which there is no clear majority (unless Christianity is seen as a monolithic group) and in which there are significant minorities. Nevertheless, it is a historical anomaly of protecting only RCs and extending no similar provision to other religious minorities, such as the Jewish community, which comprises nearly 2% of the Ontario population. Contrary to the 1867 rationale for protecting only a small Ontario RC minority, there are currently other minority religions in Ontario that are in for more vulnerable positions today than our RCs.

The other passible way to correct to tension would be to extend funding to other separate and alternative schools, whether religious, faith-based, or otherwise different from the public model. This, it is worth noting, seems to be the trend in the literature in terms of arguments. This is the most common position expressed in popular media and public debate, and authors such as Dickinson, Dolmage, Bayefsky and Waldman argue that this is likely the only viable way forward on this matter, even though this raises difficult questions regarding the value of a common v. a separate school system model. This is also the position taken by the United Nations Human Rights Council on the matter, which has led it to repeatedly condemn Ontario's current practice and implore the province to update its legislation to extend funding in this way.

Theoretical questions?

The debate raises a number of noteworthy theoretical questions, in particular questions that overlap with the debate over common versus separate school models in liberal democratic societies. Which approach better reflects and serves the purposes of such a society: The common school approach and the elimination of the RC school financial constitutional privilege, or the separate school approach and the extension of state funding to a wider variety of religious and otherwise independent schools? What does it mean for a child's right to education? Would this right be infringed upon with either of these approaches? What does it say about political legitimacy? I cannot answer these questions here, but I do want to highlight that this debate does raise such questions.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have outlined the problem of tension between the privileges of the founding peoples principle that informs the Constitution Act, 1867, with the egalitarian values of the *Charter*. I have outlined the legislative and sociopolitical history of the time leading up to confederation and the years between confederation and the *Charter*. Following Dickinson, Dolmage, Bayefsky, Waldman, and Lawton I have outlined the history of litigation over the tension and highlighted the judicial reasoning that led to where we are now. Finally, I have outlined the debate in the literature over what to do about the inequity: whether to eliminate or extend the privilege. The trend in the literature is towards reconciliation of the tension, but there is no consensus on how to do it. The extension of funding approach, however, does seem to be the stronger of the two arguments, primarily on the practical grounds that neither legal nor political remedy is likely to be forthcoming in the form of elimination of the privilege, and the status quo is unlikely to go unchanged in an era of ever great and deeper diversity in Canadian society.

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